

To the Editor:

I was heartened to see the editorial where the editor raised the alarm about Stibnite Gold Mine and the Paulson takeover ("Paulson move puts the onus on the Payette," The Star-News, Dec. 10. 2020). I would like to share my comments on the draft environmental impact statement. It should raise the alarm even louder.

Although Midas propaganda states that the mitigation they propose is the only feasible way to clean up the current environmental mess at the Stibnite site, the reality is the additional mining will create a much larger mess, and the waters downstream from the Stibnite Mine will still contain arsenic, antimony, and mercury above water quality standards for human health.

The only way these elevated levels can be mitigated to safer levels is by installing a multimillion dollar plant to treat effluent water "in perpetuity" (the cost of which will eventually be foisted off onto Idaho tax-payers). The "in-perpetuity" treatment requires frequent delivery of water treatment chemicals and sludge for disposal elsewhere.

For alternatives 1-4, Midas would store large quantities of a variety of hazardous materials on site. Per the draft Environmental Impact Statement, these include (annual totals): ammonium nitrate, 7,300 tons in secured slips and explosive 100 tons in secured magazines in the open pits.

There would also be tanks of antifreeze, 40,000 gallons, propane, 560,000 gallons, diesel fuel, 5,800,000 gallons, pesticides, herbicides, and other hazmats at unspecified locations at the mine site.

In addition, there would be lead nitrate, 700 tons, gasoline, 500,000 gallons, sodium hydroxide, 300 tons, nitric acid, 115,000 gallons, sulfuric acid, and sodium cyanide 3.900 tons in tanks/bins at the mine processing area.

The mine site sits at the headwaters of Idaho's beautiful "wild and scenic" Salmon River and over part of the Centennial Tectonic Belt, which is subject to earthquakes. Earthquakes with an approximate magnitude of 6 or greater have occurred in the CTB with epicenters east and southeast of the mine site.

In addition, the area is subject to frequent avalanches, landslides, wild-fires, and flooding. Remember the recent explosion of ammonium nitrate that leveled much of Beirut, Lebanon? Consider what might happen to the downstream watershed if one of the above natural phenomena damaged "hazmat" storage tanks on site.

How much do you love the Salmon or Snake rivers? Do you fish, boat, camp, or swim there? Fish bioconcentrate mercury and retain arsenic in their tissues. Almost 70 years after the

closure of a French gold mine, arsenic levels in downstream water and fish remained high, with a strong correlation between levels in water and in fish.

Transport of hazardous materials to and from the mine site will require many trips (ammonium nitrate, 304 deliveries/year, diesel fuel, 580 deliveries/year) by many large and sometimes "oversized" trucks that pose a hazard not only to the 71 stream crossings, but also to travelers and to towns.

Both the Burntlog and Yellow Pine routes have segments with steep grades (above 6%), and no emergency truck ramps are present or planned on the routes. Approximately two-thirds of all mine-related traffic would originate south of Warm Lake Road and would use Idaho 55 through the communities of Cascade, Banks, and Horseshoe Bend.

Approximately one-third of all mine-related traffic would originate north of Warm Lake Road and would use Idaho 55 through the communities of Donnelly, Lake Fork, and McCall. Through McCall, mine-related traffic would use Deinhard Lane and Boydston Street.

Picture the scenario of a truck hauling cyanide or other hazmat sliding off Idaho 55 between Boise and Cascade into the North Fork of the Payette River and breaking open, thus spilling its contents into the Payette River watershed.

Or, picture the scenario of a serious accident in the towns of New Meadows, McCall, or Cascade, spilling cyanide bricks onto the streets, where the bricks will dissolve in snow or rain and run along the streets.

Imagine if a hazmat truck or tanker turned over on the Deinhard Street bridge in McCall, spilling its contents into the Payette River, or, if one overturned at the turn-offs at either end of the Deinhard bypass around downtown McCall, spilling toxins onto Boydston Street residential district.

How much are you willing to sacrifice to Wall Street hedge fund owners whose business plan is to maximize profits for their investors, in exchange for a few jobs, especially since many Midas jobs will go to out-of-state employees coming here for two weeks at a time?

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