Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/14/2026 9:19:00 AM
First name: Grace
Last name: Chen
Organization:
Title:
Comments:
You don't often get email from [REDACTED EMAIL].
Learn why this is important
[External Email]

If this message comes from an unexpected sender or references a vague/unexpected topic;
Use caution before clicking links or opening attachments.

Please send any concerns or suspicious messages to: [REDACTED EMAIL]
Dear District Ranger Pliley,
I am deeply aware of all that depends on healthy headwaters habitat in the West Fork: pristine trout habitat supporting one of the most-fished Rivers in our state; 1,400 family farms and ranches and 10 billion gallons of water delivered from Painted Rocks Reservoir;
a sustainable, $80 million dollar recreation economy; and a rich local culture that values wildlife and natural resources. US Critical Materials? rare earth mine in the Headwaters of the West Fork could be disastrous to these qualities of life in the Bitterroot.
I am writing to urge you to complete an Environmental Assessment before deciding whether this Exploration can proceed. I believe the current plan insufficiently addresses potential risks to our community, water
quality, and threatened and endangered species.
First, the proposal ignores the most common threats a mine poses to floodplains, wetlands, sensitive areas, and the special water source at Painted Rocks: acid mine drainage and polluted run-off from mined materials left on site. An Environmental Assessment
would facilitate a complete evaluation of groundwater, stormwater, and local geology to fully understand risks and protections needed. A responsible proposal would present clear plans for eliminating the all-too-common occurrence of water encountering hazardous,
long-lasting toxins. A 2024 report from USCM shows that disturbance of rock at Sheep Creek could risk exposure of threatening levels of asbestos, heavy metals, and radioactive materials. If mismanaged, these would put our waterways and our community?s health
at risk.
Secondly, vaguely described measures for preservation of endangered species need stronger conditions, particularly in light of the heavy helicopter use in the plan and the presence of multiple listed wildlife species. Fish are not considered in the Plan, despite
the presence of threatened bull trout.
Finally, the prospecting company, US Critical Materials emphasizes the need for robust community participation, and in the face of such great public controversy around this proposal, only an Environmental
Assessment can fulfill this public promise. USCM CEO stated that ?environmental stewardship is not an afterthought for this project; it?s foundational,? and that, ?the responsible path forward is [not] automatic approval? it?s disciplined, evaluated, grounded
in science? and informed by the voices of the people who care most about this place.? I fully agree.
Based on the extraordinary circumstances listed above, the Forest Service has the responsibility to conduct an Environmental Assessment before making a decision of whether to allow Exploration for Sheep Creek
Mine to Proceed.
Sincerely,
UK Viewer