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Organization:

Title: Custer County Resident

Comments: I am writing to document my opposition to this project receiving a Categorical Exclusion. This project is upstream of the City of Custer and French Creek, and they must be protected in a proactive manner - that means performing an Environmental Assessment before the drilling occurs rather than waiting until after to determine the negative impacts. French Creek is also set to become the City of Custer's new discharge location for the city's treated sewage wastewater (no environmental assessment was performed by the SD DANR on that decision either). French Creek and the Black Hills are under assault by the very environmental agencies that are charged with protecting it!

This is not a small or inconsequential project to perform without first having done an environmental assessment. Presumably, the company is conducting this exploration with the expectation of success and therefore creating a larger project in the future - this is considered getting their foot in the door and once that occurs it will be even more difficult to prevent the environmental disturbance and destruction that will occur. The project plan indicates the expected total duration of operations is 1 year - however there is no firm deadline and therefore the operation could continue beyond that timeline. Is the US Forest Service holding the company to a firm deadline?, and if so, what is that deadline? What are the consequences if the company exceeds a deadline?

The US Forest Service mission is "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations". Please do not fail in this mission by allowing the project to proceed without conducting a complete and thorough environmental assessment.

The environment must not be sacrificed in order to fast track a project for the benefit of a mining company from Minneapolis, MN. Do not put the interests of a mining company from Minnesota ahead of the interests of the Black Hills and its resources, residents and tourists who enjoy the many benefits the Black Hills offer.

Michelle Jeffrey

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