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Sep 13, 2026

Dear District Ranger Pliley,

I'm writing to support the request of so many other in the Bitterroot community that a full Environmental Assessment be completed before permits are granted for exploration of the proposed mine at Sheep Creek.

My motivation comes from decades of watching mine operations in the Rockies and elsewhere. Without exception, such operations bring complex impacts on regional resources, from water to wildlife and all the other aspects of wild land that we treasure. I've seen terrible and sometimes irreversible mistakes made as a result of inadequate assessments. This is what I fear with Sheep Creek if we don't fully understand the potential consequences of exploration and development.

I join other Bitterrooters in pointing out the special nature of our magnificent river and its superb headwaters. The West Fork is a shining gem. Its qualities are priceless. Its value to the well-being of our community is acknowledged by all parties. By its very nature, its pristine character, the West Fork is also fragile. It could so easily be damaged by even small imprudent actions.

The chance of exposing West Fork waters to toxic materials ? acknowledged even by USMC ? even if small, is too big a risk to take without the full understanding of an Environmental Assessment.

Beyond the assessment, I am concerned that the existing proposal does not include monitoring of runoff and ongoing baseline measurements. These should be conducted by an independent entity.

I am frankly alarmed at the estimated thousands of helicopter flights. These will have a serious impact on the ground despite not touching it. The noise alone will destroy one of the most treasured qualities of the West Fork: its natural soundscape. In my opinion, helicopters have a worse impact than trucks.

Finally, what about clean-up? Where are the guarantees? The Bitterroot community ? so near sites like Butte and Anaconda ? knows all too well what happens in the aftermath of mine development.

Please, let's know what we're doing before we do it.

Jeremy Schmidt

Stevensville, MT