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First name: Luke
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Comments: Hi, my name is Luke Bruce.
I'm almost 12 years old and a 6th grader at Hidden Springs Elementary in Boise, Idaho. Healthy rivers are really important to me because they are a valuable part of the ecosystem. Without healthy rivers, like the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon, then the salmon and steelhead will not be able to spawn and survive as easily. With a loss of habitat then the streams can get warmer and most fish that live in these types of streams require water temperatures to be 60 degrees or colder. Fish are really sensitive to environmental conditions. Wilderness North shares that 'everything is directly related to temperature when it comes to food and because fish can,Äôt regulate their body temperatures, they must find their optimum sustainability temperature. If they can,Äôt find that temperature, their metabolism either speeds up or slows down. When fish metabolism speeds up, (water is too warm) the fish,Äôs breathing rate also increases requiring more oxygen. Problem is, as the water,Äôs temperature goes up, the amount of oxygen in the water drops. When fish,Äôs metabolism goes down, they become more lethargic, which affects feeding and reproduction.' These waters are home to some of Idaho's most iconic fish species: cutthroat trout (Idaho's state fish), the bull trout (one of the most aggressive fish and a big reason why healthy ecosystems in waters that are clear, clean, and healthy). For example, if the cutthroat trout is no longer found in the East Fork then the bull trout have a decreased food source and this will cause them to starve and if that happens then a lot of the other animals won't be able to get food and there won't be as many nutrients in the river system. You're probably thinking why does this matter since most of us live a long distance from this spectacular area, but what most people don't realize is that our decisions are going to affect everyone, no matter where you live. The heavy machinery will also create more pollution (air, noise, light) in the area and produce even more greenhouse gases which increases climate change. Some areas are best left untouched because they're so special. They let us connect with nature. One of the most important parts of this river, to me, is that when you're there, it's quiet and you're surrounded by untouched wilderness as far as you can see. The Wild & Scenic Rivers Act (1968) was made to 'preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.' I feel that the East Fork of the South Fork should be set apart as a special destination. My last thought and concern is that all of the increased sediment produced from Midas Gold that washes downstream will get into fishes gills and makes it harder from them to breathe. That, combined with the warming water temperatures will result in almost certain fatalities to countless fish.
Sincerely,
Luke Bruce