

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/10/2023 3:59:50 PM

First name: Kain

Last name: Shaffer

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Supervisor,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the Stibnite Gold Project (SGP), proposed at the headwaters of the South Fork Salmon River watershed. As proposed, this project represents unacceptable risks to Chinook salmon, bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and rainbow trout (juvenile steelhead). The project will negatively impact all forms of recreation within the area, and harms treaty reserved rights and interests of the Indigenous peoples of the area.

I have spent many years recreating in the Payette National Forest and specifically along the East Fork South Fork of the Salmon river and I know with the current plan SGP has proposed the recreating in Payette National Forest will be severely harmed. This past summer I walked the many streams in the South Fork drainage fishing and soaking in the current thriving state of those ecosystems. I saw some of the largest chinook returns, caught and released the healthiest cutthroat and rainbow trout, saw a thriving macroinvertebrate population, along with a pristine wilderness that has healed over previous decades of mining.

I am greatly concerned with the new access road construction and how Johnson Creek and Burntlog Creek, will both face degradation and risk of a catastrophic toxic spill if this project moves forward. Not to mention the localized degradation to the untouched wilderness where the road will be graded over which will bring more erosion to the headwaters of these various drainages.

I personally saw Chinook Salmon Spawning just above the Stibnite Pit, I caught and released cutthroat and bull trout out of the Pit and saw how they were reclaiming the environment that past mining created. With climate change and the proposed SGP plan I don't see or believe there is enough analysis done that can show that these species will be able to reclaim the environment after another 20 years of mining. As proposed, this project will result in the loss of over 120 acres of high-functioning wetlands. It will negatively impact the general water quality of streams found within the site from additional sedimentation and the potential release of additional contaminants mobilized by mining and construction. Stream temperatures are predicted to be elevated for up to 100 years within the mine site boundary and the habitat for these sensitive species will be for the worse, not better, as a result of this project.

Finally, the SGP will negatively impact the treaty-reserved rights of the Nez Perce and other indigenous peoples of Idaho. The SDEIS clearly states that "Adverse impacts to tribal rights and interests under either alternative, including preventing access to traditional lands, harming traditional fishing and hunting rights, impacting endangered salmon and concerns that it would harm the tribe's salmon restoration efforts".

For these reasons, I urge the Forest Service to protect the Salmon River watershed and reject the proposed Stibnite mine plan.