

Letters to the editor

Let your decision-makers hear no to Zephyr

While gold mining companies love to tout the societal benefits of gold mining like its use in electronics and dentistry, etc., the vast majority (80%) of gold mined today is in the production of jewelry. This is a frivolous and non-essential use of gold because the potential for environmental damage to the natural community of our Grape Creek Wilderness Study Area and its environs is untold.

Huge water requirements, the inevitable destructive impacts of mining that includes ground destabilization, unforeseen fluid drainage from the site, which will happen eventually, traffic impacts to Temple Canyon Road and other local roads, the potential for fire and explosion plus other impacts of having hazardous materials on-site, not to mention the laughable amount of money to be set aside for restoration simply cannot be worth extracting gold most certainly bound for the manufacture of jewelry.

If we believe that Zephyr will only minimally affect the local environment or that they will mitigate any potential damage then we are putting our heads in the proverbial sand. Let me give you an example. As a local government land use planner, I worked on projects in other rural areas of the state

where developers won approval by promising mitigation for the negative environmental aspects of their developments, golf courses and luxury housing mostly; nothing like the environmental devastation of a gold mine (see CC&V in Victor).

One of the common concerns of the local jurisdiction was the loss of habitat for elk and other wildlife. The developer would inevitably win approval by being required to “mitigate” so that loss of habitat would not occur. Well, guess what? After a few years of flying golf balls, luxury homes with fencing around properties, barking dogs, and tree removal, plus the anemic oversight, if any, of whatever mitigation was required, the elk simply disappeared. The paltry mitigation efforts that won over the county in the first place turned out to be useless. You can mitigate and mitigate and mitigate until you ultimately lose the thing you love.

So, just because something (a mining permit) is legal does not make it right – right for our communities, right for Grape Creek and the Tunnel Drive area, or right for this place all of us call home. All of us have to take seriously that we have entered a critical point in our very existence on this planet. The destruction of our natural world cannot be worth its inevitable deterioration by such a use as this. Please, let’s start in our own backyard. Let your decision-makers hear you. Say no to Zephyr.

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