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Title:

Comments: Subject: Formal Scoping Comments Demanding the Selection of the "No Action Alternative" for the Bear Lodge Rare Earth Project (Bull Hill Mine) To the Project Review Committee, I am writing to formally submit my comments regarding the proposed Bull Hill Mine open-pit project within the Bearlodge Ranger District of the Black Hills National Forest. After reviewing the immense scope of this project and its severe threat to our public lands, I strongly urge the U.S. Forest Service to select the "No Action Alternative" and deny the permits required for this project to move forward. A project of this scale is entirely incompatible with the multi-use, conservation, and recreation mandates of the Black Hills National Forest. I oppose this project based on the following unacceptable impacts:

Irreversible Destruction of Public Forest Land: The proposed 260-acre active disturbance footprint and 183.5-acre open pit represent an irreversible destruction of public forest land. Carving an open pit of this size out of the Bear Lodge mountains permanently destroys mature forest canopy, disrupts the local ecosystem, and threatens regional biodiversity-including the northern long-eared bat-far beyond the 1,700-acre project boundary. This level of permanent landscape destruction should not be permitted on public land.

Unacceptable Industrial Traffic and Public Safety Hazards: Forcing 13 to 17 round-trip semi-trucks daily onto Forest Service Road 838 (Warren Peak Road) introduces an extreme safety hazard for residents and visitors. A heavy semi-truck passing every 30 to 45 minutes will destroy the road bed, generate blinding dust plumes, and put recreational drivers at risk. Regular public traffic should not have to dodge heavy industrial mining equipment on shared forest roads.

Devastating Impacts on Historic Hunting Grounds: The project site sits directly within Deer Hunting Unit 1 and Elk Hunt Unit 116 (Bearlodge). The constant heavy machinery noise, bright industrial lighting, and blasting will permanently displace local elk and deer herds. This project threatens to ruin decades of wildlife conservation efforts and decimate highly valued hunting opportunities that local families and economies rely on.

Disruption of Major Recreational Trails: The proximity of the open pit to the Sundance Trailhead severely compromises popular multi-use networks like the Edge and Ogden Ridge Trails. Furthermore, winter hauling and plowing schedules will actively disrupt Snowmobile Trail 4 of the Bear Lodge Mountains Snowmobile Trail System. Turning a pristine outdoor recreation area into a noisy, industrialized hauling corridor destroys the primary reason the public visits this district. The long-term environmental, recreational, and safety costs of the Bull Hill Mine far outweigh any short-term commercial benefits. For these reasons, I request that the Forest Service protect the integrity of the Black Hills National Forest, reject the current proposal, and select the No Action Alternative. Thank you for your time and for consideration.

Jennifer Linn