

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to object to the exploration drilling by Solitario Zinc Golden Crest Exploration Drilling #62590. As a former wildlife biologist and a current master's student in the Sustainability program at BHSU, I am beyond disappointed an EIS was not required from the start. The EA on the drilling alone does not provide enough information to know the full impact of this project. A full EIS should be required to assess the impact of the entire project including the mining. If Solitario Zinc happens to find gold during their exploration, they are not going to simply say "Ok, we found it! We can go now!"? No way, if they happen to find gold, they are going either mine it themselves or sell the rights to another company to mine it. We need to have a full EIS conducted to include the whole process for the company that will be mining should gold be found. Not all companies follow the same rules, and we have a right to have EACH company that thinks it can mine our backyard be required to have a full EIS. The negative impacts to our clean water, the local economy, wildlife habitat, Native American culture, and to those who use this area to escape civilization and recharge are too important to ignore.

The Black Hills is a very small and unique ecosystem in a large area of South Dakota. There are many species that are endemic to this area including the Black Hills Red-Bellied Snake, Black-backed Woodpecker, and the Black Hills mountainsnail, a land snail that was once widespread and abundant throughout its range but is now rare and critically imperiled to name a few. Forested areas are highly important to our native bee populations, which are declining drastically in recent years due to habitat fragmentation and loss, climate change, increase pesticide use, and competition from the non-native honey bee. Native bees are extremely important to biodiversity and agriculture providing for a larger crop yield with heavier fruit.

There is a reason people flock to this area to compete in bike races, trail races, hike, snowshoes, and cross-country skiing. Our home is a very special place, it is worth more than gold to us. Please require an EIS on the whole project from start to finish to make sure these negative impacts shown in the EA won't cause severe irreversible damage to our home, water, wildlife, local economy, and mental health of the community members that utilize Big Hill and the surrounding area as an escape.

Respectfully,

Kelly L Harnett