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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

United States Forest Service Committee,

As a supporter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, the voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife, I write to oppose the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Although the Solitario Zinc Corp seems to have the right to begin exploration on their property I believe all efforts should be made to keep this from happening. Although the initial digging of a few test sights may not numbers a big deal, opening the door to actual mining operations would be a great detriment to a know sacred area. I am concerned primarily about the ecological issues this project could potentially cause, but this drilling project would hinder my ability, as well as millions of others, to recreate in South Dakota. This past December I had my favorite Christmas experience spending 4 days observing and learning the ways of hundreds of not a thousand elk. I can still hear the sounds of their bugles and calls in my head. And being there to watch my 13yr old niece shoot her first cow elk was as good as life gets. I look forward to returning to hunt and fish myself and share the area with my own children and hope future generations can enjoy them as well.

This project would have a number of significant impacts on recreational opportunities, water quality, wildlife, and the economy of the surrounding region. In similar mining practices around the country, Backcountry Hunter & Anglers has seen foreign mining companies promise jobs and a boom to the local economy, only to offer those jobs to foreign entities that strip our land of its resources for short-term economic gain and leave the region with nothing but a permanent scar on the landscape.

Drilling would cause critical damage to aquifers that provide water to local residents and potential pollution to Spearfish Creek that runs though Spearfish Canyon. It is important to the Black Hill's elk herds and the turkey populations, both of which have seen recent declines. It is likely that the additional development of roads and 24-hour activity at the drill pads will impact the wildlife. Additional disturbance could further harm these populations. Not only could the project have detrimental effects to hunting and fishing opportunities and wildlife populations, but could impact hiking, camping and mountain biking, all of which contribute to the local and regional recreational economy.

Thank you for your support of public lands, waters, and wildlife of South Dakota, and to your commitment to the hunters, anglers and outdoorsmen and women that recreate there. I appreciate you taking these concerns into consideration and hope that you will oppose moving forward with the Golden Crest Exploration project.

Sincerely,

Josh Krafka