United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Final Environmental Assessment

Mystic Ranger District, Black Hills National Forest, Pennington County, South Dakota

July 2022

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Abbreviations

BHNF	Black Hills National Forest
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CEQ	Council of Environmental Quality
F3	F3 Gold, LLC
MA	Management Areas
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFSR	National Forest System Road
NFST	National Forest System Trail
PO	Plan of Operations
ROD	Record of Decision
SARC	South Dakota State Archaeological Research Center
SD DANR	South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
SD GFP	South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks
USFS	United States Forest Service
WIZ	water influence zone

1 Introduction

1.1 Summary of Proposed Project

The United States Forest Service (USFS) Black Hills National Forest (BHNF), Mystic Ranger District received a Plan of Operations (PO) from F3 Gold, LLC (F3) on December 10, 2018, proposing to explore for gold, which falls under the locatable mineral regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228 Subpart A (reference (1)). The proposed Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling project (Project) is located north of Silver City, Pennington County, South Dakota in Sections 19, 30, 31, T2N R5E and Sections 13, 14, 24, 25, T2N R4E (Figure 1-1).

This Project includes diamond core drilling sites, access road maintenance (as needed), drill pad clearing (as needed), and reclamation activities. Two staging areas would be used to store equipment and tools. Main access from the north would be from National Forest System Road (NFSR) 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via county Highway 237 (Rochford Road). The primary access from the south would be from NFSR 671 (Sunnyside Gulch Road) or NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via Silver City Road. In addition, temporary overland trails may be constructed for drill site access. No mining, milling, or processing is proposed as part of this project. The Project would last approximately one year from initiation through drilling and reclamation, pending unforeseen circumstances (weather, fire, Covid, etc.). This proposal is guided by the 1997 BHNF Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan; reference (2)) and evaluated in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

1.2 Purpose and Need

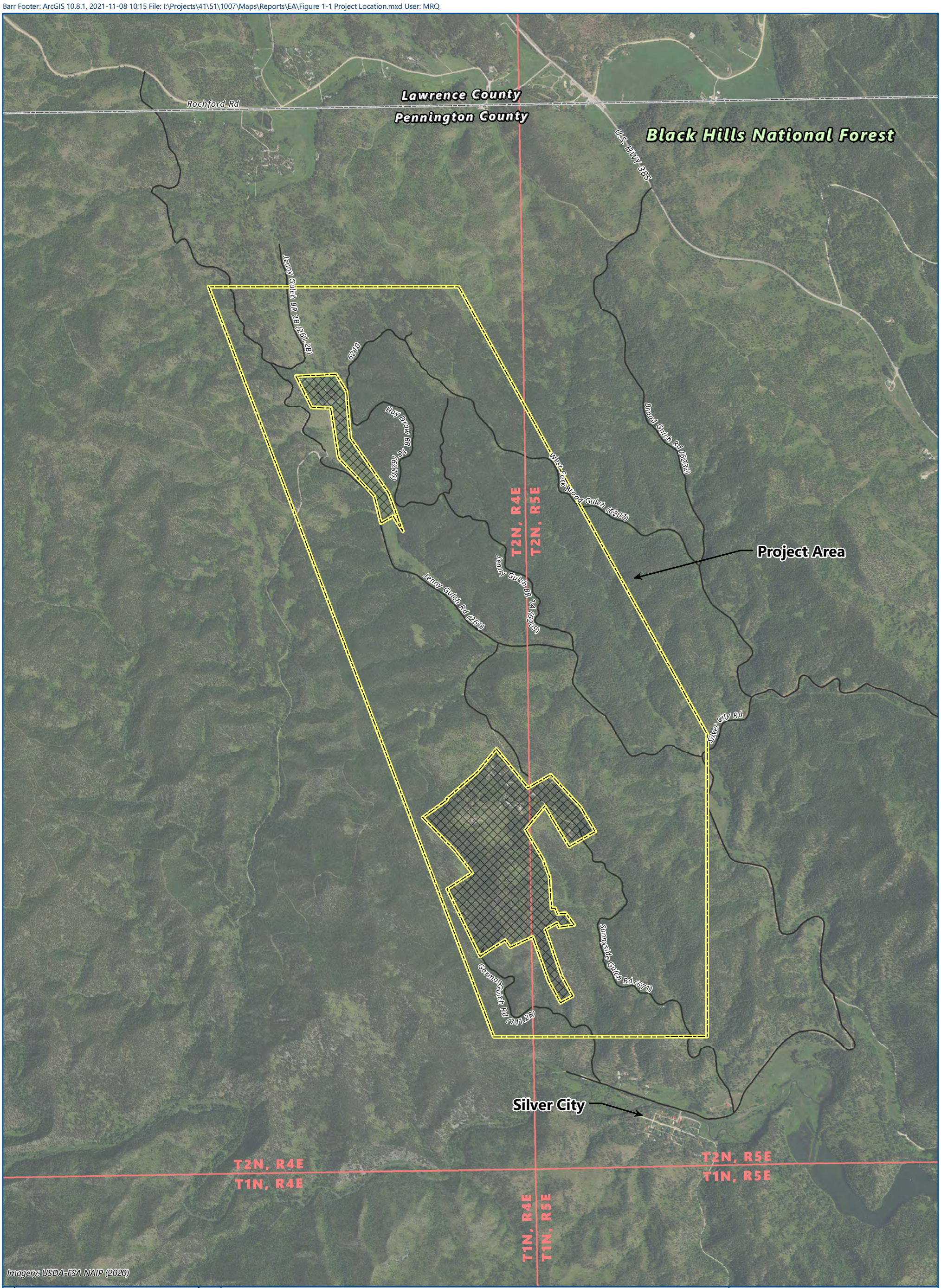
F3 has submitted a PO proposing exploration drilling on National Forest System Lands open to mineral location (reference (1)). F3 has a statutory right to perform exploration drilling as proposed per the General Mining Act of 1872. The USFS administers exploration and development on National Forest System lands under mining regulations defined in 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228, Subpart A. Entities wishing to undertake mineral exploration are required to submit a PO for review by the District Ranger.

