

Dear Sir/Madame

MAR 09 2023

My name is Jennifer Lynch and I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed exploratory drilling project by F3. I moved to Custer in 2019. I chose Custer because it has outstanding natural beauty and represents a part of our country that is so rare these days. Custer is a quiet, close-knit family who live together in peace and tranquility. When I heard about the Gold Exploration (Newark) Project that F3 wants to do I knew that this way of life was under attack.

An exploratory drilling project poses a significant threat to the environment. If F3 is allowed to go forward with this project, land in the National Forest will be cleared, driven on, and drilled into. We will lose Ponderosa Pines that have been around for many years in the National Forest. Thousands of woodland animals and birds will lose their homes. The excavation of the land, the use of heavy machinery, and the release of toxic chemicals and waste materials all have the potential to cause irreparable harm to our natural resources. It is my understanding that an environmental assessment has **NOT**, nor will be conducted. We therefore have no idea how this drilling project will impact our environment. An environmental assessment **MUST** be done.

It is my understanding that the U.S. Forest Service has issued a categorical exclusion to F3 therefore allowing it to go through. I strongly believe that a categorical exclusion is **NOT** appropriate in this case. Categorical exclusions are used in situations where the potential environmental impact of a project is deemed to be minimal. This is not the case with this particular project. The use of a categorical exclusion may also prevent a thorough analysis of potential environmental impacts and could result in irreversible damage to our natural resources. I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to issue a categorical exclusion for this project, and to instead conduct a thorough environmental review.

An exploratory drilling project will also have a negative impact on our economy. We are a small town who rely heavily on tourism and outdoor recreation. Noise from construction and environmental degradation caused by this project could deter visitors, resulting in a loss of revenue for local businesses who rely solely on tourism. People come to Custer to escape noise and relax in the serene quietness of the National Forest. This would be taken away from them if they have to listen to the noise pollution that is being produced from F3's heavy machinery. There are also private citizens that own land and homes in and around the National Forest. They have a right to quiet enjoyment of their real estate. They would be stripped of this right if this project were allowed to go through.

This proposed drilling project is just the beginning. If gold is found, a gold mine will be set up and residents will lose their right to quiet enjoyment of the land that belongs to them. The National Forest belongs to everyone, not just some company in Minnesota looking to rape it for monetary gain.

Thank you,
Jennifer Lynch

