Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/7/2023 6:00:00 AM
First name: Nancy
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Nancy DeFrates-Densch*redacted*Rob Hoelscher, District Ranger1019 N. 5th St.Custer, SD 57730April 4, 2023Dear Mr. Hoelscher,I am writing in regard to the proposed Newark Exploration Drilling Project.I am quite concerned about the use of the categorical exclusion evaluation. Given the proposed site's proximity to an established neighborhood, this does not seem prudent. A full environmental assessment study seems like a no-brainer to me for the following reasons.Every house in this neighborhood has its own private well. I am concerned that drilling may have an impact on our water. All it will take is for one drill to hit the right cave (and there are many), and it is quite possible that our wells will be dry. This would obviously have a disastrous impact on our quality of life, and property values. As I live less than a mile away from one of the proposed drill sites, the noise from 24/7 drilling would also negatively affect both quality of lifeand property values. Future mining would be even worse.According to the letter we received regarding this, the water being used to drill would not come from the drill sites, but from existing "municipal water sources." What municipal source(s) would this be? Are they going to truck it in from Minnesota, where water is plentiful? Are they planning to pull their trucks up to the water station in downtown Custer? Custer does not have a limitless water supply. The entire west has been experiencing drought conditions for years. Totake the amount of water this project would require from the Custer's municipal supply would put the entire city water supply at risk.I have serious reservations about F3 mining. They attended the "informational meeting" held earlier this year. However, as it became apparent that those in attendance did not support their proposed exploratory drilling, and potential future mining project, did they stand up with you, and present any information whatsoever? They did not. They sneaked out the back door. The best predictor of someone's future behavior is their recent past behavior. So, what is going to happenwhen they destroy our water supply? My best guess is that they will sneak out of town under the cover of night, leaving the people of Custer County holding the bag, as they left you holding the bag at that meeting. Who would monitor them to ensure that they comply with all rules, regulations, and laws? I certainly don't trust them to self-monitor. They would have a vested interest in cutting comers, and have demonstrated that they will cut and run.What assurances do we have that F3 would restore the land to its original state when they are finished raping it? Based on what I have seen of mining projects in the northern Black Hills, the land would be left as is when F3 decides that they are done with it. Are they required to put up a substantial bond to compensate us for the loss of property value? For future water supply if they destroy, or pollute our water table?If the USFS/BLM grant mining rights, they should be granted far away from residential areas, where the risk is simply too great.Please stop this from happening, or at a minimum conduct the appropriate environmental assessment study, and present the results at a real informational meeting.Sincerely,Nancy DeFrates-Densch