BACKGROUND
Currently, a massive mining operation is being proposed by the Midas Gold Company at the old Stibnite Mine in the mountains of central Idaho, near the town of Yellowpine. The plan of operations directly borders both the Frank Church Wilderness and the Wild & Scenic Main Salmon River. Inevitably, mining has negative impacts on people, wildlife and water quality. Any time there are mineral exploration expansions, there will be significant increases of environmental damages, water and air pollution, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, and deterioration of flora and fauna.

Midas Gold is proposing what they are calling a “restoration project” where they would re-open a 700’ pit mine with additional pits, potentially affecting 27,000 acres of forest with new roads, buildings, mining operations, and heavy equipment. Their plan deludes us with several aspects of the headquarters of the South Fork Salmon River, altering river beds, building new roads and bridges, excavating tons of rocks and minerals, and creating tons of sediment waste, all of which will be left on the site creating even more environmental damage.

Idaho Rivers United objects to Midas Gold permit requests. In large part, the project will be driven by the historic suffering the area has endured from previous abandonment by past bankrupt mining companies. The proposed Midas Gold project is not a restoration project. Midas has spent thousands of dollars investing in the nearby communities and preaching about a project they say will “restore the site” and bring new jobs and economy to their small communities. The strategy of Midas Gold’s marketing tactics is to outmaneuver use conservation slogans and verbiage to hide the fact that the ultimate results are to reopen the mining operations at Stibnite.

OUR WORK DEFENDING THE S.F. SALMON
2018 was a productive year for IRU in our fight against Midas Gold as we worked to save one of Idaho’s most pristine and revered treasures. Early in the year, a summery of the scoping comments was released. The report presented more apprehension and suspicion than Midas Gold would care to share with investors. 80 members, along with other concerned citizens filed hundreds of comments in opposition of the mine and raised important questions about the scale and sustainability of open pit mining in the Salmon River Mountains.

In April, American Rivers designated the South Fork Salmon one of America’s Most Endangered Rivers. IRU hosted several related events to highlight the voices of the river and to spread word about what Idahoans have to lose. In an additional engagement with what we launched our “People of the South Fork and Community Concern Campaign”. These are the people who love the river and the watershed and are willing to fight for what they love by sharing their stories, engaging their neighbors and participating in the permitting process when the time comes.

Momentum is growing to stop the Stibnite Project from coming to fruition. It is important for all the voices of opposition to ring loud to show gold mining investors that the community does not back this project.

Looking ahead, in 2019, we will be calling on you to re-engage in the ongoing permitting process. In 2019, a draft Environmental Impact Statement will be released which will outline all of the potential environmental impacts from the Stibnite project and preferred alternatives to be analyzed by the Payette National Forest. These are our public lands, and they are our rivers. Your voice will be needed to speak for the environment that cannot speak for itself. You are an important piece in winning this fight. Please take time to writing letters to the editor and encourage others to speak out against this terrible mining proposal.

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Saving Salmon

While IFU continued to achieve legal and political wins on behalf of Idaho’s wild salmon in 2018, the salmon themselves showed they have little time left for bureaucratic paper shuffling. The year’s returns of wild salmon and steelhead are among the worst on record, and it is a Quarter-century after the species were listed under the Endangered Species Act. Federal proclamations say that the fish are recovering in “record numbers.” However, after spending more than $16 billion on measures that haven’t even come close to returning endangered salmon— even during the best years—it’s clear the federal plan to restore Idaho’s salmon and steelhead has failed and they are not being treated fairly to the public.

Meanwhile, Idaho’s lame duck governor, in late October, committed Idaho to more of the same failed federal policy when he signed a four-year agreement with the federal government exchanging cash for an ongoing commitment to the same old approach that has failed Idaho’s fish over the past decade. In 2018, IFU conducted extensive salmon-centered campaigns and policy initiatives. In federal court we won, and then defended on appeal, increased api to help juvenile salmon migrate to sea. In the political arena, IFU successfully helped defeat a Congressional bill that would have usbated the federal court’s rulings on spill. IFU also put extensive energy into a campaign to draw attention to the renewed Accord Gov. Otter signed in October.

Looking ahead, IFU will continue to encourage Gov. Elect Little to correct the salmon failures he inherits from Otter. While salmon returns are projected to be even worse in 2019, IFU will continue to work and spur Idahoans to action while continuing to stand firm in court to keep pressure on the real problem: huge, low-value dams on the lower Snake River.

With Gratitude,

Kevin Lewis, Executive Director

Membership Director

Outstanding Volunteers & Supporters

The work protecting and defending Idaho’s rivers is bigger than any one organization. For this reason IFU needs an extensive network of citizens, businesses, members and partners to lend a hand.

Conservation Partner of the Year: Nate Otte

Wild & Scenic Advocate of the Year: Dan Blake

Bureau of Land Management

Educator of the Year: Danielle Warnke

Volunteer of the Year: Ty Hafen

Clean Water Advocate of the Year: Rain Salmon and Spa

Business Partner of the Year: Idaho River United

Salmon Advocate of the Year: Gary Gadway

Member of the Year: Will Whyers

Read their stories: https://www.idahoarivers.org/members-partners/

CALL TO ACTION: Help us tell our new Governor that we value our wild salmon and steelhead

Idaho’s salmon and steelhead are on the brink of extinction, and it is time for Idaho to reaim leadership and be a voice for our dying fish.

Please fill out our online petition and share your voice: idahorivers.org