

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/27/2020 4:24:35 AM

First name: Virginia

Last name: Hickey

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am writing you today to reject the Stibnite Gold Project on the South Fork of the Salmon River. This private company has long been extracting gold near Yellowpine. And while some was permitted on former Tungsten mining sites, this new proposal is set to make a different impact. This one, would forever change the face of this wild place and everything downstream.

As a recreational and environmental enthusiast, I have been visiting this part of Idaho, as well as other pristine places like the St Joe, Stanley, and the NF Clearwater areas to whitewater raft, fish, and just soak in these incredible, remote, and ethereal places. For so many years, (at least 12 years now) I have been in awe at the old cedars on the NF Clearwater, the ancient rocks in the Frank Church Wilderness, and the wild salmon that travel clear across mountain ranges to return to where they were spawned. And the sheer variety just along and in the river is mind boggling... Chinook salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, cutthroat, brook, bull and rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, lamprey, Columbia spotted frog, and the Idaho Giant Salamander to name a few.

This is a unique and fragile place, that cannot sustain a gold mine.

I urge you to reject this project:

1. It puts water quality at risk... Mining and related activities put the water quality at risk. Millions rely on drinking water that originates in our National Forests (including myself on the Columbia River). These healthy forests with high water quality also provide a plethora of watershed benefits, such as sustaining surface and groundwater flow, purifying water, maintaining fish habitats, controlling erosion, and stream bank stabilization.

2. It threatens sensitive species and endangers wildlife... This area is rich with wildlife. From Osprey to Beaver, Black Bear to river otter, migratory fish to tiny aquatic insects. All species rely on the healthy habitat of the South Fork of the Salmon to thrive.

3. These are some of the last remaining wild places... Having industry put a stronghold down for an indefinite amount of time is risky at best. Why not allow these places be wild for our next generations? Let's protect the South Fork of the Salmon so our children's children know how far the salmon came to finish out it's life cycle in the middle of Idaho; feeding the stream once again, as it has for thousands of years. Let's all find joy in navigating a challenging whitewater river, casting into a clear eddyline, or climbing up the ridge to hunt that elusive elk. What will happen to the waterways below? The Main Salmon, Snake, Columbia, all the way to the Pacific should be included in the assessment.

4. Create more balance on public lands... While private companies often do business on public land, let's allow the public's needs, the ecosystem, and the future needs of diverse public use in shrinking wild places to come first. The former should be taken into as much consideration and with as much weight as private profits for industry.

The cost is too large for the Stibnite Gold Mine project to be allowed to move forward. We have witnessed before how mining has forever damaged wild places, and we should look beyond our lifetimes and be greater stewards of the land. Please reject the proposed project and protect the South Fork of the Salmon River for me, my friends, the wildlife, the wild flowing water, and all those who come after.

Thank you,

Virginia Hickey

