

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

First name: Tom

Last name: O'Connor

Organization:

Title:

Comments: This letter is sent to protest the Categorical Exclusion for the Newark Gold Project in the Black Hills. The examples cited 36 CFR 220.6(e)(8) are for much less intrusive projects such as geomagnetic surveys, trenching, clearing vegetation, or repairing existing roads. Instead, this project is a large intrusive project that has the potential to impact a large area of the southern Black Hills. Extraordinary circumstances include but are not limited to the potential impact to wildlife, nearby residences, recreational uses and the City of Custer. Other factors include the unknown number of personnel, vehicles, and drilling rigs necessary for the project to install numerous drilling sites spread over several miles - not to mention that drilling may continue for 24/7 for months on end. The project is located in a heavily used portion of the Black Hills and is located near the City of Custer, which depends upon tourism for its economy. It is not an appropriate project for a Categorical Exclusion which will bypass the protections of NEPA and the Environmental Impact process and effectively exclude the public from site-specific decisions, reduces transparency, and removes incentives for the agency to avoid harming localized resources.

Tom O'Connor

redacted