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First name: Calvin
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: I formally oppose the Mining Nominations Project (Project #63480) proposed for the Jessieville-Winona-Fourche Ranger District of the Ouachita National Forest.

This proposal would open 337 acres of our public National Forest to out-of-state commercial mining interests, locking out local quartz businesses, conservationists, hikers, and the tourism economy our communities depend upon. Established Arkansas quartz operations have confirmed they will not benefit from this. The public loses. Out-of-state corporations gain.

Open-pit operations proposed within 150 feet of the Ouachita National Recreation Trail would destroy habitat, increase watershed sedimentation - one site by an estimated 825% near Lake Winona, a Central Arkansas drinking water source - and introduce industrial activity into land that belongs to every Arkansan.

The primary commercial driver appears to be industrial silica extraction. On-site crushing would release crystalline silica dust - a known human carcinogen that causes silicosis, an incurable and fatal lung disease. Our air, our water, and our communities are not acceptable industrial sacrifice zones.

I urge the Forest Service to deny all permits under this project and conduct a full independent environmental and public health impact assessment. This land is ours.

Respectfully,
Calvin W. Gentry
Hot Springs Village, Arkansas