

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/11/2023 12:43:49 AM

First name: Lee

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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

DATE: January 10, 2023

RE: Commenting on Stibnite Mine Project

Forest Service Payette National Forest,

Perpetua Resources (formerly Midas Gold) is proposing a massive strip mine (Stibnite Mine Project) 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. The 2.4 million-acre River of No Return Wilderness 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.

As proposed, the Stibnite Gold Project will double the old mine's existing footprint, 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 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. If all this 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. This mine won't profit Americans directly, but we could lose needed wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and potentially lose access to an important freshwater source while this mine operates.

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. Now Perpetua Resources wants to re-open and expand former mine pits here 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 Forest Service needs to deny the mine permit and require Perpetua to finish cleaning up the mine site. The very last thing the area needs is more toxic mining pollution and other harmful impacts.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my views.

Sincerely,

Lee Bennett, wildlife enthusiast