

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/14/2023 7:00:00 AM

First name: Don

Last name: Kelley

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Ms. Schuyler, As a long-term Black Hills resident, I believe that we need to be more cautious in allowing further mineral exploration and mining than we've been in the past for several reasons mentioned below. I therefore think that a Categorical Exclusion prior to permitting the large F3 Newark exploration would be inappropriate. As the Black Hills region becomes more populous while also tending to become drier, I believe we need to be especially dedicated to the preservation of our local water resources. The Newark project is in the watershed above Custer, where the clear water of French Creek flowing through town is a major factor in that town's attractiveness for both tourists and fishermen. The history of water body contamination from mining is a sore topic for many of us Black Hills residents. Tourism certainly outranks mining as a local source of jobs and income, and preserving the quality of both subsurface and surface water has public health importance. In addition, it has been upsetting to note that much of the mineral extraction in the Black Hills has been performed without concern for cultural/historical features, which must be inventoried and protected prior to disturbance of the landscape. In view of these and other factors, I believe that an Environmental Assessment of the project site is absolutely necessary prior to permitting exploration. Thank you for consideration of this matter.  
Don Kelley\*redacted\*