

# STIBNITE MINE PROJECT: PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST

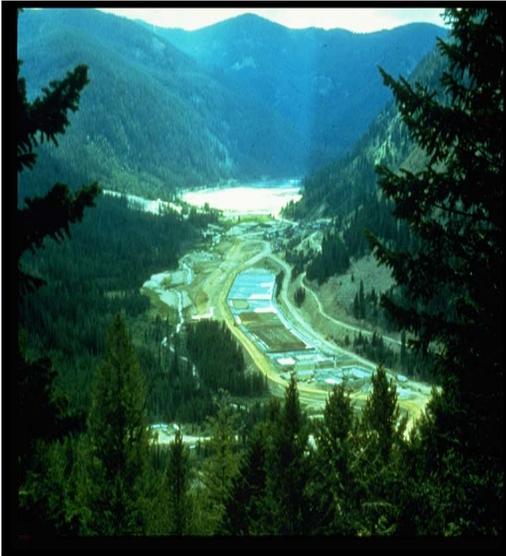
The Stibnite Mine, near Yellowpine, Idaho, has a long history of mining and ownership, and therefore has become a long-term cleanup effort. The existence of gold has been known in the area since the Thunder Mountain gold rush in 1900. Valley County records indicate claims in the Stibnite area go back at least as far as 1914, when Albert Hennessy established his private ownership interests in several unpatented mining/mill claims through the provisions of the 1872 Mining Law, (30 U.S.C. 22) on public lands. Approximately 800 acres of private property also exists on the site. The Forest Service, State of Idaho, and EPA have worked closely and cooperatively on reclaiming and remediating the Stibnite Mine site through a Memorandum of Understanding. The site cleanup is conducted under two authorities, the General Mining Law (for reclamation) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (for remediation of hazardous wastes). Remediation began in the late-1990's

with: 1) stabilization of a large mill tailings pile (the Bradley tailings) in and surrounding Meadow Creek, 2) stabilizing the Meadow Creek diversion, 3) designing a new channel through the tailings area, 4) placing Meadow Creek back into the new channel, and shaping and re-vegetating the spent ore pile. Much of this work was conducted by Mobile Oil Corp. In 1999, The Forest Service completed a cleanup action at a pilot plant site. The action consisted of covering and capping the ponds. The ponds were constructed in 1979 and were used as a cyanide leach pilot test plant for processing gold. The environmental hazards at the site have been a source of contaminants for 20 years and the clean-up of tons of trash and abandoned equipment at the plant took over 2 ½ years. The State of Idaho also removed a mill building and chemicals located on private land. In the year 2002, the Forest Service removed and encapsulated pond sludges and contaminated smelter stack soils.

Future work anticipated is continued restoration of the watershed/river system itself, of which an analysis and restoration plan was recently completed. The major contaminant of concern is arsenic with ground water contamination some of the

highest reported in the nation. Also, the wastes and pits encroaching and cutting into the river system has made for a need to restore the fisheries ecosystem to the area. A large part of the reclamation, starting in 1998, was not only recontouring, seeding, and fertilizing exploration and haul roads, but in the last several seasons over 220,000 pounds of scrap metal, 80 tires, and 50 batteries were recycled. Twenty-two buildings were removed, 15 by Forest Service personnel and seven by their owners. Other trash was either burned in one of the 12 burn piles or put in dumpsters. The material put into the dumpsters, one piece at a time, amounted to over 500 cubic yards of compressed trash. The hard work of Payette National Forest fire, wildlife and fisheries seasonal crews who teamed up with Forest field personnel made this project possible. Total cleanup/rehabilitation costs are estimated at \$12-13 million.

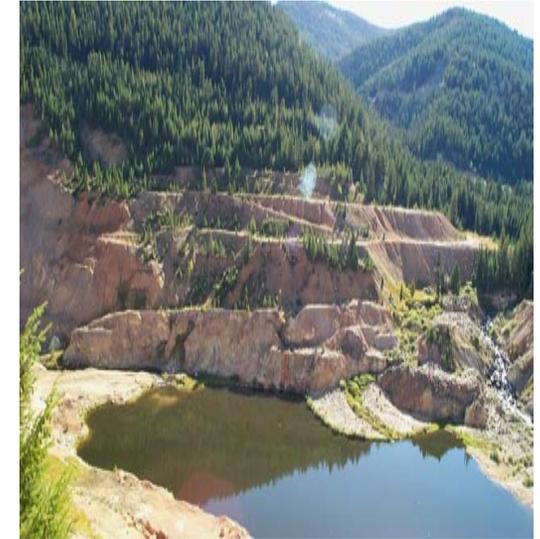
**Cong. District: Idaho 1**



Stibnite Mine site during active mining operations (heap leach pads in center of valley), conducted by Hecla Mining Company.



Garnet haul road, after re-vegetation has taken effect.



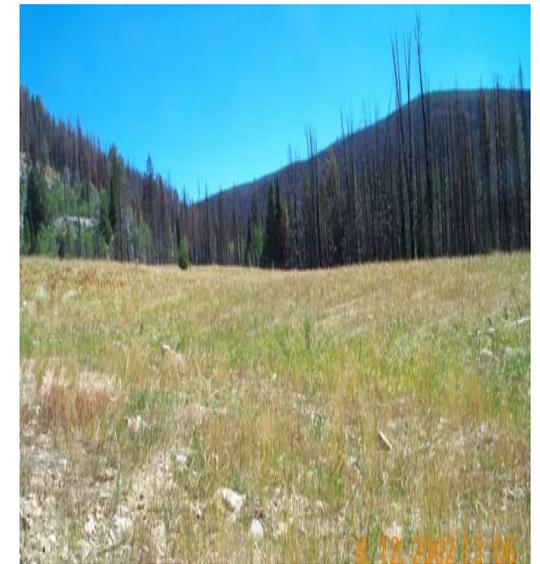
Glory Hole open pit, designated for future watershed restoration and fisheries enhancement projects.



Bradley tailings pile area (shown at top of photograph #1) and original Meadow Creek drainage area (photograph taken 1995).



Standing water on tailings pile before remediation initiated (1995).



Area after removal of equipment and structures, ripped, revegetated, and fertilized.



View of newly designed Meadow Creek channel, taken in 1998.