The purpose of the exploration drilling is to identify the geological resources located with the Project area. The need for this Project relates to F3's statutory right to access for exploration purposes. F3 is seeking USFS authorization of their proposal to exercise their rights under current mining laws to perform exploration drilling while minimizing environmental effects in accordance with USFS regulations for locatable minerals.

The Forest Service's purpose is to decide whether to approve F3's proposed PO and, if approved, what requirements are appropriate to minimize impacts on surface resources in accordance with 36 CFR 228, subpart A. After evaluating the proposed PO, the Forest Service determined that approving the proposed mining plan of operations would be a major Federal action subject to the National Environmental Policy Act as defined in 40 CFR 1508.1. Accordingly, the Forest Service prepared an EA.

The need for the Forest Service's action is to comply with regulations governing the use of surface resources for operations authorized by the United States mining laws on National Forest System lands under 36 CFR 228, subpart A. These regulations require that the Forest Service respond to parties who submit a proposed plan of operations for approval to conduct operations authorized by the United States mining laws on National Forest System lands for part or all of their planned actions including mining, mineral processing, and uses reasonably incident thereto. In accordance with 36 CFR 228.5, the submittal of F3's proposed PO requires the Forest Service to consider whether to approve the proposed mining plan of operations or to require changes or additions necessary for the plan to meet the purpose of the regulations for locatable mineral operations.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2021-11-08 10:15 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\EA\Figure 1-1 Project Location.mxd User: MRQ



PREOJCT LOCATION
Jenny Gulch Gold
Exploration Drilling Project
Final EA
Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 1-1

1.3 Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Policies

The following laws and regulations apply to the proposed Project.

1.3.1 General Mining Act of 1872

Mining on public lands is authorized under the 1872 Mining Act (as amended) (30 USC § 22), which authorizes and governs prospecting [i.e., exploration] and mining for economic minerals such as gold, platinum, and silver on federal lands. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration on lands open to the public domain.

1.3.2 National Environmental Policy Act

The NEPA was established in 1970. NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the environmental consequences of proposed actions on public lands and informs the public about the agency's decision-making process. This environmental analysis is conducted according to the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQs) 1978 regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR §§1500-1508, as amended). The CEQ issued revised regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA, effective September 14, 2020. The revised regulations provide the responsible official the option of conducting an environmental analysis under the 1978 regulations if the process was initiated prior to September 14, 2020 (40 CFR §1506.13, 85 FR 137, p. 43373, July 16, 2020). This EA will follow the 1978 regulations because scoping for this project was originally initiated in 2020.

