

Alex Massa

RE: Solitario Resources "Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project"
To: Steve Kozel, Northern Hills Ranger District, Black Hills National Forest

Dear Mr. Kozel

On December 12, 2023, previous commenters on Solitario Resources' "Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project" learned that the Northern Hills Ranger District, as part of the Black Hills National Forest, issued a "Finding Of No Significant Impact" in its Environmental Assessment. Consider this my formal objection to the project.

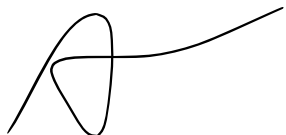
In my initial comment in June of 2023, I wrote that my biggest concern was the distance of multiple drill holes to Navigable Waters. Multiple drill sites are in a very short distance of navigable waters and water sources that supply clean drinking water to residents in Spearfish Canyon, the Tinton Area, Savoy, and the City of Spearfish. These navigable waters are Spearfish Creek, Little Spearfish Creek, East Spearfish Creek, Dead Ox Creek and Iron Creek. The biggest water body near the proposed drill sites is Iron Creek Lake. There are multiple other smaller ponds and very small lakes in the proposed drill area that should also be considered.

Drill sites "B", "DD", "BB", "AA", "CC", and "A" are less than 1000 feet from Spearfish Creek and East Spearfish Creek. Drill site "I" is approximately 750 feet from Little Spearfish Creek. Drill Site "L" is approximately 2000 feet from Little Spearfish Creek, on a slope that drains into multiple "pools" along the creek that are surely wild brown fisheries. Have these been checked? Drill Sites "M" and "N" are between 500 and 2000 feet from Spearfish Creek and Little Spearfish Creek. Drill site "D" is less than 200 feet from Dead Ox Creek. Drill Sites "H", "F", "S", "G", and "E" are within 1000 feet of Little Spearfish Creek. Almost the entire project is close enough to Navigable Waters that it should be of great concern to the BLM and The Black Hills National Forest, as this water flows directly into the city of Spearfish.

Additionally, many residents get their water from natural springs or wells in the Tinton and Spearfish Canyon area. Solitario claims that there are no perennial streams or other waterbodies present at or near any of the drill sites (2.2.3.2). However, the list above debunks the incorrect information that Solitario presents in their proposal. Solitario Resources has also said that there are no water monitor wells located in the project vicinity, and therefore no groundwater monitoring is present. If we know that hundreds of residents get their water supply from natural springs or wells, wouldn't it be wise to ensure that they have to put a plan in place to be consistently monitoring the high potential of groundwater and subsurface contamination? Any contaminants that seep or drain into a personal well would have lasting effects that would effect humans, wildlife, and the natural environment.

The impacts of Solitario's "Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project" are certain to impact the residents of Spearfish Canyon, the Tinton Area, Savoy, and ultimately downstream in the City of Spearfish. Additionally, the impacts to water quality - should any issues arise (they will) - will be felt for generations. It is imperative that the Northern Hills Ranger District of the Black Hills National Forest reconsider this project, and listen to the community-at-large when they say "No more" to Gold Exploration projects in the Northern Hills.

Thank you for the opportunity to object to this project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized capital letter 'A' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Alexander L. Massa