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Comments: I am strongly against the Golden Crest Exploration Drilling Project #62590. The ultimate purpose of exploratory drilling is to conduct mineral extraction. The Black Hills region is a unique and priceless resource that cannot be reclaimed to its former state after construction activities of this nature and magnitude. Mining activities contribute to degradation of the environment through habitat loss and fragmentation; air pollution; deforestation; topsoil loss; introduction of harmful chemicals into the environment and increased pressure on, and potential contamination of, precious local water resources.

Destroying any part of this unique landscape also causes significant economic revenue loss to the community as the beauty that attracts tourism and recreation to our area will be negatively affected.

Additionally, resource extraction projects also negatively impact the ability of the Black Hills National Forest to provide local ecosystem services that help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Forests are one of Earth's most valuable ecosystems and are a key ally in tackling climate change. Climate change is happening now; is being driven primarily by human activity; and is a global emergency.

The United Nations estimates that climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress (<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange>). The impacts are already harming human health through air pollution, disease, extreme weather events, forced displacement, food insecurity and pressures on mental health. Damaged ecosystems release carbon instead of storing it. Therefore, irreparably damaging the local forest resources that help insulate and protect our local community is NOT a sustainable action and it will NOT contribute to achieving net-zero emissions and addressing the climate crisis.

I strongly urge against permitting this exploratory drilling project in the Black Hills for the health of the Black Hills National Forest and the residents of the community that call it home.