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Dear District Ranger Pliley,

I oppose development of the proposed Sheep Creek mine because of the risks to the Bitterroot watershed and the families and businesses that depend on it. I do not support approval of the exploration proposal as currently presented. At a minimum, I urge the
Forest Service to complete an Environmental Assessment and provide an opportunity for public review of that analysis before deciding whether to authorize exploration.

As a fly shop owner, fly fishing guide, rental cabin(s) owner, hunter, and steward of the Bitterroot River, I have a personal and financial stake in the health of this watershed. My family?s livelihood depends on clean water, healthy fisheries, and the quality
of the experience people come here to enjoy. I also want future generations to have the opportunity to fish, hunt, work, and build their lives around the same natural resources that support us today.

In my work, water conditions matter every day. Streamflow, water temperature, and the health of the fishery influence the decisions we make and the experiences we can offer. Protecting the Bitterroot requires attention to the entire watershed, including
the headwaters that feed it. The consequences of decisions made at Sheep Creek could extend downstream to Painted Rocks Reservoir, the West Fork, and the broader Bitterroot community.

My primary concern is whether the proposed exploration adequately protects surface water and groundwater. Before authorizing disturbance, the Forest Service should establish reliable baseline conditions and evaluate the potential for sediment, contaminated
runoff, and drainage from disturbed rock to reach nearby waterways. That review should include testing sufficient to determine whether excavated materials could release metals, radioactive constituents, asbestos fibers, or acid-generating drainage under the
conditions present at this site.

The public should be able to understand how water, drilling fluids, and excavated materials will be handled; how contamination will be prevented during operations and after reclamation; and what monitoring and corrective action will be required. These protections
should be specific, enforceable, and supported by evidence.

I also ask the Forest Service to fully evaluate the potential effects on bull trout, other native fish, small- and big-game species, and other sensitive wildlife. Proposed blasting, drilling, helicopter flights, vehicle traffic, and increased human activity
deserve careful review for their effects on habitat, water quality, and wildlife disturbance. As both a guide and a

hunter, I consider healthy fish and wildlife populations an essential part of what we are responsible for passing on.

An Environmental Assessment should also examine the consequences for existing businesses and families that depend on this watershed. For my family, damage to the river could affect our ability to earn a living and the future of the businesses we have worked
to build. Those existing livelihoods deserve meaningful consideration in this decision.

I understand that the decision before you concerns exploration. Those activities still warrant a thorough evaluation of their own potential impacts. I ask that the Forest Service prepare an Environmental Assessment, make the supporting studies available,
and provide a meaningful opportunity for the public to review and comment on the analysis before a decision is made.

The Bitterroot?s clean water, fisheries, wildlife, and working communities have lasting value. Please give this proposal the level of scrutiny that reflects what is at stake for the people who depend on this river today and for the generations who will inherit
it.

Please include this letter in the project record, address these concerns in the environmental review and decision documents, and keep me informed of future opportunities for public participation.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,
Tyson Sugihara
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