1.3.3 Forest Plan Direction

The BHNF has developed a programmatic management direction in its 1997 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan; reference (2)). The Forest Plan was amended by the Phase II Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (ROD) in October 2005. The Forest Plan provides management direction for all resource management activities on the BHNF. It establishes goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for protecting communities, properties, and forest values by establishing a variety of resource management practices. The Forest Plan identifies minerals as a resource commodity and states that mineral production will continue in the BHNF in accordance with the 1872 Mining Act and in accordance with 36 CFR 228.

The Forest Plan identifies the following goals and objectives applicable to this Project:

- **Goal 3** – Provide for sustained commodity uses, including mineral resources, in an environmentally acceptable manner
    - **Objective 308** – Ensure that exploration, development, and production of mineral and energy resources are conducted in an environmentally sound matter so that they may contribute to economic growth and national defense.

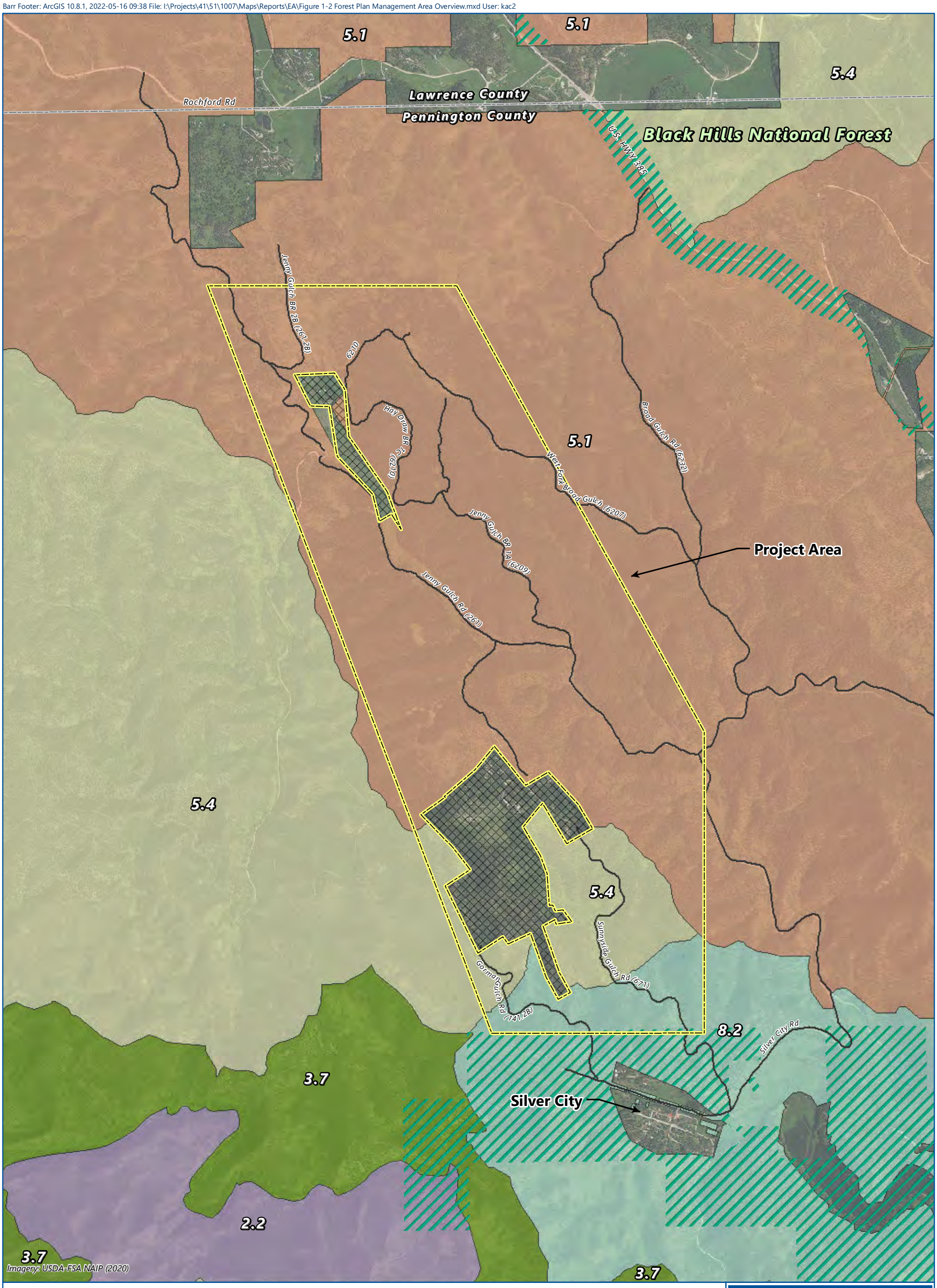
1.3.3.1 Forest Plan Management Area Direction

