

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/20/2024 7:17:07 PM

First name: Christopher

Last name: Roth

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm writing today in opposition of the proposed Golden Crest gold exploration drilling for many reasons, but at top of the list is the unnecessary risk to the surface- and groundwater of Lawrence County and the Black Hills by this project.

In reading about previous mining operations in the U.S. and around the world, it sure seems that extractive industries will only follow the regulations they're required to at a given time, to the level those regulations are enforced. And even when that's the case, landscape-altering accidents are all too common.

Looking at Solitario's other projects, they are currently operating a zinc project in Alaska with the company Teck Resources, who was recently fined \$1.6 million for a 2.5 million liter acid spill into the Columbia River in British Columbia (1) and in 2021 fined \$60 million for discharging selenium and calcite into the Fording River in British Columbia (2), plus millions of dollars more for various other spills (3) and currently sits on Canada's Environmental Offenders Registry.

Solitario is also operating a zinc project in Peru with the company Nexa Resources, who, in 2012 when known as Votorantim Metals, spilled toxic wastewater into the Huallaga River in Peru, a tributary of the Amazon (4), contaminating at least six miles of waterway. Solitario has been working with Votorantim since 2006 and was no doubt aware of this spill.

Why does Solitario continue to work with these companies? Given that track record, what accidents await the Black Hills? I believe it's in the best interest of those who live here to not find out.

Aside from putting our water at risk, mining operations will affect the area's complex ecosystem of plants and animals, not to mention the fishing, hunting, hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing and general quality of life enjoyed by so many residents.

Just as equally important, the USFS and Solitario have the responsibility not only to meaningfully consult and coordinate with the Indigenous tribes of the area, but also make public those results before engaging in such projects.

Thank you for listening to and considering the voices of those who wish to protect the sacred and unique Black Hills. I'm asking you to put current and future health and sustainability ahead of extraction and profit.

(1) <https://www.mining.com/teck-fined-1-6-million-for-acid-spill-into-columbia-river-at-trail-smelter-operations/>

(2) <https://esemag.com/water/teck-coal-fined-record-60m-river-contamination/>

(3) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/teck-coal-administrative-penalties-fording-river-pollution-1.6741917>

(4) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-peru-mining/peru-eyes-tougher-penalties-for-polluting-industries-idUSBRE8820NL20120903/>