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Comments: Public Comment to Newark mining Project

I am against the Newark Mining Project proposed in the Hell Canyon District. I think we need to consider that the entirety of the Black Hills is un-ceded Lakota territory and this project is not aligned with our political, cultural, or environmental values.

This project and all others like it can only proceed with the full and prior informed consent of the entirety of the Lakota Nation and that has not been even attempted. This is a right we have as Lakota people guaranteed to us by the 1868 Treaty of Ft. Laramie which according to article VI of the US Constitution is the supreme law of the land.

The more conventional understanding is that both the National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have a fiduciary responsibility in dealing with the Tribal Governments and bringing them in for consultation. Their comments and concerns have clearly been laid out from the public meeting held in Custer regarding this project. They say no.

Our cultural values are more complex, we understand the earth as a living entity, Unci Maka grandmother earth, and we try to live by the values to treat her as a relative. The Black Hills are at the very core of our spiritual beliefs, in our Lakota epistemology it is known as the center of everything that is. We trace our emergence story from Wind Cave, our place of origin.What will happen to Wind Cave if this project is approved? Do you know? Has it been studied? Wind Cave is one of the largest cave systems in the world, it has the purest natural water in the world, a unique system of box formations, and endemic species that evolved in this particular environment and are found no place else on earth. In the public meeting lead attorney for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Mario Gonzales said that Black Hills, "Is ALL sacred land." Not one site, not one stretch of stream, not one district, but the Hesapa in its entirety is ALL sacred land. We cannot allow this project to desecrate it.

Archaeologically speaking the oldest evidence of human habitation in America can be found here, the "Clovis Culture " has left behind the famous arrowhead and spear tips that are the hallmark of their existence; Indigenous people have always existed here.

Just procedurally the next step to ensure the basic needs of due diligence are covered a full Environmental Impact Statement should begin. This level of scrutiny would entail covering the potential harm to local residents as well as all those downstream, the negative cultural impact to the Lakota nation, and the economic havoc that would be brought upon the town of the Custer. What are the long term costs not just for the lifetime of the mine but the ongoing lasting and generational impacts long after these fly-by night prospectors leave?

Lastly this mining project is right in the path of the drinking water of the town of Custer. We know from previous mining projects that gold mines leave behind pools of arsenic and cyanide. We know that mining companies historically have been some of the worst polluters of water sources and have little track record in taking responsibility for their water contamination and do not propose a plan to clean it up long term. Water is going to become more and more scarce in an area that already has felt pressure from the influx of new residents. In Lakota we say Mni Wiconi, water is life, this has been a calling for an entire generational young Lakota people who are willing to make a stand for the protection of water.

ps. it will hurt both the snails and the turtles which must be protected at all costs.