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Comments: 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 on the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. Now Perpetua Resources wants to re-open and expand former mine pits here for its proposed cyanide vat leach gold mine that puts not only the Wilderness at risk, but also the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River.

The 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 serious impacts that 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 new proposed road would sit 100 feet from the wilderness boundary or could even enter the Wilderness, as the most logical location for the road seems to be an existing pack trail that dips into the Wilderness.

All of this activity threatens the area with cyanide and other toxic chemicals and will cause degradation of this wilderness. I believe that the wilderness evaluation erroneously downplays these impacts.

For these reason, I urge the Forest Service to deny the permit for Perpetua Resource's Stibnite Gold Project and require Perpetua to finish cleaning up the mine site.