

## Montana opinion: New copper mine would create jobs

Written by Jerry Zieg Guest Opinion  
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In recent months, I've had the good fortune to get to know quite a few Great Falls and Cascade County folks who have taken a real interest in Tintina Resources' Black Butte Copper Project, a planned underground copper mine about 17 miles north of my hometown, White Sulphur Springs.

As a kid growing up on a ranch on the Smith River in the 1960s, I only went with my family to Great Falls a couple of times a year. These were exciting trips — a city of more than 60,000 people with an Air Force base was a real experience for a Meagher County ranch kid.

As much as I enjoyed visiting the city, I most relished the wide-open spaces, gorgeous vistas, plentiful game and fantastic fishing of the ranch. It's where we lived; it's what we breathed in every day.

When I'd finished my chores, I'd often fish the Smith River. Back then no one floated, it hadn't yet been "found" and the fishing was great. Once word of this recreational gem got out in the 1960s, the Smith started getting loved to death. The people at Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks at first championed this, but ultimately recognized a disaster in the making, and began to regulate traffic — an approach that led to some grumbling but has gone a long way to protect and preserve the river and its beautiful surroundings.

Earlier this year, members of the Russell Country Sportsmen paid us a visit at the mine site and reminded us of the value Great Falls area folks place on the Meagher County landscape and waterways. Hunting, fishing and skiing top the list of these recreation opportunities.

From presentations to groups like SCORE and Farmer's Union, the genuine questions regarding stimulating the economy while protecting the environment have been welcome and useful. That's why our company is taking extra steps to ensure our underground copper project not only provides good-paying jobs, but protects the scenery, the water and access to the area that people of this region cherish.

I have been fortunate to spend much of my career since the late 1970s right near home, working to advance these mineral prospects that now comprise Tintina's Black Butte Copper Project some 23 stream miles from the Smith River. I've watched Montana and its agencies, especially the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), evolve toward strengthened regulation and oversight of mining projects in order to protect the state's water quality and wildlife habitat.