



## 2018 Reflections

Tarey Potter / Reflections @Lava Hot Springs

Idaho Rivers United teamed up with BSU Environmental Studies students to create river education projects that engaged over **330 students** in the Treasure Valley. Students of all ages learned about river health, salmon life cycles, bio-magnification and river clean up activities.



**IMPACT**  
74% of funds are directed to IRU's projects and programming

### Members

41 States

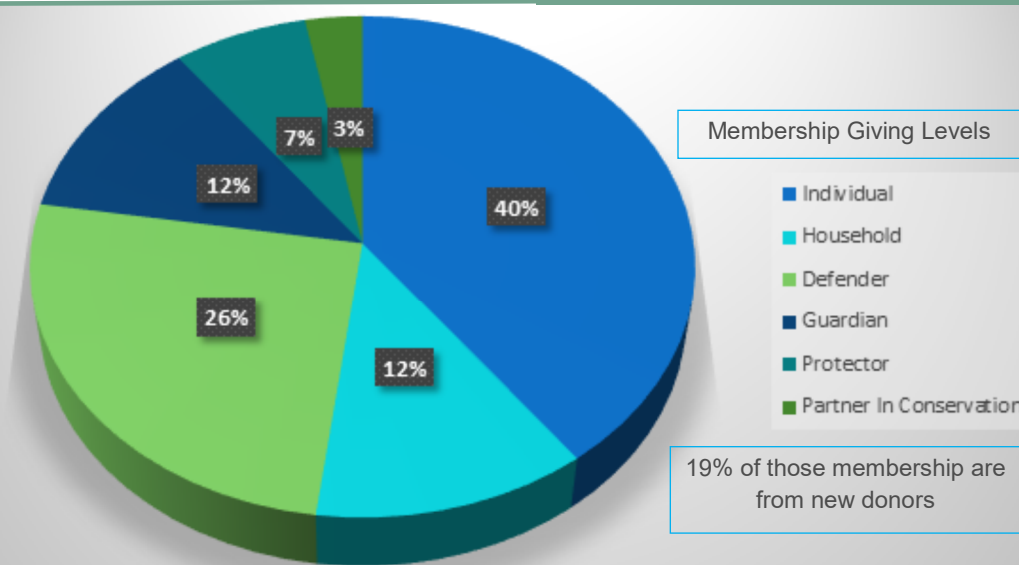
577 New

38% of Income

comes from membership



**COMMUNITY**  
80 volunteers across Idaho  
129 business partners



## Protecting the South Fork Salmon River

### 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 details rerouting several aspects of the headwaters 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 which will be left on site creating even more environmental damage.

Idaho Rivers United objects to Midas Gold's permit requests due, in large part, to the historic suffering this 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 these small communities. The strategy of Midas Gold's marketing tactics is to outwardly use conservation lingo 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 secret treasures. Early in the year, a summary of the scoping comments was released. The report presented more apprehension and suspicion than Midas Gold would care to share with investors. IRU 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 effort, we launched our **People of the South Fork and Community Concern campaigns**. 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 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, yet again. 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.

