

RESOLUTION 2025-40

A RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO THE PONDEROSA EXPLORATION DRILLING PROJECT BY SOLITARIO RESOURCES, INC. WITHOUT FURTHER STUDY AND CONCLUSIONS FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Forest Service (“USFS”), Northern Hills District has released a draft Environmental Assessment of Solitario Resources’ Ponderosa Exploration Drilling Project; and

WHEREAS, Solitario’s project identified 43 drill sites distributed throughout an area southwest of Cheyenne Crossing and near Tinton, and each drill site will feature a potential drill depth of over 3,000 feet, the project would cover an area even greater than the Golden Crest project that was unanimously opposed by this body, in addition to the associated impacts and disturbances in the surrounding areas; and

WHEREAS, the drill sites are located in the Spearfish Creek watershed; and

WHEREAS, multiple studies in the same watershed have identified risks from mining-related processes which could impact the Minnelusa aquifer through interaction between the two aquifers; and

WHEREAS, a Categorical Exclusion is situationally inappropriate for this area and fails to account for the importance of the Spearfish Creek Watershed, from which streamflow losses serve as an important recharge sources for the Madison aquifer which serves as the City of Spearfish’s municipal water supply; and

WHEREAS, the potential for adverse impacts to the sources of the City of Spearfish’s drinking water supply without further study and understanding is too great a risk for the population of Spearfish; and

WHEREAS, the Spearfish Creek Watershed which includes Spearfish Creek, a perennial freshwater stream and fishery that sustains a healthy population of wild rainbow trout, which could potentially become impaired through drill site interactions with surface water and groundwater; and

WHEREAS, the D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery and Archives, a popular tourist destination within the City of Spearfish that draws nearly 200,000 visitors each year, relies on uncontaminated water from Spearfish Creek for the ponds used for its hatchery activities; and

WHEREAS, Spearfish’s proximity to recreational opportunities, particularly at Spearfish Creek, Big Hill, Iron Creek, and the surrounding areas (including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, biking, snowmobiling, and hiking) provides significant revenue to Spearfish’s economy through tourism; and

WHEREAS, a previous USFS draft Environmental Assessment identified potential impacts to the recreation and industry users in the same watershed, but those impacts would not be fully understood here without an environmental impact statement; and

WHEREAS, the disturbances to recreation caused by this project could alter the promotion of the area for recreation with a potential long-term negative impact on the tourism industry in the area; and

WHEREAS, the Spearfish City Council opposes exploration for future potential gold mining in the Spearfish Creek watershed as maintaining the quality and quantity of the water supply is of utmost importance to the City of Spearfish; and

WHEREAS, the Spearfish City Council opposes exploration for future potential gold mining in the project area as it is a major recreation and tourism area, the disturbance of which will adversely impact the Spearfish economy and quality of life for Spearfish residents in a significant way; and

WHEREAS, comments on the Ponderosa project are due to the U.S. Forest Service, Northern Hills District, by July 21, 2025; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of Spearfish that due to the potential risk of harm to the Spearfish Creek watershed, the water supplies of communities in the Northern Black Hills, fish and wildlife habitat in the Spearfish Creek watershed, as well as disturbances to recreational and industry activities, and the resulting negative impact on the local economy, the City of Spearfish opposes the Ponderosa Exploration Drilling Project without further study and conclusions as to the severity of impacts through the preparation of an environmental impact statement by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

Dated this 21st day of July, 2025.

(Seal)

CITY OF SPEARFISH

By: _____
John Senden, Its Mayor

Attest:

Michelle DeNeui, Finance Officer

Adopted: July 21, 2025

Published: July 25, 2025

Effective: August 14, 2025