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Organization:

Title:

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I am opposed to the expansion of the Stibnite Mine near Yellow Pine, Idaho mainly because its location is in the headwaters of the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River, all of which is critical fish habitat for threatened Chinook Salmon and Bull Trout.

I also oppose resumption of mining because there are other, less environmentally sensitive sources of gold and antimony in the U.S. and allied countries. I believe the potential dangers of acid rock drainage from mine tailings and other pollutants being released into this watershed is too high a price to pay for mining minerals that are available elsewhere. Killing native populations of native bull trout and salmon is too great a risk. Once gone from the South Fork Salmon watershed they could be gone forever.

I worked as a seasonal fisheries technician for the U.S. Forest Service from 1992-2004, spending two seasons on the McCall and Krassel districts of the Payette National Forest. It is a very beautiful part of Idaho. Some of my fish tech work involved cleanup of previous mining impacts at Stibnite, plus fish habitat surveys and monitoring to aid restoration of fish habitat at, upstream and downstream from Stibnite Mine. I believe that the money and other resources the U.S. Forest Service, other governmental agencies and Native American tribes have already spent attempting to restore this area to more natural conditions would have been wasted if the Stibnite Mine is allowed to expand. Allowing the open pit mining footprint to grow beyond the existing "Glory Hole" would adversely impact fish and wildlife and add another eyesore to the landscape, just as the old one is beginning to heal.

In the long term, I believe restoring fish habitat and populations and preventing further damage to this scenic area would increase revenues from hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation above and beyond any short-term benefits from mining. Preventing Stibnite expansion would benefit Idahoans who have chosen to live and work here for the rest of our lives not only financially, but spiritually and culturally.

Idaho is a special place among Rocky Mountain states because it is more remote and still has more federally protected wilderness and wild native and anadromous fish populations. You can still lose yourself in nature here. Yes, most of the other Rocky Mountain states like my native Colorado have fish, wildlife and scenery, but Idaho is particularly special because of its salmon and steelhead. Colorado never had fish migrating 900 miles to the Pacific Ocean, growing huge and coming back to spawn and die. Please don't allow greed and the perceived need for more minerals (all available elsewhere) to cut out another piece of the Heart of Idaho.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on an issue I feel strongly about.