

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/8/2023 5:18:31 AM

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Title:

Comments: I wrote one comment earlier, but had another thought (hopefully that's OK).

Let's talk about money for a minute. If we allow this mining project to continue, what happens? The folks that own the mine will make money (possibly a whole bunch of it). They are going to take that money back to where they are from, and it will have minimal effects on the local economy. They might create a few jobs, but those workers won't be getting the big bucks. Or the mining might not pan out, in which case, whatever they do to the land and the water will be with us forever. They can probably go bankrupt and not even have to clean up the mess. It might look bad, or be dangerous. It could detract from the local economy.

On the other hand, the forest is chuck full of trees. We could allow the loggers to cut some trees. Then the sawmills could make them into usable wood, which can be sold and used. Grass will grow in the area that was logged, which ranchers will be able to graze cattle on. Wildlife will flourish, which will increase wildlife watchers and hunter's enjoyment of the area. Eventually, new trees will grow in the same spot, and the cycle can be repeated. Trees and grass are good for the environment. Fish will live happy lives in the streams, which increase fisherman's enjoyment of the area. Tourists will come, enjoy the area, and decide that maybe they would like to live here, or at least come back again. All of this benefits the local economy, and the profits made from the forest and recycled over and over again through the system, creating a paycheck for everyone involved, including the local service industries, like restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, car dealerships, etc.

I have been selling lumber in Spearfish for over 20 years (Currently for the Knecht Home Center, but I do not represent their official point of view in any way, shape, or form). I buy and sell lumber from many different places all the time. I live next to the sawmill in Spearfish, and I picked up lumber from the Sturgis sawmill today. Neither of them have anywhere near the amount of logs and lumber for sale that they used to have. The sawmill in Hulett, WY is currently cutting logs that were shipped in from California (from the burn area there last year) via railroad to Upton, WY, and then trucked to Hulett, because they can't get enough logs locally in the Black Hills to keep up with demand. The price of pine, both nationally and locally is substantially higher than what it was just a few years ago. Loggers and sawmill employees are a vital part of our local economy, and they actually live here. They reinvest their paychecks into buying goods and services in our local communities. The forest is full of trees, and many of them are the same size/age, which has created the same type of habitat in wide swatches, rather than a checkerboard of different grasses/tree ages, which would increase habitat for all domestic and wild creatures.

I humbly submit that rather than doing more mining (which has a bad historical track record), maybe the best uses for the forest are the sustainable logging of trees (which we already have the infrastructure for and the proven track record of a hundred years for), grazing cattle, and the eco-tourism/recreation that the area currently has.

Sincerely,  
Jason Schuldt

PS - Here's a picture that I thought was really cool of a small tree (trunk about 6" in diameter), that is growing out of the stump of a larger tree (trunk about 20" in diameter) that I found about three miles southwest of the proposed mining sites on Timber Gulch Rd. The smaller tree is about 15' tall, and still growing, but the picture is of the stump.