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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to voice my strong opposition to the Homestake Partners' proposal to conduct geotechnical investigations in Homestake Valley. I am deeply concerned that the proposed drilling will cause significant adverse impacts to wetlands, irreplaceable fens, fragile alpine creeks, and the wildlife, which lives in and around them. I also worry that the dam project (which this drilling supports) will involve removing part of the Holy Cross Wilderness Area, that the dam walls will intrude into a designated Colorado Roadless Area, and that the dam will cause irreversible damage to wetlands, fens and Eagle River watershed, as well as the humans and animals that rely on it.

The drilling project would have a significant impact on wetlands and fens. To reach drilling sites, the Partners would have to drive a drilling rig over wetlands and in, or near potential fens - which have taken thousands of years to develop. The Fish and Wildlife Service calls fens "irreplaceable" and the Forest Service says they "cannot be replaced in-kind." The Partners did not clearly identify impacts to fens in their application, despite the fact that their own soil analysis indicates that there are soils with the organic matter concentration, which is typical of fens present in the area. The Forest Service must update its mapping of fens and wetlands in the area and accurately analyze impacts to this rare ecosystem before allowing any drilling or other activities.

I'm also concerned about impacts on wildlife, water, and wilderness. The drilling would involve clearing trees to create roads and drill pads, possibly during avian breeding season in July. It would require crossing Homestake Creek and siphoning water from it. The seismic survey would be conducted by sending repeated sound bursts at 170 decibels - as loud as a shotgun blast - in a narrow part of Homestake Valley. The drilling and these sound bursts would be easily heard, for weeks, in the Holy Cross Wilderness. Part of the seismic survey would also take place in a designated Roadless Area.

This proposed action is damaging: it will have significant impacts on resources, from fens to wilderness, that are protected under Forest Service regulations and federal law. I ask that you begin a public process to map fens in the project area, and that you conduct an Environmental Assessment to more fully consider the impacts of the geotechnical investigation on wetlands, wilderness, and Roadless Areas in Homestake Valley.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Bottomley

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