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Comments: Hello, I'm writing to comment on the proposed strip mine on the Payette National Forest proposed by Perpetua Resources. This massive project would be too close to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and in the headwaters of the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River in Idaho. The 2.4 million-acre River of No Return Wilderness is one of the wildest areas in the lower 48, and the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River is popular for recreation and critical for endangered native wildlife.

Millions of dollars have already been spent by the Nez Perce Tribe and the federal government in trying to clean up the legacy of past mining impacts. It is extremely inappropriate for Perpetua Resources to re-open and expand former mine pits here for its proposed cyanide vat leach gold mine called Stibnite Gold Project. The mine puts not only the Wilderness at risk, but also this important river and endangered species such as salmon, steelhead, and bull trout.

The Stibnite Gold Project would tragically double the old mine's existing footprint, would use up to a fifth of the water in part of the East Fork of the South Fork, and includes about 1,800 acres of mine pits, 15 miles of new roads (plus dozens of miles of currently remote USFS roads), a 400 foot-high tailings dam for 100 million tons of materials, more than 3,000 annual hazardous vehicle trips, year-round traffic for the mine's 25-year time period, and other infrastructure within the nearly 30,000-acre project area.

Under the preferred alternative, road construction and mining operations would cause serious impacts to the River of No Return Wilderness, including noise audible from a nearly 2-mile radius, wildlife disturbance and displacement, increased access to and activity in what are now quiet and lightly-visited places in the Wilderness, and sediment pollution in streams within the Wilderness. The wilderness evaluation erroneously downplays impacts.

If all this weren't bad enough, a new road would be constructed along a ridge that forms the boundary of the Wilderness. And, while the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) alleges the road would be 100 feet from the wilderness boundary, the most logical location for the road seems to be an existing pack trail that dips into the Wilderness.

The Forest Service must deny the mine permit and require Perpetua to finish cleaning up the mine site. It's worth noting that the Nez Perce Tribe has been actively working to clean up the South Fork of the Salmon and is also challenging this mining proposal. The last thing the area needs is more toxic mining pollution and all other harmful impacts.