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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a father of two young children, an outdoor recreation enthusiast, and a resident of Spearfish, I am adamantly opposed to this exploratory drilling project.

I believe that the USFS has the responsibility to do everything in its power to protect our public lands for all to enjoy for generations to come. To this end, an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) must be done to fully understand the impacts of this project on local residents, tourists, hikers, bikers, bird watchers, fishermen, hunters, ranchers, snowshoers, cross country skiers, OHV's, anyone who enjoys the forest as it is now, and anyone who relies on access to clean water in the Spearfish Creek watershed. Upon analysis of the EIS, it will become clear that the best way for the USFS to protect our public lands will be to apply for a mineral withdrawal to include the Spearfish Creek watershed.

Protect our public lands. Stand against corporate greed that justifies its own self-interest by citing laws that were written before there were automobiles. This is not hyperbole. The Gilt Edge Mine is an active Superfund site and can be seen from the proposed drilling sites and has caused unrepairable damage to the Whitewood creek watershed.

Think about the winners and losers if drilling and mining are allowed to take place in the proposed locations. The winners will be a small number of shareholders. The losers will be the untold number of people for generations who can no longer enjoy our National Forest the way it is now. The answer is clear: demand the EIS, request a mineral withdrawal from Spearfish Creek watershed, and do not allow this project, or any similar project in the future, to rob us of access to our public lands, disturb the wildlife, and threaten the watershed.

If we are considering laws from the 1800's to make this decision, let us not forget about the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. According to that document this land belongs to the Great Lakota Nation. They must be included and represented in this conversation. Their voices must be heard.

On Monday, 6/5/2023 the Spearfish City Council, representing the residents of Spearfish who are likely to be the most affected by this decision, voted unanimously in support of a resolution opposing this project and called for an EIS to be conducted. Our voices must be heard.

Finally, it comes down to this fact: water is worth more than gold.