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First name: John and Jeanne

Last name: Van Balen

Organization:

Title:

Comments: We are John and Jeanne Van Balen and have owned our property in Custer County for 32 years. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the Newark Gold Exploration project will have on the area for the following reasons.

- Water usage

The 39 drill rigs will use between 5,000 to 10,000 gallons of water a day per rig. This translates to 195,000 to 390,000 gallons of water a day for a year. This is when the area is in a drought and the Western Dakota Water System is investigating a system to pump water from the Missouri River to address future water needs.

- Noise pollution

The drilling rigs are going to operate 24 hrs a day so we will have constant noise pollution for a year.

- Quality of life

We moved to the Black Hills because we wanted to live in a rural area where we can enjoy the wildlife, the trees and wildflowers and hike in peace with only the sounds of nature.

-Fire danger

We were here for the Jasper fire and saw the total devastation of a large area of the forest close to us. The current drought conditions increase the probability of a fire caused by drilling.

-Pollution

According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) "Mining is an inherently invasive process that can cause damage to a landscape in an area much larger than the mining site itself. The effects of this damage can continue years after a mine has shut down including the addition of greenhouse gases, death of flora and fauna, and land and habitat."

-Tourism

Campgrounds and Custer businesses rely on tourism for their livelihood. Tourism is a major industry in South Dakota and drilling and mining in the Black Hills and specifically this project with drilling rigs operating 24 hrs a day will have a negative impact on tourism.

-Environmental Assessment

An environmental assessment should be required for the Newark Exploration Drilling Project. A categorical exclusion is not appropriate.

The Newark Gold Exploration Project is beneficial to an out of state corporation to the detriment of Custer County and the Black Hills. It is for these reasons that we strongly oppose this project and ask your assistance in protecting the Black Hills. It is our responsibility to protect not exploit our surroundings.