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Organization:

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Comments: I am writing in opposition to the categorical exclusion of F3 Gold's Newark exploratory drilling project. An environmental assessment is essential before this project is allowed to begin. This proposal is upstream from Custer and near French Creek. French Creek runs through Custer. The potential danger of contamination cannot be stressed enough. No one is aware of the potential damage that can be done to water sources, environment and wildlife. An environmental assessment is crucial to discover the risks. This is a huge project with a proposal up to 390 drill holes, not to mention clearing over an acre of land. The Black Hills cannot afford another Gilt Edge Mine superfund site. It is the local residents who will have to live with the consequences of this project. Exploratory drilling is equivalent to fracking. The world is at a tipping point with environmental concerns and this fracking project exposes unnecessary risks, including cumulative health effects for nearby residents, residents of Custer, and wildlife. A 2015 published study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences confirmed that fracturing techniques can contaminate water. An article in 2014 Annual Reviews of Environment and Resources noted a steady rise in earthquakes annually from fracking. I was born in Custer and lived the majority of my life in the Black Hills. This area is sacred to the indigenous population and beautiful to behold for all people. It is unacceptable to allow a categorical exclusion for the Newark Project. Thank you for your time, Cherlyn Leach Valades*redacted*