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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I appreciate the apparent thoroughness of the environmental assessment, but I still oppose any gold mining around the Spearfish Canyon recreational area in the BHNF. To begin, my home is just a few miles north of the proposed drilling site, "O." We chose to live in this area due to having access to BHNF literally in my backyard. I never dreamed this could be a detriment that could potentially affect my well being through potential water, light, noise, and air pollution. I certainly never dreamed that the BHNF would allow out of state/out of country investors to potentially damage the BHNF with no regard or benefit to our local community, only downside risk for us locals. I understand the proposed measures to mitigate water and ground contamination, but as the assessment itself stated, there were no noise or water studies done in the vicinity of the proposed sites. This EA is based on prior studies in neighboring areas, which is not pertinent to their specific project area.

I also find the dismissal of the value of recreational activities to local residents as short sided and detrimental to our community's health and sense of well being. My family routinely hikes the areas near Big Hill and we travel to Iron Lake often. We also are members of several UTV groups who utilized local trails through BHNF. How is it appropriate to allow the drilling equipment trucks on our trails when we can't even pass on them if our UTV is over 62"?

There are too many "what ifs" associated with this EA. Sure, they don't think arsenic could spread into our water supply, but if it does, it will only be temporary. Sure, recreational users will find other trails to traverse. Sure, the cuttings won't pose any threat. Sure, the bats and other wildlife won't be harmed. So what if there are possible downsides to drilling for five years! Everything will go back to normal after that period, and if not, they don't care. Solitario is only looking out for their own interests and bottom line. It's the people and visitors to Spearfish Canyon that will be on the hook if any one of the "what ifs" comes to pass.

I respectfully urge the BHNF and USFS to stand up for the people of my community and uphold their mission to "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." Please do the right thing and protect our lands.