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First name: Catherine

Last name: Commander

Organization:

Title:

Comments: As second and third generation landowners in Custer Country, and 4th and 5th generation Dakotans, we strongly object to the proposed Newark Exploration Drilling Project.

Our beautiful region is rapidly disappearing under development and mining projects will rapidly destroy the remaining beauty of the Black Hills.

Water is increasingly scarce in these hills and this project will very likely lead to the same kind of toxic groundwater pollution seen in previous mining projects, especially with a categorical exclusion in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the project.

Putting aside the people who live here and help feed our nation with cattle from these hills, retirees and tourism provide the lifeblood of almost all commercial activity here. Tourism has become a year round industry here and we host almost 4 million visitors because this is a beautiful place with natural wonders to explore. We also have man-made creations to explore, but mines are not part of this. Every small disturbance to the rapidly disappearing open space damages tourism and commercial activity. People won't come back and businesses will close. The relative few who may benefit from mining will do so at the expense of the whole region that relies on the beauty and cleanliness of this region for their daily bread.

This proposed project goes completely against community interests for residents, ranchers, the many millions of annual visitors and most especially our young people, who will be forced to move away to find jobs and a clean environment because those things will be destroyed here.

This project should not be allowed to go forward and destroy the remaining natural beauty of the Black Hills region.

Sincerely,

Catherine Commander, Jane Case, J.E.Hawley

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