The Forest Plan sets management allocations for specific uses of land (called Management Areas [MA]) within the BHNF to meet multiple objectives, as described in Chapter 3 of the Forest Plan. Three MAs are located in the Project area, as shown on Figure 1-2 and described below:

- **MA 5.1, Resource Production Emphasis** – Approximately 1,392 acres within the Project area are classified as MA 5.1. This MA is managed for wood products, water yield, and forage production, while providing other commercial products, visual quality, diversity of wildlife, and a variety of other goods and services. Numerous open roads provide commercial access and road-based recreation opportunities, while closed roads provide non-motorized recreation opportunities. Mineral development, including exploration, is an identified activity for this MA. MA 5.1 encompasses 563,898 acres of land, or 45.2 percent of the BHNF.

- **MA 5.4, Big Game Winter Range Emphases** – Approximately 209 acres within the Project area are classified as MA 5.4. This MA is managed to provide high-quality winter and transitional habitat for deer and elk, high quality turkey habitat, habitat for other species, and a variety of multiple uses. Mineral development, including exploration, is an identified activity for this MA. MA 5.4 encompasses 396,516 acres of land, or 31.8 percent of the BHNF.

- **MA 8.2, Developed Recreation Complexes** – Approximately 123 acres within the Project area are classified as MA 8.2. This MA is managed for recreational opportunities and visual qualities adjacent to developed recreation sites and bodies of water. This MA does not list new mineral development as an activity/opportunity in areas that have been withdrawn from mineral entry. MA 8.2 encompasses 11,368 acres of land (excluding water), or less than 1 percent of the BHNF.



Project Area

Project Exlusion Area

County Boundary

Existing USFS Roads to be Utilized

USFS Management Areas

Management Area 2.2

Management Area 3.7

Management Area 5.1

Management Area 5.4

Management Area 8.2

Mineral Withdrawl Area

N

0 2,000

Feet

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FOREST PLAN MANAGEMENT AREA OVERVIEW

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Final EA

Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 1-2

1.3.4 Other Applicable Laws/Regulations

The key laws, regulations, and policies applicable to the Project are described above. Additional laws and regulations that also require consideration in USFS management decisions and/or NEPA are identified below:

- Mining and Minerals Policy Act 1970 (30 USC § 21)
- National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980 ((30 USC § 1601-05).
- Clean Air Act (42 USC 1857 et seq.), as amended and recodified (42 USC 7401 et seq.)
- Clean Water Act (33 USC. 1251 et seq.)
- Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1531 et seq.)
- Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management
- Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands
- Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations
- Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites
- Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USC 703 et seq.)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.)
- Protection of Historic Properties (36 CFR 800)
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as amended
- The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
- The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
- USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination, and Collaboration
- South Dakota Codified Law
- Administrative Rules of South Dakota

2 Alternatives

This chapter provides information on the development and evaluation of Project alternatives. The development of alternatives is directly related to those which achieve the purpose and need for the Project.

