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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a long-time resident of Fall River County. My family has been here for four generations, or eight generations if you expand the local area to include the land just across the border in northwest Nebraska. I spent 25 years overseas but I always maintained my roots here and always knew I would come home to raise my own children.

I and my family are avid outdoorsmen and have always lived close to the land. We have more attachment to the land and trees and rivers and wildlife than we do to any town or human creation. We are hunters, fishermen, gardeners, orchardists; we take pride in taking our living directly from the land, and view it as a sacred responsibility to protect the land that sustains us, not just for us but for our grandchildren still unborn.

I, my family, my neighbors, and everyone I know in Hot Springs and the surrounding area are absolutely, resolutely opposed to uranium mining in Fall River County. I do not know of a single person here who would welcome this development, except for two individuals, both of whom I know have bought mining stocks in the uranium countries seeking the permits, and are therefore hoping to sell out their neighbors for their own profit.

The reasons for opposing mining in this county are numerous, and have been articulated multiple times already. The citizens of Fall River County have stood together to oppose uranium mining on multiple occasions: via the EPA, via the NRC, via the State Water Board, and most recently in a public referendum declaring uranium mining and illegal public nuisance in Fall River County. And still you come back, looking for new loopholes. How many times do the citizens and residents of this county need to tell you no, before you get the message? We've already made our feelings clear: foreign mining corporations will never be welcome here.

I provide a brief list of reasons why in situ uranium mining should never be allowed in the Black Hills, and in particular within the claim boundaries that Nexus Uranium has proposed for exploration in the 'October Jinx' project. This list is not exhaustive:

- the Black Hills are entirely dependent on groundwater. Unlike the Rocky Mountains, none of our rivers or aquifers are replenished by snowmelt. Without groundwater, this is the Great American Desert, largely uninhabitable.
- The Black Hills cannot afford to give 10,000-20,000 gallons per borehole per day to foreign corporations, for free, with no benefit to the residents of these counties. This is dry country. We are currently in drought. Pulling that volume of water from area aquifers for purposes of extracting uranium (and contaminating that water in the process) will result in the water tables dropping, local wells going dry, and the country becoming uninhabitable for the people who live here.
- The geology of the Black Hills is all fractured. The claim that in situ uranium mining can be safe relies on the fantasy that uranium ore, and the contaminated water that is used to extract it, can be isolated between impermeable geologic layers without contaminating deeper and surrounding aquifers. In reality there are no 'isolating layers'. The Black hills are a dome uplift, which rose from the plains millions of years ago, in the process forcing their way through all of the shallower geologic layers, in the process fracturing those layers and creating fissures for artesian water. All of the aquifers are connected by fissures, cracks and breccia pipes, and are known to communicate with one another. Contaminated water pumped into the ground in any mined location will not be containable. If/when contamination spreads to the Madison and the Minnalousha aquifers, this project will have irreversibly poisoned the entire Black Hills.

- Even if the geology itself were not fractured, there are abandoned boreholes perforating the entire western slope of the Black Hills, from uranium exploration in the 1970s and 1980s. These boreholes were never filled, and now provide additional conduits for contaminated water to travel vertically between different geological layers, including between aquifers.

- Weather conditions on the surface in the area of the mining claims are extreme. The land alternates between drought, wildfire, and flood. The area of the mining claims includes steep-sided canyons prone to flash flooding, draining directly into the Cheyenne River, which is upriver from Angostura Reservoir, a major economic draw for Hot Springs and the surrounding community. Leach ponds and other 'containment' facilities proposed for surface processing of uranium-containing water will never be sufficient to contain the volume of water that can be deposited by a single concentrated summer thunderstorm; in a flash flood the ponds will overflow and the contamination will be deposited straight into the Cheyenne River.

- Ancient rock art (petroglyphs and pictographs) in the area of these mining claims is up to 8000 years old. Some of these art sites have never been surveyed or registered; the Craven Canyon site (in the area of a separate Nexus Uranium proposal on SD state land) is well known; but the rock art in the area of the Dead Horse claim is just as spectacular, only less well known. The entire area of the Wolf Canyon claim (south of Flint Hill) is also full of ancient rock art and ceremonial sites for Lakota People. The value of this land for archeology, history, and the spiritual connection of the people who live here is far higher than the value of the minerals below the ground.

- None of the companies proposing to poison our water and take our minerals are even American companies. The minerals they extract will be processed in other countries and will be sold to the highest bidder internationally; it is highly likely the uranium will end up going to countries unfriendly to the United States. The law requires a 'cost-benefit analysis' of the pros and cons of mining uranium, but doesn't even ask the questions "costs to whom?" and "benefits to whom?". It is uncontested that the costs will be borne by South Dakota families who call this place our home, while the only benefit will go to foreign corporations, investors, and speculators. But this is our home; it is not for sale; we will not let dodgy Canadian shell companies backed by unofficial Chinese money loot our home and our future for a quick profit and leave us with the toxic environmental legacy. Any public official or politician who facilitates this process is a sell out and a traitor.