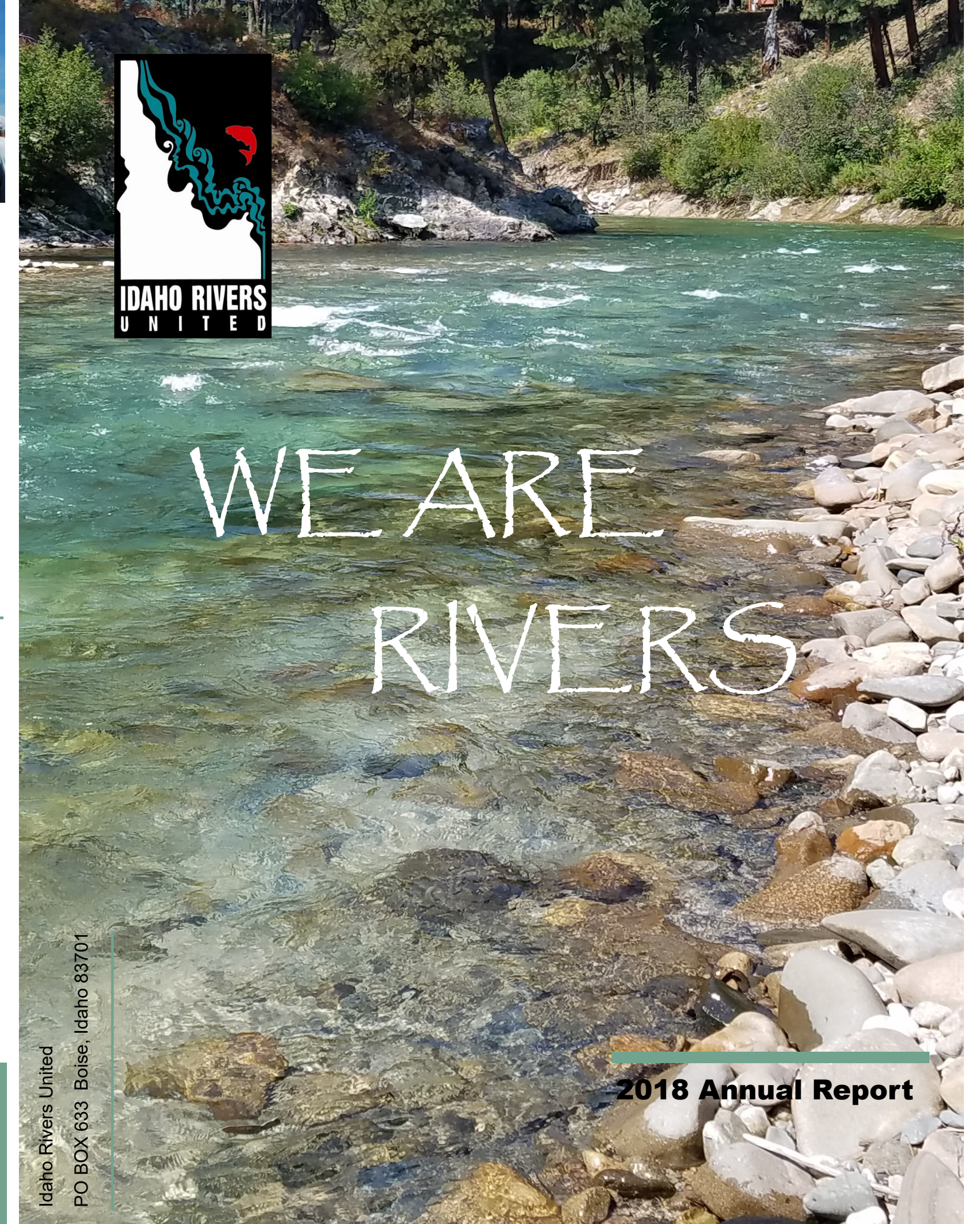
#### Visit:

[www.idahorivers.org/stibnite](http://www.idahorivers.org/stibnite) to learn more about the Stibnite Gold project and Community Concern campaign from the people of the South Fork.



#### Connect with Us

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2018 Annual Report



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Pocatello

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Boise

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Moscow



### Message from the Executive Director

Look back, look forward, hint about end-of-year donations, and end on a positive note. That's how these annual wrap-ups are supposed to go, right? Tidy bow on accomplishments of the last year and positive spin on the plans for the coming one all in the hope that you will continue to stay engaged.

But, if you're reading this, you already know that in the world of river advocacy, rarely are there tidy or fast finishes to any fight; you're likely already engaged in Idaho river issues that are as important to you as they are to us, and you have, in some way expressed your interest in supporting Idaho Rivers United now and into the future. **So, thank you.** Thank you for your support over the last 28 years, and thank you in advance for the energy and passion you will continue to share with us in the future.

In retrospect, together we did notch some pretty inspiring wins for Idaho rivers in 2018. The South Fork of the Salmon River was named one of America's Most Endangered Rivers; we gained ground in court for crucial spill for Idaho's wild fish and water temperature issues, and we continue to raise awareness about the threats of mine exploration and development in and around our rivers.

Over the last year, IRU helped celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We participated in panel discussions, attended river events and held film festivals to promote and honor this important law. On a more technical side, we continued our valuable work with the Hydropower Reform Coalition – a nationwide group dedicated to achieving better river protections during project licensing.

