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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to express my concern regarding the Ponderosa Gold Exploration Project. I live, work, and recreate in Spearfish Valley and am strongly opposed to this exploratory drilling project. I work together with my partner on a vegetable farm that is irrigated by water from Spearfish Creek. In a very direct way, our livelihood and the quality of food we are growing for our customers and community relies on a healthy stream system. The drilling (let alone associated potential future mining projects) threatens the natural environment (the water quality and quantity, our beloved and popular trails, the wildlife habitat and land health); the local economy that is so fueled by outdoor recreation, hunting & fishing, and tourism to the scenic Spearfish Canyon and northern Black Hills; and significant tribal cultural resources. The report lists no conflict with Indigenous cultural sites - this is absolutely inaccurate. The whole of the Black Hills are sacred to several Indigenous groups. Furthermore, this drilling project is in direct violation of US federal government treaties.

For these reasons, I request that the US Forest Service deny this project, or, at a minimum, require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project. What are the impacts on wildlife habitat to be expected from the drilling noise and lights, from the additional truck traffic? How much water will be used by the drill rigs? From where will this water be sourced? What impact will this work have on the popular Hannah campground, located immediately down-valley from most of the proposed drill pad sites? Has meaningful consultation been made with the impacted tribes?

Finally, I request an extension of 60 days to the public comment period for this project. A period of at least 90 days for submitting public comment should be allowed for this and future projects in order to accurately gather the concerns of affected communities.

Thank you for your consideration.