

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/7/2023 7:03:22 PM

First name: Monique

Last name: Keck

Organization:

Title:

Comments: In the summer of 2011, I rode a bike from Western Montana on the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes. I dipped my legs in the creek to cool off after a long afternoon only to find out farther down the trail that the water is not safe. Signs are posted warning visitors, "Play Safe. Protect Your Health." and "Lower Coeur d'Alene River and lateral lakes are contaminated with lead and other metals from mine tailings. Small children are at greatest risk..." I oppose the exploratory drilling proposed for the Black Hills due to detrimental environmental factors like this.

Over the next five years, this project will disrupt wildlife, habitat, residents, and waterways with a goal of analyzing samples. One can only conclude that if/when desirable minerals are found, then they will forge ahead with a plan for full-scale mining. In several case studies, it has been evidenced that the impact of mining is both substantial and hard to recover from. Take the above example of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Shortly after mining began, farmers had already seen damages to crops and animals and would go on to bring legislation against mining entities for decades after. Flood events and timber harvesting exacerbated the negative effects. Though the mining began in the late 1800s, the town is still recovering and keeping a close eye on the contaminated sediments at the bottom of their lake.

Similarly, in Leadville, Colorado, additional remedies were needed to contend with its mine waste including catchment ponds and water treatment plants. I'm not sure if Spearfish has the necessary infrastructure for something like this. The town of Leadville's dependence on the Climax Mine resulted in disastrous effects during several economic downturns in which it lost one third to one half of its population.

If those examples are not enough or do not hit close enough to home, look right down the road to Whitewood, another Superfund Site. There is an article on the South Dakota School of Mines website titled "SD Mines Researchers Trace Pollution from Historic Northern Hills Mine Tailings Hundreds of Miles Downstream" (2018). According to the article, elevated levels of arsenic and mercury have also been found in historic mine tailings.

Mining interests seem to benefit a small selection of a population for a time, then often leave communities with cleanup for up to decades after. Let's not add Spearfish to that list.

Solitario may not be proposing to put in a mine or remove trees or put in new access roads or anticipate contamination of water at this time, but starting this process will undoubtedly snowball. It is concerning that the EA stated there will be no groundwater or surface water sampling. Additionally, the report mentions that no fire protection measures will be put in place.

What does seem clear from the report is that the Madison and Minnelusa aquifers which supply the Spearfish community with drinking water will be affected. Not only our waterways will be affected, but creatures who rely on this habitat such as bald and golden eagles and various types of bats. This being the case, I oppose the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project and request an Environmental Impact Statement.