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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it may concern:

I am a recent college graduate from Oregon State University, and a former fisheries technician for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). Though my permanent address is in Oregon, I have spent every summer of my life, as well as several full years, living in McCall. I am an avid outdoorsman with a passion for fly-fishing, river snorkeling, hiking/backpacking, and whitewater rafting. Through my two summers of working as a snorkel surveyor for IDFG, I have come to love the waters of the East Fork South Fork Salmon River, which harbor some of the most impressive bull trout and wild chinook salmon I have ever seen.

In the summer of 2018, I was a part of the snorkel survey effort that established baseline population estimates and species presence/absence data for the reach of river to be affected by the proposed Stibnite Gold Project. Just prior to surveying the EFSF Salmon, I snorkeled a stretch of the Crooked River which is undergoing a multimillion dollar restoration effort to repair damage from gold mining there. I was shocked to see how lifeless the Crooked Area was, especially when compared to the flourishing EFSF Salmon drainage that I later surveyed. The EFSF Salmon is a true gem for Idaho - its waters are clear, cold, clean, and chalked full of trophy bull trout, hard-fighting wild chinook, large whitefish, and a myriad of shiner, dace, steelhead, and cutthroat trout. When snorkeling the EFSF Salmon, it feels like snorkeling a tropical reef, teeming with life and rich in rocky and woody structure. These waters draw eager fly-fishermen from all over the PNW and beyond to chase behemoth bull trout in a truly raw and wild setting. For the locals, the area is a quaint paradise with plenty of fishing, hunting, and hiking to keep one busy.

Like many residents of the area and recreators from afar, I have been largely unaware of the proceedings of the Stibnite Mine Project's review process. I have been aware that a mine is under review, but amidst all the other chaos this year has brought, voicing my opinions about the mine has taken a back seat while the mine steadily marches towards approval. Many others I have talked to feel the same way - they strongly oppose the project on a variety of economical and recreational grounds, but they haven't had sufficient time to voice their opinions or thoroughly review the proposal. I would like to request an extension of 75 days for the comment period on the mine's DEIS. This extension will give the community well-deserved time to review the mines DEIS and collect their thoughts and opinions about its merit. In a year of such chaos and turmoil, it is only fair that the public receive sufficient time to participate in the management of their public lands.

I would like to conclude by expressing my concern over the project, especially since the DEIS anticipates significant harm to several federally threatened fish species. If the mine is approved and developed according to plan, it will severely hinder tourism and recreation in the area, lower quality of life for residents in nearby Yellow Pine and neighboring communities, and impede costly efforts to replenish endangered fish populations. The mine would generate private profit off of public land, but it would not help the surrounding communities. While the mine proposal expresses a federal strategic need for this sort of mineral exploitation, a national strategic need for the primary product (gold) does not exist.

In sum, I believe the proposed Stibnite Mine Project presents more potential for harm in the EFSF Salmon drainage than it promises good, and I believe the community needs more time for comment on the DEIS so that they can make informed decisions about the mine. Please extend the comment period for the DEIS by 75 days.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sage Fox

