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Title:
Comments: Statement of Opposition to the Newark Gold Exploration Project: Protect Our Water and Economy

My name is Tim O'Connor. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Newark Project in Custer, SD. I am a Custer County resident. I am writing in solidarity with the Custer Community and the Indian Reservations of Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Cheyenne River.

Firstly, the proposed Newark Gold Exploration Project, west of Custer on Forest Service property should not be treated as a CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION. This project will pollute the major bedrock aquifers (Deadwood, Madison, Minnelusa, Minnekahta, and Inyan Kara aquifers)
and our recreational water resources (French Creek). Mining would negatively impact our water and our local tourism and outdoor recreation economy. Custer is currently circled by mining exploration projects that could lead to large-scale open pit mines. Mining and processing gold have a long history of polluting water. Lithium exploration projects are to east, south, and north along highway 385 near Custer. Mining and processing lithium also pollute water and use enormous amounts of water.

Additionally, lithium is a hazardous substance. According to a Hazardous Substances fact sheet lithium dust can ignite spontaneously in air producing toxic gasses. Lithium can affect humans and other animals in many ways, including impacts on metabolism, neuron communication and proliferation and embryonic development. Breathing lithium dust compounds irritates respiratory systems and causes lung fluid buildup. Exposure to lithium carbonate can produce toxicity in the neuromuscular, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal systems. Lithium also disturbs the development of invertebrates and has been shown to be deadly to fish. Lithium mining is not good for people, water, cultural resources, wildlife, or the environment. It is not a good match for our agriculture, tourism, and outdoor recreation economy - as it will in fact harm all three.

Finally, I went to an En Ron mining meeting in Custer. They mostly speculated on the "facts." They were mainly interested in the profits of mining, not what impact the humans and wildlife would suffer from the water pollution and soil pollution or the effects on the community here in Custer and in the Southern Black Hills. As a long time community member of Custer County, I demand an Environmental Impact Study be done before any permits are issued for any mining project in the Black Hills.

If you are interested in keeping our water, air, and soil clean, please call the Custer County Planning Office at (605) 673-8174 and get more information from the black hills clean water alliance at their website, www.blackhillscleanwateralliance.org or their Facebook Page.