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Title:

Comments:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. I strongly urge the Forest Service to not allow the Stibnite Gold Project to operate. The Stibnite Gold Project will have detrimental consequences for the ecological and cultural sanctity of the area and connected watershed.

The South Fork of the Salmon River fosters some of the state's most delicate ecosystems. For centuries, it has been a thriving home for Chinook Salmon, Steelhead Trout, and Bull Trout. These fish, listed under the Endangered Species Act, are an integral part of the South Fork ecosystem and an immeasurable part of the people, both native and non-native, who for generations have inhabited and depended upon the area for physical, spiritual, and economic sustenance. Proposed gold mining in the South Fork watershed threatens these vital resource values. It will permanently degrade fish habitat and water quality, and substantially harm the Nez Perce Tribe's ability to preserve their treaty-reserved resources. In addition, the mine will risk the health and safety of surrounding communities due to increased heavy truck traffic transporting hazardous materials, new sources of hazardous air pollution, and the mine's contribution to climate change.

The South Fork Salmon is part of the Nez Perce Tribe's aboriginal territory, where they have retained their inherent rights. The U.S. Government has treaty obligations to take care of it. It holds the plants, animals, fish, and spiritual values that the Tribe depends upon. It is the home of elk, deer, wolverines, bear, otter and bighorn sheep. It is the home of federally protected Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout. These fish depend on clean, clear, and cold water for their survival. The Stibnite Gold Project is a massive metals mining project run by Perpetua Resources (formerly Midas Gold Inc.). It would feature: 3 open mine pits; industrial facilities to chemically process gold, silver, and antimony ores; waste rock dumps; storage for millions of tons of toxic sludge behind a 400+ foot high earth fill dam; miles of new access and haul roads and electrical transmission lines; and on-site housing and services for hundreds of workers. The estimated life of the mine is 20-25 years.

The Stibnite Gold Project (SGP) would directly impact over 7 square mile of land. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement released in 2020 concluded the mine would permanently degrade water quality in the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River and damage miles of salmon, steelhead, and trout habitat. Additional threats include the potential for a tailings dam failure, permanent water pollution by acid mine drainage and toxic metals, and cyanide spills. The project would adversely impact county road infrastructure, schools, emergency services, law enforcement, social services, affordable housing, and employee availability for existing businesses. External costs of the project would be shifted to the taxpayers.

Perpetua Resources claims that remediating the impacts of historic mining at Stibnite cannot happen without more mining, and that the SGP is the only way to address degraded water quality and threats to Endangered Species Act listed fish. This is wrong. Restoration can, has been, and will be done without mining. The Forest Service, Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho Dept of Environmental Quality, and others have already spent millions of dollars on restoration, fisheries research, and supplementation in the Stibnite area and the South Fork. These efforts are all without destructive, long-lasting impacts to water and fish.

These waterways and their fish have given me solace, meaning, identity, and a career as a guide. Please allow me, my children, and future generation to enjoy and experience the wild and scenic, the ecologically intact, and the beauty and power of the Salmon River Watershed and Frank Church Wilderness Ecosystem. Thank you.