

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/6/2023 7:49:37 PM

First name: Michael

Last name: Frost

Organization:

Title:

Comments: United States Forest Service Committee,

As a lifelong South Dakotan, growing up in Rapid City, I am very unsettled to see that yet another drilling/mining operation is being considered. The proposal states "no mining would occur under this proposal, only exploratory drilling". I believe it is shortsighted and foolish to think that this will not lead to a full-blown mining operation. I do not think the "economic boost" for the Black Hills would even come close to offsetting the priceless loss of habitat, public land, and recreational opportunity that this inevitable mine would destroy. I use the Wharf mine as one of many examples. I grew up skiing Terry Peak, and now as I ski the area, I look out to a moat of dirt and a large pit mine almost everywhere I look. The Black Hills are beautiful, and I was very fortunate to grow up in this area, hunting, hiking, camping, fishing, biking and recreating in the amazing national forest and public land. Unfortunately, the Black Hills are a finite area, it is not the expansive forest/hills/mountains of the rocky mountain west. We must cherish every acre, and giving any additional part of it away for a foreign mining operation is insane, in my opinion.

As a supporter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, the voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife, I write to oppose the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project in the Black Hills of South Dakota. This drilling project would hinder my ability, as well as millions of others, to recreate in South Dakota.

This project would have a number of significant impacts on recreational opportunities, water quality, wildlife, and the economy of the surrounding region. In similar mining practices around the country, Backcountry Hunter & Anglers has seen foreign mining companies promise jobs and a boom to the local economy, only to offer those jobs to foreign entities that strip our land of its resources for short-term economic gain and leave the region with nothing but a permanent scar on the landscape.

Drilling would cause critical damage to aquifers that provide water to local residents and potential pollution to Spearfish Creek that runs through Spearfish Canyon. It is important to the Black Hill's elk herds and the turkey populations, both of which have seen recent declines. It is likely that the additional development of roads and 24-hour activity at the drill pads will impact the wildlife. Additional disturbance could further harm these populations. Not only could the project have detrimental effects to hunting and fishing opportunities and wildlife populations, but could impact hiking, camping and mountain biking, all of which contribute to the local and regional recreational economy.

Thank you for your support of public lands, waters, and wildlife of South Dakota, and to your commitment to the hunters, anglers and outdoorsmen and women that recreate there. I appreciate you taking these concerns into consideration and hope that you will oppose moving forward with the Golden Crest Exploration project.

Sincerely,

Michael Frost