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Dear Forest Supervisor Matt Anderson and Ranger Dan Pliley,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a public comment. It is not acceptable to give USCM the go-ahead to commence exploratory activities or mining without completing an Environmental Assessment. I'm writing to ask that the Bitterroot Forest Service requires

this essential step.

The proposed Sheep Creek mining project is expected to have adverse impacts to water quality and quantity in both the Bitterroot Valley and the Clark Fork River Valley downstream. Moreover, water is at a premium in the Bitterroot, and the available water should

be reserved for human consumption, wildlife, fisheries and agricultural uses. Basin closures due to limited water quantity are already impacting the local community, and further harm to the watershed is likely to cause severe economic and ecological disruptions.

Adverse impacts to wildlife are also anticipated. This project threatens critical habitat of sensitive, threatened, and endangered species, such as wolverines and grizzly bears, as well as direct mortality. Sheep Creek is in the heart of the grizzly bear recovery

area, and mining exploration and mining activities would create more bear-human conflicts. With climate change, wolverine habitat is already shrinking. Protecting high altitude wolverine habitat (like the habitat that currently exists in Sheep Creek) is key

to their future denning success and long-term survival.

It is also likely that mining in the high elevation Sheep Creek Basin will release toxic chemicals into the environment, some of which may be virtually impossible to remediate. In particular, a geologic sub-surface assessment is necessary to document the absence

or presence of naturally occurring asbestos constituents and radioactive materials at the Sheep Creek site. Legacy mining impacts can be seen all over Montana, and should not be permitted in this fragile ecosystem.

The issuance of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) by the Forest Service enables USCM to avoid the submission of an

Environmental Assessment (EA) and is contrary to the public interest and the protection of the environment. Please require USCM to submit a full EA,

with an associated public comment period.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jaredcharles Farmer

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