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Comments: The Forest Service should require an Environmental Impact Statement for the following reasons:

1.Exploratory drilling could affect our water resources.

"Water originating from the area is used for municipal, industrial, agricultural, and recreational purposes throughout much of western South Dakota. The Black Hills area also is an important recharge area for aquifers in the northern Great Plains.

Population growth, resource development, and periodic droughts have the potential to affect the quantity, quality, and availability of water within the Black Hills area.

... Human influences (i.e., exploratory drilling) have the potential to degrade water quality for both ground water and surface water. For ground water, the potential for contamination can be large because of development on and upgradient of aquifer recharge areas, large secondary porosity, and relatively fast flow velocities."

~"The Black Hills Hydrology Study", by Janet M. Carter, Daniel G. Driscoll, and Joyce E. Williamson, USGS Fact Sheet FS-046-02

2.The Black Hills area is an important resource center that provides an economic base for western South Dakota through tourism. Public access to this very popular area is used by many for all types of outdoor recreation including fishing, camping, mountain biking, fat biking, xc skiing, hiking, UTV'ing, snowmobiling, hunting. Tourists from all over the country vacation in the Black Hills and hundreds of people participate in the Gold Rush Gravel Grinder and the Dakota 5-0 hoping to enjoy what "they call a beautiful part of the country."

3.Degradation of the ecological condition of the forest by creating more roads, clearing of the land at the site, and creating soil erosion and dust, which could also impact surface waters.

4.Affect raptors and rare plants. Ospreys, Eagles and Northern Goshawks inhabit the Spearfish Canyon, Little Spearfish, Big Hill, and Hanna areas. An EIS would document, identify and flag any occurrence of raptor nests which may be impacted as well as SD Natural Heritage Program rare plants.