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Title:

Comments: I submitted my comments earlier today and never got a response. Others who did so at around the same time have seen those comments appear in the public forum, but mine have not.

Because I'd typed them directly into the comment box, it appears I now have to re-create my comment from scratch in a limited time frame. Therefore, I have serious concerns that other folks have not been able to successfully navigate this system, but may not be able to pay as close attention as I am. Please keep this in mind going forward, as there may be others who believe they have submitted comments, but have had them disappear in transit as I have.

I want to register my objection to the FS FONSI for the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration project.

The USGS Atlas of Water Resources in the Black Hills Area, South Dakota clearly indicates interplay between Rapid Creek and the Minnelusa aquifer. That interplay means that contamination of the surface waters of Pactola Reservoir, upstream tributaries, and/or Rapid Creek, including by exploration and mining-related activities such as those proposed in this Project EA creates a contamination risk for my water supply, as well as that which supplies residents of the larger community of Rapid City, surrounding communities, and Ellsworth Air Force Base.

Additionally, exploration and/or mining in the Jenny Gulch area clearly will impact recreation opportunities in the Project area for both locals and visitors, as well as negatively impacting habitat for threatened and endangered species. Drawing a line around Bighorn sheep birthing areas and surrounding it with drilling activities does not in any way constitute mitigation.

Source of water supply for drilling has not been clearly indicated, and there is no guarantee of a source for this project that does not negatively impact existing users.

BHNF Forest Plan Revision (in progress) has not been taken into consideration in the Project EA. Jenny Gulch is a highly sensitive and well-beloved area of the Hills that should be protected. Past plans indicate a protection area around Pactola Reservoir that take into account its crucial role in providing a stable water supply and recreation opportunities--but make no mention of mineral exploration and development. That activity should be prohibited in this critical watershed area.

Recent actions by both Rapid City Common Council (resolution passed strongly opposing this project) as well as the Pennington County Commission (letter of concern about this project) should be weighed by the Forest Service. No one wants this project, and nearly everyone can see the risks. That puts the FS on solid ground in determining the "no action" alternative is the best course of action.

Tribal Consultation is warranted on this project, yet Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) have NOT made a full cultural resource survey of the site. Project EA indicates that THPOs have received only a letter and invitation to comment, which does not in any way fulfill the need for Consultation or a comprehensive cultural survey of the site.

Local folks will fight this project every step of the way. It's very clear this is an unnecessary, unwanted, and seriously risky project. FS needs to change its course and reconsider the FONSI.