

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/14/2026 8:03:00 PM

First name: Tyler

Last name: Langton

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I live in the Bitterroot Valley and spend a lot of my time outside exploring the public lands around here. Hiking, fishing, camping, and simply being able to get out into places like the West Fork are a big part of why I chose to live here.

I am opposed to the Sheep Creek Rare Earth Exploration Project.

I understand the argument for developing domestic sources of rare earth elements, and I understand that this proposal is being described as exploration. But I don't think that means we should overlook the potential impacts or treat this as a minor project simply because it isn't being called a mine yet.

This is the Bitterroot. The West Fork and its tributaries are part of the headwaters of the Bitterroot River. These are places where clean water, healthy forests, wildlife, and relatively undeveloped public lands still matter. Once roads, drilling, underground workings, equipment, fuel, waste rock, and other infrastructure are brought into a drainage, there is a real possibility of impacts that can't simply be undone later.

What concerns me most is that the Forest Service appears to be moving toward a categorical exclusion. I don't believe that is appropriate for a proposal with the potential scope of this project, particularly when the ultimate purpose of exploration is to determine whether the mineral deposit can be developed further.

I don't want to see the Bitterroot become another place where we say, "It's only exploration," until enough infrastructure and money have been invested that a much larger development becomes the assumed next step.

I'm not opposed to responsible mining or to developing critical minerals in appropriate places. I am opposed to treating sensitive watersheds and public lands as expendable because a mineral deposit happens to be there.

Please take a hard look at the potential impacts to water, wildlife, roads, recreation, and the surrounding forest, as well as the cumulative impacts and the possibility of future mine development. I believe this project deserves a thorough environmental review and meaningful public involvement before any decision is made.

The Bitterroot is worth protecting. Once we permanently change a place like this, we don't get it back.