

Submitted on 03/08/2023

Name: Kurt Olofson

Mr. Rob Hoelscher, Hell Canyon District Ranger

1019 North 5th ST

Custer, SD 57730

RE: Newark Exploration Drilling Project

Dear Mr. Hoelscher:

Please consider my comments and concerns on the proposed drilling project.

There is a lack of comprehensive scoping to address the extraordinary circumstances. This warrants further documentation in an EIS. Appropriate scoping is imperative to address the past, present, and future actions, potential impacts, and cumulative effects. The current scoping complexity fails to match the project complexity. The lack of complex scoping clearly nullifies the use of a CE under NEPA. This absence of comprehensive scoping precludes any justification for proceeding with this project and should be abandoned by the USFS (acting as lead agency). The absence of appropriate public communication, meetings, and truth in findings has left the public with distrust of the Black Hills National Forest Service. The Hell Canyon Ranger District should want to be a good neighbor to the citizens who are directly affected. The expedience to approve this project has the appearance of an overzealous appeasement for the contractor and circumventing proper forest stewardship.

The Black Hills history of gold extraction and the pollution that mining has caused are inexcusable. The scars remain even from exploration. Our right to a healthy and safe environment is absolutely paramount.

It is imperative to address the natural, cultural, and spiritual resources and how these resources will be impacted by this project.

The tremendous amount of public protest opposing this project indicates that the agency should proceed with caution.

Respectfully,

Kurt Olofson

