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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Michael Chidiac and I reside and run a business in Custer, SD. I also live part-time in Texas from whence I moved 2 years ago. I came to the Black Hills in 2016 on a business trip. I fell in love with the spirit and beauty of this area immediately. My heart soars while I am here and many people with whom I've come to know will tell you that there is a certain type of healing you get just by being immersed in the natural beauty of the Black Hills. It grounds you in a way that no other area can. When I am not working, I am either on my side by side getting lost on the thousands of trails or hiking deep into the Hills, the lakes, and the creeks. In fact, last year my daughter and I spent an entire day in the area where this proposed drill site is being considered. The Upper French Creek area is amazing; it's what I call God's country. I am adamantly opposed to this project. We cannot continue to destroy the Hills by leveling trees and destroying the mountains. In fact, very close to where I reside there is a mining operation that has defaced the side of the mountain. It was promised that "no one" would ever notice such a small project and it would certainly not affect the topography. It's just the opposite. It's an eye soar and it's a huge project. This area is called the Black Hills because the pines are so dense that, from afar, they look black. Well, that changes when drilling begins. You may as well call the area near my home the "Brown Hills," because that's the result of drilling. These projects always become larger than what's proposed. And this one seems to be starting out quite large with 390 drill holes! Inevitably, it will grow beyond that. We need to be smart and more environmentally considerate about this. The wildlife does not need displacement. Our national parks and US forest preserves are some of the most sacred in the country - and we share it with that wildlife. The water is clear and potable for us and our millions of tourists that visit this area every summer - it does not need to be tainted with the downstream impacts of drilling. The Black Hills is a special place. It's a place for healing, freedom, and getting lost in the pines where so many millions of people find peace and renewal. Please do not let this project progress. Our world and the country has changed significantly over the last 10 years. We need our place of respite (the surrounding hills and forestry) to remain as natural as it's been for thousands of years. It also keeps those millions of tourists coming back year over for their renewal. And tourism happens to be a major contributor to our local economy. A wise man once told me the story of the camel and the tent. The camel was so cold and just wanted to put his nose in the tent to warm up. The man in the tent allowed the camel to stick his nose in the tent. The camel whined a bit and said to the man, "but can't you just allow me to stick my head in the tent; it's so cold out here." So the man said, "sure." After a while, the camel said "oh, can you allow me to bring my front legs into the tent, I am so cold and that would really help." The man let the camel bring in his front legs. Over time, the entire camel was inside the tent and the man was on the outside and eventually died of the cold. Please. Let's not let this camel (Newark Exploration Drilling Project) in our tent (The Black Hills). Thanks. Sincerely, Michael Chidiac*redacted*