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Comments: I wish to express my opposition to the Stibnite Gold Project as described in EIS #50516.

I have been an Idaho resident for most of my 80 years. My comments are based on personal experience in central and north central Idaho.

1. Idaho's Salmon River contains some of the finest salmon and steelhead spawning grounds in the world. Snake River salmon and steelhead that rely on the Salmon River for spawning habitat and a migration route to and from the sea have been ESA-listed as threatened and endangered since the 1990s. These species are all currently on a path to extinction, with one currently on life-support. Any activity that would threaten any part of the Salmon River and its tributaries is unconscionable.

2. Montana is known as the "treasure state" because of its great mineral wealth, and mining plays an important role in the state's economy. Yet Montana voters, by citizen initiative, outlawed cyanide heap leach open-pit gold mining because of the damage such mining can cause to the health of Montana's citizens and their environment.

3. The Constitution of the United States includes a statement regarding the honoring of all treaties, including those between the U.S. government and various Native American tribes. The Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) people, for example, have treaty rights to "fish, hunt and gather in all the usual and accustomed places." Those places include the east fork of the south fork of the Salmon River. The right to fish in a river devoid of fish is no right at all. To honor U.S. treaties, the existing threatened and endangered anadromous fish species in the Salmon River and its tributaries must be protected, not presented with additional risks to their continued existence.

4. Mining throughout the American West often follows a familiar pattern: first, the mine owners and operators promise the proposed mine will do little or no harm to the environment, and that they will repair/rehabilitate any damage to the land or water that might occur. They usually also agree to post a bond that could be used by a state or other permitting entity to conduct such rehabilitation should the mine owners fail to do so. Barring any major environmental catastrophe during actual mining, at some point the return on investment begins to dwindle for any number of possible reasons. Too often, the mining company then pushes a few piles of dirt around, scatters some seeds, plants a few trees and departs, but only after filing for bankruptcy. The end result? American taxpayers foot the bill for cleanup, often after decades of continuous environmental damage. Sometimes rehabilitation is no longer even possible. Are we really this stupid?

5. Finally, we all know that shit happens. Operate a heap leach open-pit gold mine for 20 years on a waterway of critical importance to threatened and endangered anadromous fish species, in a geographic area protected by treaty rights and adjacent to one of the greatest wilderness areas in the nation, and the truth of the first sentence in this paragraph will once again be evident.

No permit should be issued to the owners of the proposed Stibnite mining project.