

## KORE mining project : Hot Creek Vicinity

### Overview from Chris Leonard

If it's not one battle to protect the fisheries in the Eastern Sierra, it's something else. While I'm not the longest standing fly-fishing guide operating in the area, I've been doing this long enough now to fully realize the fights. It could be over water during drought years, battling bureaucracies with proposed reg changes, or putting a spotlight on the destruction of dispersed camping. Last summer at Hot Creek, I watched an angler fifty feet downstream of me drop his drawers and empty his bowels in the grass fifteen feet from the water. I was guiding two clients. They weren't surprised when I asked the guy what he was doing, then asked him to never return to the Eastern Sierra again. I'd take that experience last summer on Hot Creek any day of the week over the looming threat we all now face of Canadian-based operation Kore Mining proposing taking one giant shit right next to my most favorite fishery in the world: Hot Creek.

Mining laws today date back a minute. 1872. The General Mining Act of 1872 was written when miners looked for metals with pack mules and handpicks. It's an outdated set of laws that no mining company in the country wants to fix. Prospecting minerals on federal lands can pay big bucks. But mining is different today than it was in the past, and that begs consideration of every new mining proposal that comes up. Fortunately, common sense still dictates that companies don't have a complete carte blanche to dig up federal soil just anywhere. One of the most controversial mining proposals of current times is that of Pebble Mine which ended last November when the Trump Administration killed off hopes of digging up Bristol Bay, Alaska. Pebble Mine wanted to extract gold, copper, and molybdenum. Bristol Bay is also home of one of the largest salmon runs in the world, a money maker for both commercial fishers and its tourism-based economy. Every proposal faces a different set of environmental concerns, some benign, and some truly legitimate.

Kore Mining is interested in drilling the ground around Hot Creek to look for gold. Sitting on claims several decades old, and a budget of \$8 million, they intend to disrupt about a five-acre region of pristine forest located directly behind Hot Creek. If gold is found, they'd bid the claim to a major company to open pit leach heap gold mine the region. USFS is still cleaning up pollutants from the Mill City mining which happened over a hundred years ago. Cabin owners have been kicked out of their cabins and denied rights to their property. We haven't even resolved this mess, and yet mining is being proposed again?

What could possibly go wrong? Well, first of all, where does Kore Mining intend to get its water to drill? If they do drill and hit the water table, waste water will contain arsenic, boron, and chlorine. This is directly above one of the region's best fisheries, Hot Creek. I'll also add the fact that water eventually flows into the Owens River, Crowley lake, and then Los Angeles kitchen sinks. Kore Mining doesn't use pack animals. Extensive truck traffic hauling water and waste in and out on roads that are now overgrown will create noise, light, and air pollution. I don't believe guests staying at Hot Creek Ranch envision a week of fly fishing accompanied with the sound of drilling. Athletes training at Whitmore would breathe air pollution. Let's suppose gold is found. What do we have? One large open pit mine. How's the air pollution working for people living near Owens Lake? The area being proposed to explore is wildlife habitat. Deer, sage grouse, etc. Deer tags aren't as easy to come by as they used to be, and the sage grouse is a protected bird. I can't imagine mining that close to Hot Creek Hatchery would

Creek each summer to see the geothermal area. I see them when I'm fishing and guiding. They end up with this magnificent view of the fields and Mammoth Mountain. Now substitute that with an open pit mine.

What can you do? Be vocal. Be loud. Be objective. This simply can't happen. You can start by writing USFS Mineral Programs Manager Colleen Garcia (colleen.garcia@usda.gov) before the deadline of May 6, 2021. Please also contact Reid Dagul (Reid.Dagul@mail.house.gov) and express your objection. Share this information. Get in touch with organizations fighting this fight. Sierra Club and Trout Unlimited are just a couple of many. This is the biggest fight Hot Creek has seen yet, and it has to win.

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