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Title:

Comments: Public Comment Regarding Stibnite Gold Project EIS #50516

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Lauren Nagel and I am an outdoor recreationist. As a big fan of the Salmon River, the place where I chose to get married to my husband and have taken countless friends to experience a pristine, wild and scenic place, I am writing to provide comment regarding the proposed Stibnite Gold Project which is currently being proposed for development on the East Fork of the South Fork Salmon River.

The current Draft Environmental Impact Statement raises many concerns and misses out on vital considerations regarding the current plan for the proposed Stibnite Gold Project.

First, the proposed mine is set to impact over 13,000 acres of public land. This is land that is viable for outdoor recreationists who currently use this land for endeavors such as hunting, fishing, and boating. While the current DEIS may have taken into considerations regarding wildlife habitat, it has not addressed the impacts it will have on outdoor recreationists.

Second, in regard to wildlife habitat, while there may be some considerations made to try to maintain current pristine wildlife habitat, the true impact of any development of this size will never be known until the project is over and the rehab phase has begun. The current time frame for this mine is 20 years, with the possibility for continuation should additional mineral resources be found. However, scientists have highlighted that despite the current rehabilitation plan for the waterways, the water disruption from the completion of this mine will leave these waterways too warm to support the current spawning fish species in the area.

Third, this habitat is some of the last remaining intact habitats for some of the spawning fish species in the area. Specifically, the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River is considered the most important remaining habitat for Chinook Salmon in the Columbia River Basin. The Stibnite Gold Mine will cause an impact to this pristine habitat by rising water temperatures. This will cause an impact to outdoor recreationists who come to these waters as anglers, additionally causing potential financial hardships to local outfitters who rely on these spawning fish to provide guided expeditions in the area. Chinook Salmon are not the only species of fish that will suffer with the development of the gold mine, Steelhead, West Slope Cutthroat Trout, and Bull Trout will all suffer spawning habitat loss.

Fourth, a great concern to the current natural habitat would be the upwards of 446 tons of acid generating and metal leaching materials which are currently slated to be stored in an on-site retention pond. The 450' tall dam which is slated to be built to hold mine tailings does not guarantee protection to the integrity of pristine, wild and scenic designated waters downstream. Should this dam site fail, it would cause an ecological disaster of untold proportions, impacting communities, outfitters, and outdoor recreationists downstream.

An example of such an environmental impact would be the 2015 failure at the Gold King Mine on the Animas River in Colorado. The failure at the Gold King Mine spilled at least 3 million gallons of heavy metal laden water into the Animas River and further watersheds downstream. The event at the Gold King Mine caused residents downstream to have unclear water for at least a couple weeks, causing particularly severe impacts in the Navajo nation. A secondary event happened in 2018, highlighting how difficult it is to maintain the integrity of natural habitats when dealing with such highly toxic, heavy metal materials. There are currently unsettled lawsuits from this mine disaster requesting upwards of 2 million dollars.

Fifth, the Stibnite Gold Mine could cause a negative impact to the currently earmarked streams of their Wild and Scenic river status- Burnt Log Creek, Johnson Creek, and South Fork Salmon River.

The reality of this project is that the only benefit it will bring is directly to the owners of the Stibnite project. Idaho and public land owners deserve better than a project that would promise to disrupt access to public lands for over 20 years, with no real guarantee of a return to what is currently pristine and critical wild habitat. I urge you to reconsider any proposal regarding the Stibnite project. This proposal clearly hasn't taken into consideration the current uses of this public land by public land users- which is a real short coming in the current Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Thank you for your time,
Lauren Nagel