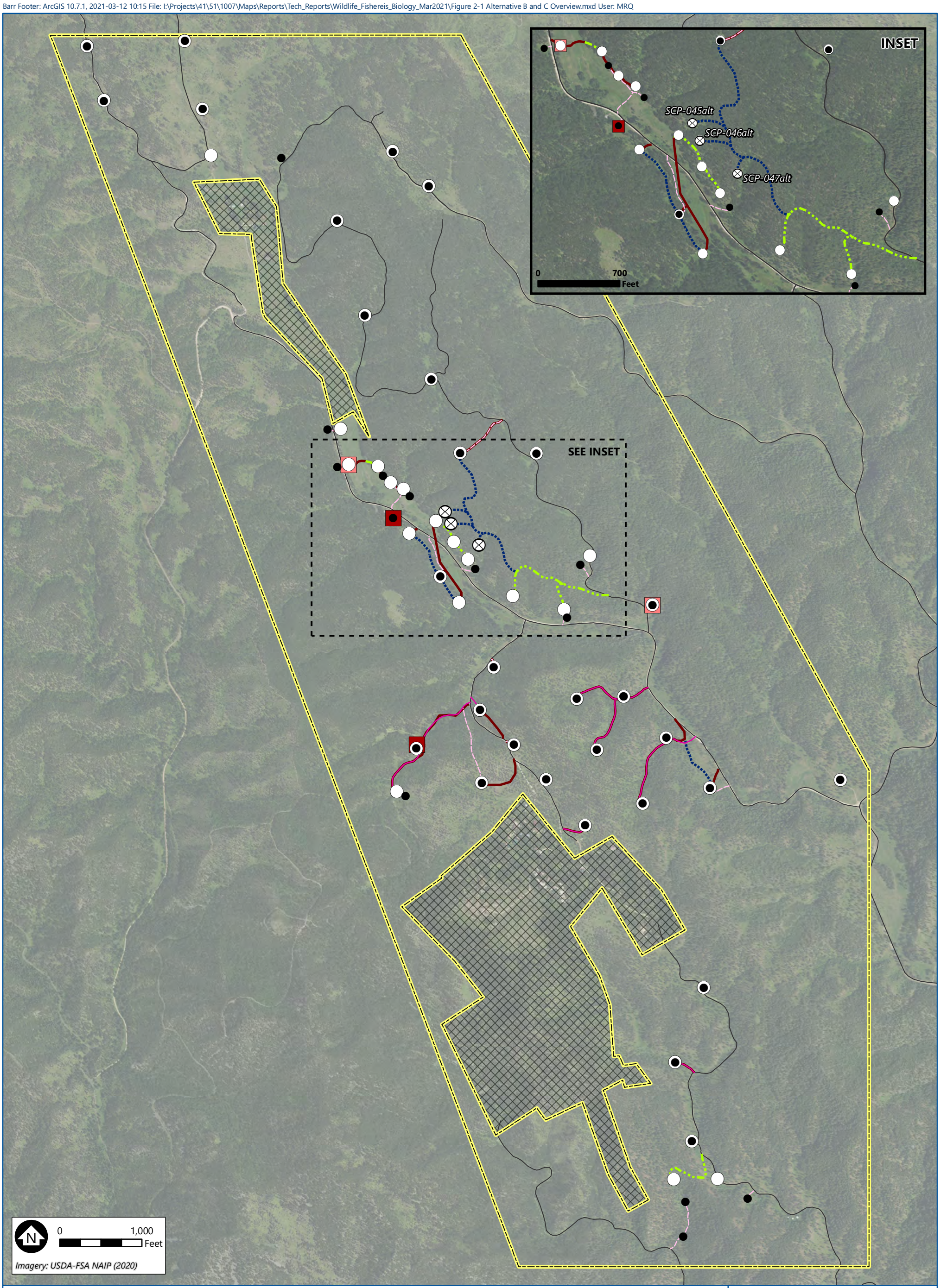
2.1 Alternative A – No Action

The NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14) requires a study of the No Action Alternative to use as a basis for comparing the effects of the proposed action and other action alternatives. Under the No Action Alternative (Alternative A), the USFS would not approve F3's PO to conduct exploration drilling activities. There would be no environmental effects associated with Alternative A. However, Alternative A does not meet the Project's purpose and need to allow F3 to access and explore for minerals on lands open to the public domain in accordance with the General Mining Act of 1872.

