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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service officials:

Please carefully consider my following comments and include them in this EIS project file or administrative record.

I am deeply concerned about this Perpetua Resources (formerly Midas Gold) proposal for a massive strip mine on the Payette National Forest. This location is at the doorstep of the famed 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.

I have visited the 2.4 million-acre River of No Return Wilderness. It 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 toxic legacy of past mining impacts. Now Perpetua Resources wants to re-open and expand former mine pits 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 doubles 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 significant adverse 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 and improperly downplays these significant impacts.

If all of these egregious harms 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 needs to 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 has challenged this mining proposal. The last thing the area needs is more toxic mining pollution and all of the associated other harmful impacts.

The Forest Service should not approve this Stibnite Gold Project that clearly puts not only the famed Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness at risk, but also the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River and endangered species such as salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Such approval would be directly contrary to the Biden administration's conservation and environmental justice policies, and go against the Biden administration's commitment to the "America the Beautiful" 30 by 30 campaign aimed at increasing protection for public lands to

help solve the rapidly worsening climate and extinction crises. More toxic mining and wastes contaminating public lands and resources is indeed the exact opposite of what is urgently needed. Gold is not essential; a healthy environment is. Public lands should not be sacrificed to enhance private corporate profits.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my comments.