

Nancy Hilding
President
Prairie Hills Audubon Society
P.O. Box 788
Black Hawk, SD 57718
July 21st, 2025
phas.wsd@rapidnet.com
605-787-6466

Ponderosa Project,
Northern Hills Ranger District,
2014 North Main St.,
Spearfish, SD 57783
<https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=64551>

RE: Ponderosa Exploration Drilling Project #64551,

Dear Patrick Champa & other Forest Service Staff,

We request an EA or EIS on this project. We are very concerned about impacts to water quality and the American Dipper, which is a state listed species, that uses Spearfish Canyon and some of its' tributaries.

The Ponderosa project would include 43 drill pads with multiple holes that could be drilled from each pad, and drilling could be vertical or at an angle to a depth of as much as 3,281 feet. Drilling would take place 24 hours a day, 5 to 7 days a week. Increased lighting and traffic, including regular pickup and water truck travel, would disrupt the wildlife and the peaceful quiet of the area. Additionally, this drilling would be disruptive because the border of the Ponderosa project lies 1.1 miles from tribally controlled land that is used ceremonially throughout the year.

We would like the NEPA document to provide a topographical map and a map of the tree cover types and habitat structural stages. We would like a map of scenic integrity objectives and ROS classes for the area and for such values to be re-evaluated since the last Forest Plan Review of such was long ago – it was in 1996 or 1997. We would like a discussion of impacts to any areas used for back country recreation, where pristine nature, quiet and solitude are valued.

We wish a full review of impacts to forest service sensitive species and any federal or state threatened and endangered species. We wish a review of impacts to any rare plant communities. We want a discussion of impacts to goshawks and black backed woodpeckers and any species associated with dense mature forests. We want these species and habitats protected

We want invasive plants and weeds prevented and native seeds used.

We want a moratorium on cutting of any old growth ponderosas with large diameters at breast height or any exceptionally large aspen/birch or oak trees.

We want the surface and ground water protected. We want the air quality protected. We want light pollution at night mitigated or prohibited. We want disturbance of wildlife from noise prohibited or mitigated. We want noise pollution prohibited or mitigated. We want the Spearfish Canyon Watershed protected. We want the American Dipper protected.

We want tribal concerns addressed and cultural sites protected.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Hilding", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nancy Hilding
President
Prairie Hills Audubon Society