As 2019 approaches, with your help, we will continue to press our state and national leaders to uphold the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We will challenge our officials to uphold the rules and laws and do what's right for Idaho's Iconic Salmon, and we will fight for anglers, paddlers, and anyone who values Idaho's rivers.

Because, with you as our members and supporters, **we are united** — Idaho Rivers United.

*With Gratitude,*

Kevin Lewis, Executive Director

### Saving Salmon

While IRU 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. This 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 returning in "record numbers." However, after spending more than \$16 billion on measures that haven't even come close to restoring 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 truthful 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, IRU conducted extensive salmon-centered campaigns and policy initiatives. In federal court we won, and then defended on appeal, increased spill to help juvenile salmon migrate to sea. In the political arena, IRU successfully helped defeat a Congressional bill that would have usurped the federal court's ruling on spill. IRU also put extensive energy into a campaign to draw attention to the renewed Accord Gov. Otter signed in October.

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

## Idaho Rivers United Mission: To Protect and Restore the Rivers of Idaho



### Outstanding Volunteers & Supporters

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

**Conservation Partner of the Year:**  
Nate Ostis

**Wild & Scenic Advocate of the Year:**  
Bureau of Land Management

**Educator of the Year:**  
Danielle Warnke

**Volunteer of the Year:**  
Ty Hafen

**Clean Water Advocate of the Year:**  
Rain Salon and Spa

**Business Partner of the Year:**  
Idaho River Sports

**Salmon Advocate of the Year:**  
Gary Gadwa

**Member of the Year:**  
Wil Wilkins

**Read their stories:**  
<https://www.idahorivers.org/members-partners/>

### Wild & Scenic

Wild and Scenic Rivers are Idaho's lifeblood, and 2018 was an opportunity to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the federal legislation that makes their protection possible. That meant it was also an opportunity to share the story of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and wild rivers with Idahoans in every corner of the state.

IRU participated in panels, organized lectures and conducted Wild & Scenic Film Festival screenings in communities from Moscow to Pocatello and everywhere in between to help draw attention to the state's wealth of wild rivers and threats they face.

IRU also continued to participate in forest planning processes that could influence Wild and Scenic rivers across a huge percentage of Idaho's landscape. In separate forest planning processes, both the Salmon-Challis and Nez Perce-Clearwater national forests are studying their inventories of Wild and Scenic river candidates. IRU supports careful consideration of new candidate river segments but has concerns about the scope of both forests' work. More directly, IRU is concerned the forests are working toward a "hard release" of many rivers from further consideration,

a move we believe would be illegal.

"The Forest Service has indicated that through these suitability determinations it intends to release eligible rivers found not to be suitable from further protection or consideration," IRU and allied organizations wrote to the Nez Perce-Clearwater in October. "This violates the Wild and Scenic Rivers act and the 2012 Forest Planning Rule. The Forest Service cannot legally, and should not as a matter of policy, use this suitability process to strip eligible wild and scenic rivers of their eligibility and related protections."

**Looking ahead**, IRU will continue to monitor both forests' progress and next steps—and consider legal action, if necessary—to ensure that all of Idaho's deserving rivers are given the fair consideration and due process they deserve.



### Hydro & Clean Water

Idaho's rivers are nothing without clean, clear, cold water, and IRU stands firm in their defense. Late in 2018 IRU won a federal court case contesting water quality in the lower Snake and Columbia rivers where salmon are most heavily impacted during their migrations. The Clean Water Act lawsuit was sparked by record-high water temperatures in recent years, including an incident in 2015 where 250,000 adult sockeye salmon died when the Columbia and Snake rivers became too warm.

Separately, IRU continues to work for water quality protections in the headwaters of the Boise and Salmon rivers where huge new mines are proposed (see Protecting S.F. Salmon on back cover). There are also 37 new mining claims proposed along the South Fork of the Payette River. Earlier this year, IRU acted as an expert witness for the Forest Service during a hearing that contested the Payette mining claims.

**Looking ahead**, IRU will ensure that temperature pollution budgets are put in place by the Environmental Protection Agency and will continue to stand in the way of new mines that threaten the state's water quality in the Boise, Salmon and Payette river basins.



## 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 reclaim leadership and be a voice for our dying fish.

Please fill out our online petition and share your voice: [idahorivers.org](http://idahorivers.org)