

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/8/2023 4:52:44 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing as an American who strongly supports full protection for our Wilderness Areas throughout our country, including the irreplaceable Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness which is at 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 main continental USA and the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River is popular for recreation and critical for endangered native wildlife including whitetail and mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, bighorn sheep, gray wolf, cougar, coyotes, wild turkeys, bass, bull, brook and rainbow trout, Chinook and Coho salmon, whitefish, and black bear. Birdwatching is excellent as it is home to over 200 species of birds including house wren, magnolia, Cape May, common yellow throat, and black throat warblers, summer tanager, northern cardinals, field, swamp and song sparrows, black birds, eastern meadowlarks, orchard and northern orioles, purple and house finches, and American gold finches.

At this time, I am very concerned because the Perpetua Resources (formerly Midas Gold) mining company is proposing a massive strip gold mine on the Payette National Forest 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 am alerting the Forest Service to the fact that millions of dollars have already been spent by the Nez Perce Tribe and the federal government in attempts to clean up the legacy of past mining impacts. Now, I am very concerned because the environmentally destructive Perpetua Resources company seeks to re-open and expand former mine pits in this Wilderness for its proposed cyanide open pit vat to leach antimony and gold mine called Stibnite Gold Project. This process involves the exposure of the surface of the finely crushed mining ore to the cyanide salt solution. Once exposed to the gold, the solution binds with ions in the gold that allows them to separate out into solution and then be screened for collection.

It is crucial to understand that permitting the operation of this Stibnite open pit Gold mine project 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 the local endangered species which include Chinook and Coho salmon, steelhead, and bull trout and all the other endangered animals that have previously been described in this petition as documented to be found at this Wilderness site at the Salmon River in Idaho. 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, I am alerting you to the fact that road construction and mining operations would cause serious impacts to the River of No Return Wilderness, including the creation of noise that will be 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 current wilderness evaluation erroneously downplays these impacts upon endangered wildlife and the environment.

I am also very disturbed by the fact that this invasive and destructive mining project will require the creation of a new road that would be constructed along a ridge that forms the boundary of the Wilderness. Despite the fact that the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) states that 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.

At this time, I thank you for your consideration of my letter and my recommendation. It is very important for the Forest Service to please completely deny this mine permit for Perpetua Resource's Stibnite Gold Project and require Perpetua to finish cleaning up the mine site. I am also making the Forest Service aware that the Nez Perce Tribe has been actively working to clean up past environmental destruction that resulted from prior mining

operations near the South Fork of the Salmon and has challenged this mining proposal. Due to the previous episodes of industrial mining which resulted in environmental pollution that endangered the public health of the local communities and wildlife in this Wilderness site, the last thing the area needs is more toxic mining pollution and all the other harmful impacts.

Sincerely,

Jean Marie Naples, MD-Ph.D.