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Comments: I continue to object to this project for all the reasons I stated in the previous round of public comments. While I understand that objecting is an uphill battle given the vast rights afforded to mining companies under the federal mining law, and that mining is necessary to produce a large number of products used in everyday life, my concerns are driven by: (1) this gold exploration project could ultimately pollute our water and destroy an area that is extremely important to the quality of life in this community, and (2) gold is not a critical mineral - this is a quest for profit, not to produce necessary goods and materials.

Spearfish is an attractive place to live because it is in close proximity to the Black Hills National Forest, including Spearfish Canyon, Big Hill and the Tinton Trail network. This vast area of forest offers many outdoor recreation opportunities all year round (biking, hiking, fishing, birding, skiing, etc) in a beautiful, peaceful setting. It is heavily used by the local community and it also draws a significant amount of tourism that supports local businesses. This exploration project, which is designed to lead to mining, threatens to ruin something that is important to many residents' quality of life.

As stated, this project relates specifically to gold, which is not a critical mineral. It's largely used for jewelry and currency. The small amounts of gold which might be necessary for things like computer chips, could be obtained in a less harmful way - ie, reclaimed from discarded items or melting down jewelry. So from my perspective, the drilling could lead to the destruction of large patches of forest, including our local trails, purely for monetary gain. The local community will bear the risk and detriment, while Solitario and its shareholders profit.

I also understand that this project is being viewed in isolation because that is how the rules are designed, but as a resident of Spearfish, my concerns are driven by the fact that over 20% of the BHNF area is now subject to mining claims. There are also multiple other exploration projects on private property very close by. Given that gold mines consume large amounts of water and routinely discharge toxins into ground water, I'm concerned about the risk to our water supply and our water quality in the event that several of these projects result in several more gold mines operating in the Spearfish Creek watershed. The toxins from regular operations will be greatly increased as will the potential for a catastrophe. It seems that no government agency is taking a comprehensive approach to protecting the local community's quality of life or water supply.

In short, Solitario's approach to this project is to emphasize how minimal the impact will be from drilling rather than to recognize the perspective of the community members who are focused on the potential long term outcome. This approach doesn't engender trust. The 1,000+ members of this community who objected in the prior round don't want the drilling because we don't want more gold mines in the Golden Crest claim area. We want the area to be preserved for current and future generations.