

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/8/2023 1:05:58 AM

First name: Cheryl

Last name: Johnson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: There needs to be trust and open communications regarding the public comments in regulatory and permitting processes. The public has a right to provide input and be heard in matters of public lands, health, and uses. The proposed drilling explorations in the Spearfish Canyon area cause concern in several aspects, water quality impacts, wildlife impacts, recreation interference, and large carbon footprints. The canyon is also home to endangered species such as the dippers and falcons along with several plant species. Drilling activities cause disruption and loss to all species found in the proposed area. Previous water flow and recharge studies were done and funded in partnership with the city of Spearfish and USGS to better understand the risks to the Madison aquifer. Those studies revealed high rates of recharge travel times in the test wells and indicate the chance of contamination is higher than anticipated. The city of Spearfish relies solely on the aquifer to provide water to its citizens and has taken all available precautions to protect this valuable resource. The risk is just too great! Even the smallest error or incident would be disastrous to the city, other municipalities and private well users. Any changes in water quality could result in the city not meeting EPA water quality requirements as well negatively affecting fish populations. The City also went through extensive studies and costs to acquire a FERC license to operate the hydro plant. The drilling locations and ground activities could interfere with operations and alter flow rates if something were to go wrong. The Spearfish Canyon area is very unique and loved for its natural beauty. Why is it so hard to protect and preserve an area so special, can it just be ok to leave something that is so perfect alone? There should be no more mining explorations or operations anywhere in Spearfish canyon or in any of the drainage areas that affect the Madison aquifer. What is more valuable than water quality and quantity for public health and safety? The slightest risk to our natural water resources should never be accepted. Our wildlife should never feel the effects of degraded environments. The people should not be forced to give up natural spaces and lose something that can never be returned.