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Comments: IDENTITY AND INTEREST OF COMMENTER

I am writing as a member of the Midas Gold Corporation Board of Directors. As brief background, I am a former EPA Region X Administrator and Counselor to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and I provide these comments through the lens of Federal service for Cabinet-level agencies dedicated to protecting human health and the environment and responsible land stewardship.

THE SCOPING PROCESS UNDER THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

I know the scoping process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is important as it frames the necessary analysis by the lead Federal agency to ensure the best information is gathered so the best alternative can be developed and chosen by the Forest Service in this matter.

Importantly, this stage of the NEPA process provides "an opportunity to introduce and explain the interdisciplinary approach and solicit information as to additional disciplines that should be included." Further, "[s]coping also provides an opportunity to bring agencies and applicants together to lay the groundwork for setting time limits, expediting reviews where possible, integrating other environmental reviews, and identifying any major obstacles that could delay the process." 43 CFR [sect] 46.235.

The Stibnite permitting process, supported by the several EIS documents to be prepared by the Forest Service, will be an exercise in interagency cooperation. As you begin cobbling together your NEPA review, care must be taken to identify key elements of the agency responsibilities, particularly the United States Environmental Protection Agency (Clean Water Act), and Endangered Species Act consulting agencies (the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service), to ensure your preferred alternative accounts for the impacts of this proposed action. Time is of the essence with this project, and now is the time to identify the key regulatory pieces necessary to prepare a complete NEPA analysis, particularly as they pertain to a fair cumulative effects analysis when considered against the necessary permits required to restore the site and set the stage for future operation.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Stibnite Gold Project, the proposed action submitted to the Forest Service in Midas Gold Idaho's Plan of Restoration and Operations (PRO), is good for Idaho's people, environment and economy. The PRO demonstrates that mining and the environment can work together in restoring the Stibnite mining site, a historic brownfield mining area. Restoring the site means improving water quality by cleaning up the millions of tons of waste rock and tailings that slowly leach metals and send sediment into nearby ground and surface water. It means helping fish migrate to the upper stretches of the river for the first time in 80 years. This area will not recover on its own. Mining will be used to rewrite the site's legacy and correct all of these problems.

I urge your thorough and timely review and ask for your consideration of the project with emphasis on the following:

- * After 100 years of mining, most of which took place long before environmental standards were established that are in place today, the Stibnite mining district needs environmental repair and restoration.
- * There is no other alternative to restore the site. The proposed Stibnite Gold Project is an opportunity for a private company to invest in restoring public lands, with the guidance of state and federal agencies. No action is not an acceptable option.
- * The Stibnite Gold Project will re-establish fish migration for the first time since the 1930s, eliminating sediment

washing down Blowout Creek, and remove reprocess and safely store historical tailings and waste rock are examples of the environmental benefits provided by the Stibnite Gold Project.

- * Restoring the natural flow of the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River, repairing impacted waterways and adding critical riparian habitat will have a positive impact on water quality and wildlife upstream and downstream.

- * After extensive alternative analyses and drawing on local community and public input, the project appropriately identifies Burntlog Road as the best access road to provide safe transportation to site, avoiding travel adjacent to fish-bearing waterways.

- * Midas Gold Idaho's plan to bus 90 percent of the workforce to site goes above and beyond to promote safe travel, limit noise and safety concerns, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- * Building reclamation into the mine plan concurrently with operations protects public lands and is a commendable investment in environmental stewardship and sustainability practices.

- * As is already established by federal and state land management agencies' rules and regulations, the project will be fully bonded for clean up before mining begins. I encourage the U.S. Forest Service to work with the company to set out a plan for bonding and mitigation and to communicate that plan to the public.

- * The positive economic impact to rural communities in Idaho should be at the forefront of the review and development of the Environmental Impact Statement.

- * The project will be an important source of state, local, and federal tax revenues, estimated in the 2014 PFS to be \$329 million in federal corporate income taxes and \$86 million in State corporate income and mine license taxes.

- * A U.S. source of antimony is critical to alleviate foreign dependence on a mineral that is essential to many military defense, consumer safety and energy products.

- * With 88% of the lands in Valley County being contained in National Forests, the County supports its schools and services based on taxes on the remaining 12% of the lands placing a significant burden on the local population. Based on the project's preliminary feasibility study, on which the PRO is based, the Stibnite Gold Project will generate significant federal, state and local taxes for nearly two decades estimated to be \$329 million in federal corporate income taxes and \$86 million in State corporate income and mine license taxes. These economic benefits tied in with the environmental restoration of the site provide a win-win for the public and citizens of the surrounding communities, the state and the general population.

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Midas Gold Idaho wants to invest \$1 billion in Idaho, bring hundreds of jobs to rural Idaho and improve Idaho's public lands.

This is the type of project Idaho needs. I strongly encourage the U.S. Forest Service and cooperating federal and state agencies to proceed with the Plan of Restorations and Operations in its current form as the proposed action in this matter.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.