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Organization: City of Spearfish

Title: City Attorney

Comments: The Common Council of the City of Spearfish submits Resolution 2023-18 as its comment on the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling project. The Resolution, the text of which is re-printed below, is attached.

Resolution 2023-18

A Resolution in Opposition to the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project by Solitario Zinc Corp. without Further Study and Conclusions from an Environmental Impact Statement.

Whereas, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Forest Service ("USFS"), Northern Hills District has released a draft Environmental Assessment of Solitario Zinc Corp.'s Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project; and

Whereas, Solitario's project identified 25 drill sites distributed throughout an area at Big Hill and south along Tinton Road and near Timon and Savoy and each drill site will be a depth of up to 500 meters and will disturb approximately 1875 square feet of surface area, in addition to the associated impacts and disturbances in the surrounding areas; and

Whereas, the drill sites are located in the Spearfish Creek watershed; and

Whereas, the draft Environmental Assessment identified potential impacts to the Madison aquifer, which could impact the Minnelusa aquifer through interaction between the two aquifers; and

Whereas, the draft Environmental Assessment understated the importance of the Spearfish Creek Watershed to the City of Spearfish by stating it is only used to irrigate city parks when streamflow losses within the watershed serve as an important recharge source for the Madison aquifer which supplies the City of Spearfish's municipal water supply; and

Whereas, the potential for adverse impacts to the sources of the City of Spearfish's drinking water supply without further study and understanding is too great a risk for the population of Spearfish; and

Whereas, the Spearfish Creek Watershed which includes Spearfish Creek, a perennial freshwater stream and fishery that sustains a healthy population of wild rainbow trout, could potentially become impaired through drill site interactions with surface water and groundwater; and

Whereas, the D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery and Archives, a popular tourist destination within the City of Spearfish that draws nearly 200,000 visitors each year, relies on uncontaminated water from Spearfish Creek for the ponds used for its hatchery activities; and

Whereas, Spearfish's proximity to recreational opportunities, particularly at Spearfish Creek, Big Hill, Little Spearfish, Timon, Iron Creek, and the surrounding areas (including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, biking, snowmobiling, and hiking) provides significant revenue to Spearfish's economy through tourism; and

Whereas, the draft Environmental Assessment identified potential impacts to the recreation and industry users in the project area, but those impacts would not be fully understood without an environmental impact statement; and

Whereas, the disturbances to recreation caused by this project could alter the promotion of the area for

recreation with a potential long-term negative impact on the tourism industry in the area; and

Whereas, the Spearfish City Council opposes exploration for future potential gold mining in the Spearfish Creek watershed as maintaining the safety, quality, and quantity of the water supply is of utmost importance to the City of Spearfish; and

Whereas, the Spearfish City Council opposes exploration for future potential gold mining in the project area as it is a major recreation and tourism area, the disturbance of which will adversely impact the Spearfish economy and quality of life for Spearfish residents in a significant way; and

Whereas, comments on the draft environmental assessment are due to the U.S. Forest Service, Northern Hills District, by June 8, 2023; and

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Common Council of the City of Spearfish that due to the potential risk of harm to the Spearfish Creek watershed, the water supplies of communities in the Northern Black Hills, fish and wildlife habitat in the Spearfish Creek watershed, as well as disturbances to recreational and industry activities, and the resulting negative impact on the local economy, the City of Spearfish opposes the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project without further study and conclusions as to the severity of impacts through the preparation of an environmental impact statement by the USFS.

Dated this 5th day of June, 2023

City of Spearfish

John Senden, Its Mayor

Attest:

Michelle DeNeui, Finance Officer

Adopted: June 5, 2023