Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/11/2023 6:02:18 AM
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Comments: Perpetua Resources/ Midas Gold is proposing a massive strip 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. 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.

Millions of dollars have already been spent by the Nez Perce Tribe and the federal government in trying to clean up the legacy of past mining impacts. 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 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, 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. The wilderness evaluation erroneously downplays impacts.

Making this proposal even worse, 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.

The Forest Service would receive public accolades by denying the mine permit and requiring Perpetua to finish cleaning up the mine site. 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. The last thing the area needs is more toxic mining pollution and all other harmful impacts.

In summary, the Stibnite Gold 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 endangered species such as salmon, steelhead, and bull trout.

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The wilderness evaluation erroneously downplays these impacts.

The new proposed road would sit 100 feet from the wilderness boundary or could even enter the Wilderness, as the most logical location for the road seems to be an existing pack trail that dips into the Wilderness.

Please choose to do the right thing by serving the public interest over corporate profit at the publics' expense. To reiterate, the last thing this area needs is more toxic mining and associated negative impacts. The Forest Service should deny the permit for Perpetua Resource's Stibnite Gold Project and require Perpetua to finish cleaning up the mess they created on OUR public lands, to, from, and at the mine site.

Thank you, USFS.