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First name: Jolena

Last name: Pang

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service Officials,

I am writing to you as a concerned 25-year-old whose parents live in Custer, and I am deeply troubled by the proposed Newark Exploratory Drilling Project in the Hell Canyon District of the Forest Service. I understand that you are considering allowing this project to proceed with a Categorical Exclusion, but I urge you to reconsider this decision and conduct a thorough Environmental Assessment instead.

I cannot express how much the Black Hills mean to me and my family. We have spent countless weekends exploring the beauty of this area, hiking its trails, and enjoying the peacefulness it offers. But the proposed drilling project threatens to destroy the very things we hold dear about this place.

The location of the project, just west of and upstream from Custer along French Creek, is especially concerning. French Creek is a crucial source of drinking water for many residents in the area. Any contamination caused by the drilling project could have disastrous consequences for the health and well-being of the people who call this place home.

Furthermore, the proposed drilling project would disrupt the fragile ecosystem of the Black Hills. The area is home to a diverse array of wildlife, some of which are already endangered. The noise and disruption caused by the drilling could displace these animals, and the pollution could further degrade their habitat.

I understand that recent gold exploration projects in the Black Hills have undergone Environmental Assessments, and I believe that the Newark Project should not be an exception. The Jenny Gulch project was also stopped by local residents, who successfully fought against a Categorical Exclusion. It is clear that the people who live in this area care deeply about preserving its natural beauty and protecting its resources.

In conclusion, I implore you to reject the Categorical Exclusion for the Newark Exploratory Drilling Project and instead conduct a thorough Environmental Assessment. The Black Hills are a precious resource that must be protected for future generations to enjoy. I urge you to do the right thing and prioritize the health and well-being of the people and wildlife who call this area home.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jolena Pang

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