



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

CHAIRMAN

July 27, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) received a letter from Idaho Governor Brad Little dated June 5, 2020 requesting the Stibnite Gold Project be identified as a high priority infrastructure project pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13766, "Expediting Environmental Reviews and Approvals for High Priority Infrastructure Projects."

Under E.O. 13766, the Chairman of CEQ is required to determine whether an infrastructure project qualifies as a "high priority" infrastructure project in response to a request from a Governor of a State or the head of any executive department or agency. In addition, E.O. 13807, "Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review Process for Infrastructure Projects," adds to the categories of projects that may qualify as high priority infrastructure projects under E.O. 13766.

The Stibnite Gold Project is a proposed complex mining project located in central Idaho in Valley County. The project developer proposes the development of a mining operation producing gold, silver, and antimony, including the redevelopment and construction of roads and other supporting infrastructure, and environmental restoration of impacts related to historic mining activities at the site. The developer's stated objective is to economically develop and operate a modern mine while providing restoration of historic impacts and socioeconomic benefits in surrounding areas. The developer's plan includes descriptions of a detailed array of operations and activities to be conducted on a mixture of National Forest System, State, and private lands. The Stibnite Gold Project is expected to produce approximately 100 million pounds of antimony. The United States remains heavily reliant on imports of certain critical minerals, including antimony, which are vital to the Nation's security and economic prosperity. Numerous items including military equipment, batteries, fire suppressant flame-retardants, and semi-conductors, contain antimony. Currently, there is no primary antimony production in the United States. Further, the Stibnite Gold Project is estimated to directly employ between 1,150 and 1,800 people and provide annual wages in excess of \$60,000 per year, thereby substantially benefitting the general welfare of a region where the per capita annual income is approximately \$23,880. As a domestic project, the Stibnite Gold Project may assist in reducing our Nation's

dependence on imports, preserve our leadership in technological innovation, and support job creation.

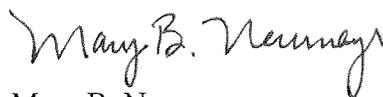
The Stibnite Gold Project may also provide significant environmental benefits for the region. The project sponsors have proposed to clean up legacy mining facilities, significantly improving water quality. The project sponsors estimate improving fish passage and sediment control at over 58 bridges and culverts, and restoring nearly 10 miles of streams and 450 acres of wetlands.

The U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) published a notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Stibnite Gold Project in the Federal Register on June 5, 2017¹ and is preparing this EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.* As described in the NOI, the Stibnite Gold Project requires approvals and authorizations by multiple Federal agencies. Based on its review, CEQ has determined that the Stibnite Gold Project qualifies as a high priority infrastructure project in accordance with E.O. 13766.

As the Forest Service continues to prepare the EIS, CEQ requests that the Forest Service conduct the environmental review in a timely manner consistent with the One Federal Decision policy described in E.O. 13807 and with the related Memorandum of Understanding executed in April 2018. In addition, CEQ requests that the Forest Service work with the appropriate agencies to list the Stibnite Gold Project on the Permitting Dashboard at <https://www.permits.performance.gov/>. CEQ also requests that the Forest Service provide CEQ with periodic updates regarding the status of the environmental review.

Thank you for your leadership in ensuring implementation of the Administration's policies that support timely environmental reviews and decision making consistent with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Sincerely,



Mary B. Neumayr
Chairman

¹ Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, 82 Fed. Reg. 25759 (June 5, 2017). Specifically, the EIS would discuss the potential environmental effects from: (1) approval of a Plan of Restoration and operations, submitted by the developer in September 2016, to occupy and use National Forest System lands for operations associated with open-pit mining and ore processing; and (2) related amendments to the Payette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and/or the Boise National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.