

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/8/2023 10:56:40 PM

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Comments: I OPPOSE this project and request the project be disapproved outright. I even have a slogan for you: STOP DIGGIN' AROUND. I am a homeowner in the Black Hills. My family and I live here, together, and we intend to raise future generations here; therefore I am an investor/shareholder/permanent tourist in this beautiful region. In recreation/tourism alone this region earns over \$3Billion/year for the locals, region and state. It is a sustainable industry that benefits not just 12,000+ Spearfish residents but anyone who comes here. As long as we keep it clean, people will come, share, and enjoy. Mining, however, is estimated to spend a comparatively small \$51M in moneys that will go to the state, and at best create 1,100 jobs. It is not sustainable and is not without serious risk to our environment. No one wants an open pit and a subsequent "reclamation effort" afterward that means a company plants grass where there used to be livable land and biodiversity. That is simply not good enough. Having higher bonds is not good enough. Protection against possible bankruptcy of a mine (if the exploration yields something that can be mined) is not good enough. Why will it not ever be good enough right now, or ten years from now? Because you do not have my TRUST. And the current arguments in favor of this project only serve to make me distrust it more. No matter how many times the newly formed South Dakota Minerals Industries Association (SDMIA, est. 2022) says the words "environmental stewardship" or "climate change" or Green New Deal, I am unconvinced and even more dubious about both their claims and their plans. Case in point: You want gold, for banks? The same banks who have mismanaged the American economy for decades (remember the housing crisis of 2008 and that awful bailout) and have also been bailed out as recently as this year (e.g., SVB)!? You want lithium for your environmental products? Have you ever actually seen a lithium battery, say, to charge small solar panels if the electricity goes out? The battery ALONE weighs 55 lbs, will not last forever, and who knows how to dispose it safely after expired. Interesting that the mining industry is now in the ancillary business of throwing the oil industry under the bus (saw that today first hand in a presentation by Quentin Neff from SDMIA) while alleging that mining is "the safest industry out there." LOL. We live in a region where solar and EVs are simply not practical or useful and they tether folks even MORE to the government, not less, yet SDMIA is pushing those items as their justification for mining. Another SDMIA member today tried to tug at heartstrings by invoking images of how children in other countries on other continents are essentially forced labor in lithium and cobalt mines, implying that mining here seems to be a moral and/or ethical imperative. That statement alone shows two important things: 1. The depths to which the mining industry will sink to move this project forward and 2. How completely out of touch they are with just how crappy and dire the average American's situation is that compels us to NOT GIVE A FLYING FIG what is happening to children in other parts of the world, b/c we are unfortunately too pre-occupied with the dire situation for kids HERE IN THE US. Here's a short list of priorities that come way ahead of the mining exploration virtue signals: The all-cause mortality rate and particularly the suicide rate among young Americans, soaring inflation, dollar decline, a housing crisis in that most people cannot afford one, a crisis in healthcare (medicine dependency, addiction and shortages), obesity epidemic, increasingly limited access to healthy foods due to price surges and shortages), more bailouts for big banks, raising the debt ceiling, giving money to Ukraine so they can have pensions. Our current president and his family are perpetually dodging corruption investigations at the same time he's exhibiting serious signs of dementia, our federal law enforcement agencies are completely corrupted (pick just one FBI scandal from this year alone, and it's only June), our healthcare agencies and media are both "brought to you by Pfizer" with no apology, recourse or recompense for shutting down the nation and forcing an experimental, failed, and sometimes debilitating jab on its citizens. The "critical minerals" list the SDMIA cites came out of this same current, awful federal government in 2022 and that is another reason why I simply don't trust it, or this project. It is all a problem-reaction-solution cycle that big business and big government are churning out at the expense of average Americans. My prediction is "environmental stewardship" is just the soft sell right now for bigger, more egregious takings later under the guise of "national security." I am not paranoid: I witnessed first-hand what govts & companies with global interests "partnered" to do to individuals, our rights, persons, property and basic freedom during and after COVID. Fortunately South Dakotans had relative freedom this whole time but

every single Blue State Refugee will attest first-hand to how govt and big biz were nothing short of oppressive for the past 2-3 years over COVID, and this same dynamic duo has done NOTHING to restore public trust -- instead it's "Onto the next crisis as we declare it!" I have lived long enough to see emissions or smog standards improve and eliminate the brown line that used to hover over all of LA County in CA even while the population and number of cars on the road increased there. Solar, wind, EVs did not do that. I have lived long enough to see scientists encourage and advocate tree-planting to capture and absorb CO2 -- naturally -- all over the US. Underground pipelines don't do that. This new "deal" of environmental products are NOT improvements, so mining for them is just a waste of time, if not a ruse. At the end of the day, water is our most precious resource, period. Given SD already has two (2) Superfund sites meaning two (2) areas of widespread contamination already, we must not risk creating a third. We have to keep this area and especially the water, clean and pristine. Big, fat, hard NO on this project and please consider a moratorium on any/all mining here. STOP DIGGIN' AROUND.