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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Dear Payette National Forest,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed stibnite mine. I appreciate the Forest Service listening to comments and concerns from locals and citizens alike. As a local McCall resident, this proposed mine will affect my life a lot and I am very invested in its outcome. While I was not born in Idaho it has been home for over 10 years. I work as a nurse in the emergency department at Saint Luke's McCall hospital here in McCall. I am also an avid outdoorsman and have spent quite a bit of time hiking, biking and predominantly kayaking around the proposed mine site. I am intimately knowledgeable of the proposed mine site and surrounding areas. While considering the purpose and need of this mine presented by Midas Gold. Please be aware of Midas Gold's tendency to overstate the importance of antimony in this project. In an attempt to manipulate the public and the Forest Service into gaining support for their proposed mine. 95% of the project revenue comes from gold. True, the United States Department of Interior (DOI) lists antimony as one of the 35 mineral commodities considered "strategic" to the United States. However, currently the United States does not have a refinement facility with no plans to do so (2014 Pre-feasibility study pg. 19-1). This undermines the national security argument made by Midas Gold. Please don't be distracted with antimony from the mines "purpose and need" this is a gold mine. Of course there are a few other metals that will likely be found in the mine but let's not forget why Midas Gold proposed this mine.

The proposed mine will offer many jobs to valley county however many of those jobs will not be high paying jobs. Typical high paying mining jobs require a high level of specific knowledge and skills not common in valley county. Even Midas Gold makes it clear they will not be hiring locally for many of their higher paying jobs. Given the short life span of this mine (at best 12 years with operation of the mine lasting 5-7 years) it is unlikely Midas will train locals for these jobs. The model they typically use is to relocate already trained personnel to valley county. Relocating personnel to valley county will cause increased competition in the housing market, increased pressure on schools to districts (particularly McCall schools) and create a boom and bust cycle for the valley county communities.

As a resident of a McCall I have worked very hard over the last half a decade to save money for a down payment on a house. I am finally ready to be looking for a house. The house market is on the rise and appears to have no signs of slowing down despite a pandemic. The market is extremely competitive making it very challenging to find a place for a local resident. Out of state citizens are more often than not able to afford second homes in McCall before local residents can buy their first.

The proposed mine will increase the house market competition exponentially. Midas Gold makes no commitments to relieve the increased competition caused by its proposed mine. With hundreds of employees and their families moving to valley county for a few years without a clear housing plan, this proposed mine will cause the housing market to increase so high locals will not be able to compete.

With so many newcomers to the community there will be an opportunity to create more supportive jobs (i.e. bars, restaurants, hotels). However the short life span of the mine will negate the impacts these supportive businesses could have. I can imagine with a flood of new short term residence into valley county a small restaurant may attempt to capitalize on this opportunity. By the time the business expands to meet the miners demand the miners and their families will be leaving. Causing increased competition and strain on restaurants that already exists. Completing the mining towns boom and bust cycle, leaving a negative impact on the communities.

The proposed mine will also have a major impact on schools in Valley county. With the increase in temporary residence local schools will have to adjust. Increase class sizes, increase staffing and likely increase school size for the 5-7 years the mine is expected to be at full operational capacity. Once the mine is closed the community will have increased its schools capacity just in time to have it decreased dramatically causing layoffs, and excessive resources the school district will be left paying for over the next decade. Again, demonstrating the effects of the boom and bust cycle classic to mining towns.

To access the mine Midas Gold plans to use Highway 55, warm lake road and is proposing to develop the "brunt log" road and using the existing south fork salmon road until the "brunt log" road is complete. The Johnson creek road is another option Midas proposed as an access route to the proposed mine site.

It takes one trip on Highway 55 during any of the summer months to see this highway will not benefit from increased traffic. Similarly Warm lake road is getting an increased amount of traffic due to its access to some of central Idaho's most mountainous, wild and beautiful public land. The heavy trucks and machinery traveling on this road will increase the deterioration of this road causing increased construction burdening the state tax payers and users of the road tremendously.

The South Fork Salmon road is a main hub of the warm lake road for accessing some of the most wild public land. This is at times a single lane road and it's hard to imagine how mining trucks and machinery will go down this road without blocking oncoming traffic. Also causing extreme stress to an already fragily road along with increasing danger to travelers on the windy backcountry road.

The increased tax revenue from the proposed mine will go primarily to the federal government. A much smaller percentage will go to the state and county governments. The roads and school improvement burden alone will nullify any state and local tax advantage this proposed mine provides.

Upon reviewing the "burnt log" road proposal I have some concerns about the impacts the road will have on the surrounding areas. A two lane road wide enough to fit mining trucks and machinery at 8000 feet will be disruptive to wildlife and goes against the forest service plan. It also threatens the spirit of the Frank Church wilderness area. With a road that high there will have to avalanche control for year round access. How does Midas plan to manage the avalanche train it plans to put the road through? How will this affect the wildlife and specially designated animals like the wolverine?

Idaho's identity is uniquely wrapped up in wild places. What is Idaho without its wild places? The reason most people are attracted to Idaho is its amazing wild land. Even for those who don't visit the mountains as often and I do tend to believe that Idaho is a special place because of its wild untamed land. This mine will not change the identity of Idaho. However, it will forever devalue one of the most wild areas in Idaho. This area has value difficult to quantify in monetary terms.

Please don't let Midas Gold take almost 6 billion dollars worth of gold out of Idaho's mountains in exchange for some low paying jobs, a laughably small community fund and an incomplete DEIS that forces the forest service to "de-promise" a functioning forest plan for the area.

Thank you considering my comments