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First name: Jerry & Margaret
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: We are against this proposed drilling project.
We are 4th generation property owners of homesteaded land that lies directly in the boundaries of the Newark Exploratory Drilling Project. There are 10 of the 39 proposed multi-directional drill holes within 1/4 mile of our property. All of this proposed exploration is very upsetting to us on many levels.

A first concern is the lack of any environmental studies prior to drilling. For example, baseline water quality studies are imperative prior to the drilling. A categorical exclusion is NOT appropriate for this project. We need an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as has been done for other recent gold exploration projects in the Black Hills.

Several drill sites are in the headwaters of the French Creek Drainage. These trickle-down granite fractures collect water that ends up in springs that feed into French Creek, which in turn feeds into the Minnekahta, Minnelusa, Madison and other formations that become major aquifers. Many towns on the perimeter of the Black Hills depend on these aquifers for their water source. And most importantly, the city of Custer and many private wells depend on the French Creek Drainage.

Exploratory drilling and any future mining operation needs a source of water (And yes, you must plan for future mining because why even drill these holes unless you want to have a gold mine?) You don't open Pandora's Box without planning for the consequences. Where will this water be sourced from? Will they rob us of our most precious resource? We live near the confluence of French Creek and Ruby Creek. For the past 2 summers, Ruby Creek has been dry and French Creek nearly dry. There is a limited amount of water in this water shed. Water is life and more valuable than any amount of gold.

You must also consider the risks associated with plugging multi-directional drill holes that reach 500-3000 feet deep. Any contaminate entering the drill hole eventually can trickle down to the surrounding private wells, the Custer City wells and ultimately the aquifers. If the 'mysterious' source water that F3 Gold uses for drilling gets contaminated...the wells and aquifer will too. If the plugging process fails...the wells and aquifer can become contaminated too.

If you have no baseline study...no EIS....how do you determine who is responsible for polluting the water? Or drying up the watershed? What exactly is the process for plugging these multi-directional drilling holes? Who monitors the process? What recourse do we have if our wells go bad? Some of the problems might take years to show up...how will the water be monitored?

Mining reclamation is costly. It can bankrupt the mining company. And then it is up to us, the citizens, the State, to pay the bill. Just look at the Gilt Edge Mine in the Northern Hills and the millions of dollars the Federal Government and the State of SD has spent there. And looking to a future with a possible gold mine operation, you must add cyanide leach pads to the risk equation. How deep are the pockets of F3 Gold or the foreign or US based company they sell too?

This project is literally in our back yard and we have other concerns that must be addressed prior to any drilling authorization. These include Air Pollution, Dust Control, Noise and Light Pollution (and its effects on wildlife and humans) and Forest Fire Risk.
1. AIR POLLUTION/DUST CONTROL. Regarding the drilling traffic on Upper French Creek Road (County 286), it should be stipulated that F3 Gold pays for the application of mag water for dust mitigation. Require an air quality test in EIS prior to drilling.
2. NOISE & LIGHT POLLUTION. Absolutely do NOT allow 24 hour nonstop drilling. Mandate that drilling

work is for 12 hours per day. Drill from 6 am to 6 pm. Shut down operation from 6pm to 6am. No drilling. No lights. Require EIS to assess harmful effects of 24 hour noise and light on wildlife and humans prior to authorization. We love living in the country for its peace and quiet. We love the night sky. If drilling is 24 hours a day....7days a week.....52 weeks for a year.....we will be sleep deprived and at risk of losing our sanity.
3.FOREST FIRE RISK. Our dry seasons make this area a tinderbox. It just takes one spark to have catastrophic results. Mandate the proper fire fighting equipment and sprayers at all sites.

In conclusion, we are strongly against the outdated 1872 Mining Laws that allow the travesty. Is gold worth destroying the heart and soul of our beautiful Black Hills? NO!
With gold we gain a fleeting monetary gain for an elitist group...but we lose everything that really matters... for eternity. 80% of gold productions is for jewelry. It takes 20 tons of ore for one gold ring. So someone gets a piece of jewelry and we get 20 tons of mine waste including arsenic, uranium, vanadium and cyanide leach pads. It is foremost a vanity mineral.. The other 20% of gold production goes to coins, bars, electronics and medicines. People argue that mining creates jobs and is good for the economy. We say the revenue from gold pales in comparison to the revenue gained from people seeking to live here, to travel here, to retire here. They come for the intrinsic beauty of the Black Hills, not for an open pit. Let them go to Lead, SD to see that

Our family has roots in Custer since 1887, Our children and grandchildren love to come to Custer and the 'ranch'. No one want the destruction of this sacred beautiful place we call 'HOME'.
DO NOT FAST TRACK THIS PROJECT!