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Organization:
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Comments: I'm a Washington State resident and an avid recreational kayaker. Every year since the mid-1980's I make a road trip to Idaho and spend several weeks at a time in the Salmon drainage, in particular the East Fork and South Forks of the Salmon. The South Fork Salmon for example remains one of my top 3 wilderness runs in North America because of it's wilderness feel, water quality, scenery, quiet and the wildlife.

I am concerned that the proposed plan will fill surrounding valleys with mine waste rock and tailings. The amount of disturbance and environmental risks can be greatly reduced if the mining company scales back its mining effort and commits to backfilling its pits instead of turning them into pit lakes.

In addition, protecting spawning habitat for threatened and endangered fish is critically important. While Midas Gold has promised to restore fish passage to headwater streams, the current project proposes burying over a mile of spawning habitat under hundreds of feet of mining waste and tailings. The Forest Service needs to examine alternative ways of storing tailings and waste rock so that spawning habitat is protected.

The Forest Service should take extreme care to prevent water contamination from heavy metals and acid mine drainage. Previous mining projects in this area devastated fisheries with polluted water. The project should be designed in such a way that mining will not create permanent sources of pollution needing treatment in perpetuity. If there is a risk of contaminating the South Fork headwaters, the project should not proceed.

Restoring the site is important. However, many mining companies have an unfortunate history of backing out of commitments, suspending operations or abandoning sites. The Forest Service should look at ways to restore the site independent of mining activities if Midas Gold is unable to restore the site in a timely manner.

The proposed project will require undoing over $13 million of taxpayer-funded restoration work. If the site is eventually restored as envisioned by Midas Gold, the Forest Service needs to describe how these investments will be protected in the future and not simply undone by the next mining company.

Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Jennie Goldberg