

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/15/2023 7:00:00 AM

First name: Brian

Last name: Hawley

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Ms Schuyler,

I have been advised that the Forest Service is preparing to grant F3 Gold a Categorical Exclusion for their proposed project to "drill for gold" (my term) just west of Custer and the \*redacted\* housing development that I own a lot in (and plan to retire to). I question the adequacy of doing that and request that a full environmental impact study be conducted using the assumption that a full fledged gold mining operation would be conducted. I have done a little research and determined that F3Gold is a privately held company worth \$5M USD. Their business model appears to be based on finding potential evidence of gold through their drilling technique and then using that to get people to invest in a full fledged mining operation to extract the gold. Given that that is the end result I think a full fledged environmental impact assessment should be done before they drill based on the assumption that a mining operation would ensue. That assessment would take into account any potential impact of the drilling as well as potential impact of the much larger mining project that would ensue. The assessment would include potential impact to surrounding residential and agricultural holdings, the French Creek watershed, the city of Custer and Custer State Park. I am particularly concerned about the immediate impact to water resources. Would they be punching holes through the aquifer, what would happen to the large amounts of water they plan to use - would those penetrate existing underground water sources, would they bring with or pick up contaminants (could they penetrate lead deposits). Is there a possibility that fracking could be an unintended consequence. My last thought is does a \$5M investment company have the wherewithal to make good on repairing any environmental damage that might result from the drilling much less a full up mining operation. I thank you for considering my concerns. Brian A Hawley, Major, USA, Ret\*redacted\*