Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/23/2023 12:26:11 PM
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Organization:
Title:
Comments:
March 23, 2023

Dear Mr. Hoelscher, Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Newark Exploration project. First - I am opposed to authorizing any further ground disturbing activity until some baseline information has been gathered and analyzed. Since this proposed drilling is very extensive and is in the vicinity of scores, if not hundreds of private homes and water wells, I believe that a survey of water flow rates and quality in the area must be done to establish pre-drilling conditions so that any dimunition in water quality or quantity following drilling may be accurately assessed.

A wildlife survey should also be conducted prior to the commencement of any drilling. It is well known by local residents that there is at lleast one active bald eagle nest in the vicinity of Pilot Road. I believe this would then require a formal Section 7 consultation with the USFWS.

A 100% cultural survey of any area within the project that might be disturbed, I think is also required.

Second - There is as yet (and the comment period is supposed to close on April 10) no real attempt to reach out to affected residents and provide information on what is going on. The people want to ask questions and they HAVE NOT had that opportunity.

This project must be paused until a proper outreach program has been completed. I would suggest you used your authority to immediately inform the F3 proponents that an Environmental Assessment is going to be required, and that there is a strong possibility that, based on the findings thereof, along with an Extraordinary amount of public controversy, a full Environmental Impact Statement may be required.

There is a huge danger here that the full disclosure requirements, which is the heart of NEPA, will be by-passed or minimized by a piece meal approach to only analyzing drilling, as if there were no likelihood of a large mine resulting from it.

Third - It is my opinion, shared by hundreds of other Custer County residents that the proposed drilling program, if successful in terms of discovering an "economic" ore body, must inevitably result in a large gold mine. A large gold mine basically right in the middle of six to eight neighborhoods, depending on how you count them. This is obviously a completely incompatible and unsuitable use of the land.

Fourth - The values of the homes affected by this potential mine have already been adversely affected, by the mere notification by the USFS that such a drilling program is in the offing! The impact to those values will continue to grow as the project proceeds. Is that going to result in a class action tort claim vs the USFS and F3?

Finally I have put together a list of potential impacts that should be addressed in any environmental analysis performed (please note, this list is not intended to be exhaustive):

Partial List of Potential Impacts From F3, LLC Drilling
and Large Gold Mine in the Black Hills

*Degrade the aesthetic of the Southern Black Hills
*Lack of public information provided so far by F3

*Potential loss or damage to ground water and private wells
*Proof of financial capability to respond to a company-caused emergency/disaster
*Increased noise, dust, ambient light at night
*Increased traffic on local roads
*Loss of recreational use of part of BHNF
*Loss of private residential property values in seven nearby neighborhoods
*Lack of environmental baseline studies
*Disturbance to existing eagle nest (T&E Species)
*Risk of fires
*Use of limited City water
*No plans to do a complete Environmental Analysis/Environmental Impact Statement.

Sincerely,

Rob McWhorter
Affected Resident