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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to express to my immense concern over the re-opening and expansion of the Stibnite Mine by Midas Gold on the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River. I appreciate your time and consideration of my thoughts.

The Forest Service itself stated that the South Fork "contains the most important remaining habitat for summer Chinook salmon in the entire Columbia Basin;" and we should place a significant priority on protecting these fish, along with bull trout, and steelhead which are all protected through the Endangered Species Act. It is unreasonable to believe that these fish will effectively use the planned mile-long fish tunnel as a diversion which is devoid of light, vegetation, insect and aquatic life. Re-channeling and dewatering streams will compromise the habitat needs of endangered species. The disruption to this vital ecosystem, the denuded forest landscape, and the impact to this viable watershed will create immediate and long-lasting destruction to this irreplaceable river. Additionally, open pits that are used to expose and extract gold lie on top of the streambed of the river, so it's of critical concern how the stream water diversion will impact the area in order to permit ore extraction.

The interests of Midas Gold DO NOT serve the communities they're impacting in a healthful, sustainable manner. My concerns also include the leaching of tailings, which store arsenic, cyanide, and antimony, into the watershed. Arsenic, as an example, is a very harmful and toxic chemical element, and this mining operation will allow arsenic to accumulate in the river and through continuous exposure result in deleterious bioaccumulation in aquatic species.

My son, Luke Bruce (11), caught his first bull trout last summer on the East Fork of the South Fork and his excitement was palpable! The fish, immense and powerful, surprised him and gave him such an immediate, sudden thrill. He talked about it for days, and it's still a vivid, special memory. He, and his generation, would be devastated over the potential loss or even the degradation of such an important area. Protect the opportunity for them, and all of us, to be immersed in untainted wilderness and the chance to connect with unspoiled nature. Please, ensure the conservation and protection of our public lands for future generations and do not undermine its cultural value and significance.

Please, give considerable thought to this massive mine's effects on: water quality, critical habitat areas, and damaging and denuding Idaho's landscape in perpetuity. This vital and beloved ecosystem may become irreparable. Midas Gold is wrong for Idaho, and even more so for its placement at the edge of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. Idaho is too great for this, preserving and protecting this heritage for all of our children and future generations is the right thing to do.