

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/29/2020 12:22:32 AM

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Comments: Comments to Stibnite Gold Project EIS #50516

Stibnite is a superfund site needing remediation and rehabilitation. Midas Gold's claim that they will perform reclamation while exploiting non-renewable mineral resources should be met with skepticism. There must be funds dedicated to ensure the land will be restored. Previous operations at this site demonstrate precedent of mining companies making huge messes and leaving the burden of expensive cleanup for others.

Despite what Midas Gold proposes, the project would fail to increase the pace and scale of restoration or to improve forest conditions. The project would increase hazards instead of reducing them. Further activity at the site risks the release of toxic sediments (including but not limited to cyanide, arsenic, mercury, and antimony) on the site from new and previous mining into the precious watershed. More roads will generate more traffic; more traffic will increase the propagation of invasive plant species. There are risks inherent in transporting fuel to the mining areas. Mining activities will destabilize mountains leading to more catastrophic landslides. Mining is a noisy, dusty operation and is in direct conflict with other resource activities in this watershed. These beautiful mountains are priceless wildlife habitat; precious wildlife will be disturbed. Recreation opportunities including river rafting and fishing will be compromised by mining operations. Management priority should be to restore this ecosystem to a more pristine condition. The role of the Forest Service is to protect and preserve our National Forests.

Allowing the project would be further devastating to the land surface and compound the horrible scars from historic open pit extraction at the site. "Waste rock" and more toxic by-products created during operation will need to be contained. It will be a disaster if containment fails; and containment is vulnerable to changing weather patterns and earth movements. Water quality and quantity will be compromised by allowing operations at the site. Disturbed sediment and contamination inherent from open pit mining will damage the crucial water supply of rivers and springs far downstream. Moving a river is not a healthy way to manage an ecosystem. Rerouting fish through an artificially lighted tunnel is preposterous. You can't fool nature and it is folly to try. Rerouting streams is audacious. Instead, natural fish habitat should be delicately renewed as much as possible.

The Forest Service's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The overriding objective of the Forest Service's forest management program is to ensure that the National Forests are managed in an ecologically sustainable manner. Mining is the antithesis of protection of resources. There is the directive to make minerals from National Forest lands available to the national economy and, at the same time, to minimize the adverse impacts of mining activities on other resources. This project does neither. Midas Gold is based in Canada, so the project would not benefit the United States economy other than by providing relatively few jobs. It would be best to leave the remaining mineral wealth in the ground, since even allowing the re-mining of tailings present on site will be ecologically unsustainable activity. It would be irresponsible to allow further contamination of the site. This beautiful mountain range with its wetlands and wildlife is more precious than the minerals that destroying it would allow a foreign company to obtain.

These are Nez Perce and Shoshone treaty lands; these people deserve their rights to manage these territories. They understand that everything is connected. Indigenous peoples and others look to the area's fish for a source of food. The health of fish is threatened by mining operations at the site. Likewise, mining poses threats to local endangered species. It also increases opportunities for invasive species to spread.

Despite my sincere interest in this issue, I struggled to digest the huge volume of confusing material in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I believe I support Alternative 5, the No Action Alternative whereby Midas Gold Corporation would cease explorations and resources would be devoted to rehabilitation and reclamation.

Thank you for considering these comments.