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BHNF/SO

February 22, 2023

Dear Ranger Hoelscher:

We are very concerned about the F3 Gold Newark project core sample drill program near Custer, SD. Also we are concerned with the extensive lithium mining claims that have snuck into the Black Hills National Forests. We live very close to the proposed drilling site locations.

We know that President Biden has made it a priority to mine and destroy the National Forest environment across the nation and that it has been made a priority action for the National Forest administration.

1. We ask that due to the cave systems, water issues, above and below ground environments that will be affected negatively that a **Environmental Assessment be completed in Custer County** in this area before any drilling takes place and that the assessment done at Jenni Gulch is not substituted as it does not have the caves and water issues we have in this area in Custer County.
2. We believe that this mining in Custer County will negatively affect the Black Hills which are spiritual for our native partners and families, will cause drastic effects on our tourism, campgrounds, animals, trees, endangered snails, bats, farm/ranch production, and our wild animals and so much more. We should not be destroying our national forests at the expense of lithium battery production, gold exploration and other mineral grabs.
3. These projects will affect our property valuations negatively, our county and state roadways which are targeted for primary and secondary use.
4. Custer county continues to have major water issues. Water drains into a pool in Custer city and the surrounding area and fires in the Hells Canyon district have resulted in our cave system being involved with the discovery of ashes in cave waters. Drilling will use chemicals and could possibly rupture an aquifer that feeds our local homes and city. We know that these chemicals can poison our water.
5. The 1872 law should not be used here in an area that has many treaty promises to our native residents. They should legislatively stop the law for mining that is over 100 years old and replace it. When the government grabs for minerals in National Forests they are destroying these lands for future generations in an effort to get Federal dollars.
6. Traffic is a major concern as Custer County lives on tourism. Our campgrounds will have tourist trailers and others affected by mining traffic. Custer County residents are often very stressed by the summer tourist traffic right now!
7. Bonds for reclamation and damages will not go to the locals to pay for their damages and for their damages to lands and life as we know it here in Custer County.

Please do the study and STOP this project from going forward in Custer County in the currently beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota.

NOTE – I TRIED TO SUBMIT THIS BY EMAIL BUT IT WAS DENIED ON SATURDAY. WILL OTHERS ALSO HAVE THIS ISSUE???

Sincerely,

Connie and Greg Werner,