



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS
SOUTH DAKOTA**

January 7, 2024

Steve Kozel, District Ranger
Attn: Objection Review Officer
Black Hills National Forest Supervisor's Office,
1019 North 5th Street
Custer, SD 57730

Re: OBJECTION: Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project

Dear Mr. Kozel,

On behalf of the South Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (SD BHA), we write in objection to the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Decision Notice (DN) for the proposed Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project. Our organization seeks to ensure our outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, and we believe the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project will hinder our ability to recreate in South Dakota and will have negative impacts on our wild public lands, waters, and wildlife.

If the exploratory drilling project is successful, there is a large likelihood that future mining activities will start. If that were to happen, this project would have several significant impacts on recreational opportunities, water quality, wildlife, and the economy of the surrounding region. In similar mining practices around the country, we've seen mining companies promise jobs and a boom to the local economy, only to offer those jobs to foreign entities that strip our land of its resources for short-term economic gain and leave the region with nothing but a permanent scar on the landscape.

As we've stated in our previous comment, this area of the Black Hills is a critical recharge area for the aquifer which provides water for a significant number of people, including the city of Spearfish. It is important to the Black Hill's elk herds and the turkey populations, both of which have seen recent declines. It is likely that the additional industry development and 24-hour activity at the drill pads will impact wildlife. Additional disturbance could further harm these populations. Not only could the project have detrimental effects to hunting and fishing opportunities and wildlife populations, but could impact hiking, camping and mountain biking, all of which contribute to over \$4 billion to our state annually – a far more sustainable and less harmful economy.

On behalf of our members, and hunters and anglers throughout South Dakota, we object to the proposed action and appreciate you taking our concerns into consideration. We ask that the Golden Crest Exploration project not proceed.



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Sincerely,

Rochelle Plocek, Board Chair
South Dakota Backcountry Hunters & Anglers



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