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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to voice my opposition to the Stibnite gold mine in the South Fork Salmon drainage.

I have been paddling Idaho's rivers for nearly ten years, and was lucky enough to paddle the iconic South Fork Salmon five times this year. People come from all over the world to experience the pristine water quality and fishing on the rivers here. Clean water is not only crucial to a healthy ecosystem, but a basic human right. Because the Stibnite mine poses a threat to water quality, the ecosystem, and communities downstream, I am asking that the USFS take alternative 5, the "No Action Alternative" to Midas Gold's proposed mine.

There are a number of concerning points, or lack thereof in Midas Gold's DEIS.

The DEIS fails to acknowledge the cultural importance of the South Fork historical range of the Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) people. A number of treaty violations have occurred over the last several hundred years after the Nimiipuu were driven from their land. Salmon decline and loss of this historical land have had significant impacts to the tribe and their way of life. Further decline of Salmon and their habitat would only worsen this, and the lack of consideration of the tribe only perpetuates the ongoing travesties that have been committed against them.

One of the biggest threats to water quality is the leaching of mining chemicals into the drainage. The DEIS clearly states that the liners that Midas Gold intends to use are untested and "The liner system proposed does not currently meet regulatory requirements." The area is also prone to large earthquakes, as we have observed this year. This poses a threat because an earthquake could cause catastrophic failure of the tailings ponds. Loss of water quality would further endanger the many species of fish such as Bull Trout, Chinook Salmon, and Steelhead that already struggle to survive in their severely altered habitat. The diversion of water around the mining site will likely also cause an increase in water temperature that will be detrimental to the fish.

Transportation of hazardous materials poses a threat to the surrounding communities. The increased traffic alone will cause increased pollution of the rivers, and the possibility of a spill is devastating.

The mine is expected to leach chemicals for at least hundreds of years resulting in the need for a treatment system that will be used in perpetuity. It will be the taxpayers who pay for the treatment of the water.

Midas Gold operates under the guise that they are here to clean up the existing mine. While it is important that restoration of the site happens, Midas should not be the ones to do it. Too many mining companies have come into old mining sites with the promise of cleaning up the site, only to leave it worse off than it was and the taxpayers are left with the burden of the cleanup.

The Stibnite Gold mine project is dangerous and shortsighted. The jobs it will create are temporary, but it will have permanent consequences for the landscape, the people inhabiting and recreating in the area, and the wildlife that calls the South Fork drainage home.

Thank you,

Anneka Door

Bozeman, Montana