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First name: Jed

Last name: Fitzpatrick

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I have been an outfitter in the Bitterroot Valley since 2004. I guide extensively throughout our great state on many trout streams: Bitterroot, Big Hole, Rock Creek, Bighorn, and the mighty Missouri just to name a few. No matter how far and exotic the location I travel, nothing compares to our Bitterroot River and most importantly the West Fork of the Bitterroot. Hell, I get chills just writing this thinking about the towering pines, the snowcapped peaks of the Bitterroot wilderness in the distance, the crystal clear waters churning over ancient granite boulders, the stoneflies which abound in droves amongst those pure environs, and healthy Cutthroat trout thriving in this Godsend of a resource. This is truly paradise, and the many clients my outfitting operation services will say the same thing.

But we are at a tremendous risk at this moment from the hands of a few in the industry of digging all this up to send it away to another place for a handful of rare elements. These elements can and are found throughout the world, yet industry's sights are set upon our beloved West Fork. And not just anywhere mind you; they want the absolute headwaters of this magical system and demand we trust them with our most precious resource. I for one do not trust an extractive industry with profits on the line to care for our water and soil the same way we Montanans take care of them. We cherish this area more than any can fathom, and our health and livelihoods depend on it. One seemingly insignificant action to the headwaters of the valley will multiply a thousand fold as it undeniably makes its way into our waters, our soils, and our entire valley.

How can we possibly give credence to an out of state, for profit extraction company above the thousands of people and hundreds of businesses who call this place home? We're the locals here. We make this valley tick. The thousands upon thousands of dollars my business earns through mine and my guides blood sweat and tears goes directly back into this local economy. Every dollar we collect gets recycled a multitude of times throughout this area. And I'm just one of the little guys here. As I stated, hundreds of other homegrown businesses dependent on clean water and a healthy Bitterroot bring in millions upon millions of dollars in revenue to our locale.

We cannot allow a speculative, extractive, strictly for profit mining company into our headwaters and turn our heads on the hard working folks who put this place on the map in hopes of blasting up an entire drainage to send our mountains to a third party processor and call that progress. There is too much risk, too many unknowns, too many good people already creating a booming local economy, and too much history of "they take the gold and we get the shaft". We've seen this many times before and it has always turned out the same. Let's do what's right for the Bitterroot. Do not allow this mine to proceed. My livelihood, my neighbors', my community, and my children depend on it.

Jed Fitzpatrick/MT Outfitter #8392

[REDACTED ADDRESS]

[REDACTED ADDRESS]

Sent from a Montana Trout Stream