

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/10/2023 6:00:00 AM

First name: Tom

Last name: Patterson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Sir or Madame:

Please see and review the attached comments.

Mr. Moore, after your review and briefing by any of your field personnel, I would be happy to come to Washington to discuss this matter further with you and Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Have your administrative assistant call or email me to schedule such a meeting.

Regards

Tom Patterson

[text from attachment below]

Email: [comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-hell-canyon@usda.gov](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-hell-canyon@usda.gov) Rob Hoelscher, District Ranger Black Hills National Forest Hell Canyon Ranger District 1019 North 5th Street Custer, SD 57730 RE: Newark Exploration Drilling Project Dear Ranger Hoelscher: Today is the deadline for public comments in respect to the above project. The initial notification to the general public and affected adjoining land owners was dated February 8. At the February 16 meeting, you appeared and indicated there would be additional further meetings and there would be an extension of time so that the general public could learn about the facts and circumstances pertinent to this proposal so they could make informed public comments under NEPA to avoid a categorical exclusion that you were inclined to consider at the time of the initial application. There have been no additional meetings scheduled and F3 Gold, the proponent of this hard rock mineral exploration, has never appeared in Custer County to explain the nature and extent of the project, nor has the Forest Service been able to provide any information. It is for that reason that I think we need to cut to the chase. Attached please find the Federal Register, Vol. 88, No. 54, Tuesday, March 21, 2023. Consistent with that notice, please let this letter serve as a request that the United States Forest Service (USFS) file an application with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) requesting that the Secretary of the Interior withdraw the total acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands in Custer County, South Dakota, from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the public land laws; location and entry under the United States mining laws; and leasing under the mineral and geothermal leasing laws for 20 years, subject to valid existing rights, to protect the cultural and natural resources of the French Creek Watershed, including municipal water for the City of Custer, South Dakota, from the adverse impacts of mineral exploration and development. We request that this application, recited above, be published with notice segregating the lands from the laws specified for up to 2 years, subject to valid existing rights. The reason for the above request is that it would initiate a 90-day public comment period and announce a public meeting regarding the U.S. Forest Service application. In summary, the Forest Supervisor has been reassigned from his position with the Hell Canyon Ranger District and the Black Hills National Forest. The Acting Forest Supervisor is a person that I have now had an opportunity to meet with at this point in time. Well in excess of 350 public comments have been filed with the Forest Service objecting to the approval of a categorical exclusion. Bryan Karchut, acting Forest Supervisor has given me the email address for Randy Moore and told me to reach out to him for more information on how this can move forward in a positive manner. Bryan tells me he has no information on how Jenny Gulch matter was handled procedurally. It is a disservice to the public and a waste of the Forest Service resources to simply put this through

the procedural steps evaluating the appropriateness of a categorical exclusion vs. an environmental assessment vs. an environmental impact. The correct course that is reflected in the attached Federal Register publication is the course that should and must be followed by the United States Forest Service in respect to the application impacting the Black Hills National Forest and Custer County and Custer City, South Dakota. The publication of this notice in the Federal Register would allow for public meetings, exchange of information and a thoughtful consideration of whether or not it is appropriate for the granting of a 20-year moratorium on these affected lands. As an aside, I have directed correspondence to the BLM and to the Regional Forest Office in the preceding days and weeks in an effort to try and learn procedurally how the Forest Service was able to "see the light" and publish this notice in the Federal Register regarding Jenny Gulch. Given sufficient time and exchange of information by the Forest Service and the BLM with affected individuals and entities, a similar result and a proper result can be obtained in regard to the Newark project. I welcome an opportunity to meet and discuss this with anyone within the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request apart from my earlier comments and position asserted by others at earlier points in time. Sincerely, Charles T. Patterson For the Firm\*see attachment - Federal Register, Vol. 88, No. 54, Tuesday, March 21, 2023, Notices\*