

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/10/2021 4:13:00 AM

First name: Ann Scarborough

Last name: Bull

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Colleen Garcia,

My name is Ann Scarborough Bull. I am a marine scientist at the University of California Santa Barbara, Marine Science Institute, and an avid fly fisher of the Eastern Sierra. I strongly oppose the Long Valley Exploration Drilling Project proposed by Kore USA Ltd. (Kore Mining). The proposed mining project threatens the future of the scenic, economically and ecologically important Long Valley area in Mono County. Open Pit heap leach gold mine in the proposed area would cause irreparable harm to a treasured section of Inyo National Forest, its citizens, economy, and the plant and animal ecosystem.

I am particularly concerned about the proposed project's proximity to Hot Creek, one of the region's iconic fisheries. Though this project is only exploratory for now, as a CalTrout supporter, I am all too aware of the grave impacts mining can have on fish and freshwater ecosystems. Mining operations can lead to sulfuric acid and heavy metal contamination when rainwater or surface drainage carries contaminants to nearby streams, rivers, lakes, and groundwater harming species who rely on these water sources. Not only is this proposed project just above Hot Creek, but the water from Hot Creek eventually flows into Owens River and Crowley Lake, putting this entire ecosystem at risk.

And perhaps the most insulting of all, you intend to complete the environmental review via a Categorical Exclusion, the least comprehensive review with the least public input. There is no mention in the USFS documents about the impacts of this project to wildlife, recreation, fly fishing, hiking, or the tourist economy. A full review in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would consider impact producing factors such as noise, air pollution, water quality, and ground disturbance on both ecological elements like plants, deer, and sage grouse as well as social elements like recreation and tourism. A Cat Ex won't do. We need an EIS.

Right now, the need to restore ecosystems rather than degrade them is urgent. California is entering into another extreme drought, another extreme fire season, and is aiming to protect 30% of our lands by 2030. As such, it is completely inappropriate to approve projects like this that will only cause further risk to our natural resources. Therefore, I strongly oppose even the first exploratory step of this effort to ultimately mine for gold. At a minimum, a full EIS should be conducted in order to properly assess the full impacts and allow for meaningful public engagement.

Sincerely,

Ann Scarborough Bull