2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Alternative B is the proposed action as described in the PO submitted by F3. Alternative B includes diamond core drilling at up to 42 drill sites, access road maintenance (as needed), drill pad clearing (as needed), and reclamation activities (Figure 2-1). Alternative B would require an amendment to the Forest Plan to allow three drill pads in MA 8.2 (Figure 2-2 located in Section 2.3). The Forest Plan designates that no new mineral development (including exploratory drilling to inform future mineral development) is allowed and the majority of the MA around Pactola Lake has been withdrawn from mineral entry. The USFS would be required to prepare a Project specific amendment to the Forest Plan to authorize the drilling activities, despite the F3-proposed drilling locations coinciding with one of the areas that has not been withdrawn from mineral entry.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.7.1, 2021-03-12 10:15 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Wildlife_Fishereis_Biology_Mar2021\Figure 2-1 Alternative B and C Overview.mxd User: MRQ



Drill Pad (Alternative B)
Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Staging Area (Alternative B)
Staging Area (Alternative C)
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)
New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)
New Access Route
Alternate New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

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ALTERNATIVE B AND C OVERVIEW
Jenny Gulch Gold
Exploration Drilling Project
Final EA
Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-1

2.2.1 Drilling and Staging

Each drill site would have a maximum footprint of approximately 2,500 square feet (0.06 acres), where the drilling rig, rod tray, support vehicles, portable cutting tank, and water truck will be placed. Drill holes would range from 500 to 6,000 feet in depth dependent on the results of each hole. Although depths up to 6,000 feet would be authorized, very few holes are planned to extend to this depth; most holes would be drilled to a depth of approximately 1,000 feet. Exploration drilling involves drilling holes vertically and at an angle from the surface. That angle can vary between -90 degrees (vertical) and -45 degrees. Once the angle is set, the drill will remain at that angle until completion of the drill hole. Directional drilling that controls the direction of the boring during drilling (as commonly used in oil and gas development) or horizontal drilling methods will not be used. The number of holes drilled on each drill pad will depend on the findings in the field, with the average drill pad having one to two holes and some having up to four holes. Depending on the results of preceding drill holes, some of the drill sites may not end up being required and would ultimately not be constructed. Drilling operations would take place 24-hours a day divided between two 12-hour shifts. Two staging areas (0.25 acres each) would be used to store equipment and tools. Drill pads and staging areas would result in 3.0 acres of temporary surface disturbance. Drill pad locations were selected based on local geology, subsurface target concepts, and surface conditions that allow F3 to best test its scientific theories while minimizing surface disturbance.

The drilling process proposed by F3 would use water mixed with industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds or other natural and/or biodegradable additives to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. No other chemicals or solvents would be used in drilling. Any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters. Water would be trucked from the municipal or industrial source to storage holding tanks either at a drill site and/or one of the staging areas. Approximately 5,000 to 10,000 gallons of water would be used per day per drill rig. During drilling activities, water would be circulated using a water pump with water lines transporting water from the storage tanks to the drill site. At the end of drilling operations, excess water would be disposed of at a municipal wastewater disposal location, in agreement with the municipality.

Drill cuttings and used water would be recovered and collected in tanks at the drill site. Settlement would be used to separate the cuttings, allowing the water to be reused in the drilling process. Upon completion of a drill hole, the cuttings would be either thin-spread and buried beneath the topsoil (which is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the western U.S.) or transported off-site to an approved disposal location. Spread drill cutting depth would be dependent on hole depth with most sites resulting in a spread drill cuttings depth of 0.25 inches; however, some sites (holes up to 6,000 feet deep) may result in up to approximately 1.50 inches of drill cuttings spread across the drill pad. Topsoil would be placed on on-site cuttings and reseeded/replanted to match surrounding vegetation. Burying cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Drill pads would be reclaimed upon completion of all drilling activities, as one reclamation effort at the end.

2.2.2 Site Access

Main access from the north would be from NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via county Highway 237 (Rochford Road). The primary access from the south would be from NFSR 671 (Sunnyside Gulch Road) or NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via Silver City Road. Additional NFSRs that are anticipated to be used for access include NFSR 261, 720.2B, 671, 141.2B, and 261.2B. National Forest System Trails (NFST) 6207, 6209, and 6210 are also anticipated to be used for access, all of which allow motorized vehicle use. Approximately 5,280 feet (one mile) of existing local roadways noted above would be used to access Project features. In addition, approximately 4,700 linear feet (0.89 miles) of 8-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access route may be constructed for drill site access, resulting in less than 1 acre of additional temporary surface disturbance. These temporary overland trails would be obliterated and returned to natural conditions after Project completion. Existing access roads and overland trails would be improved only if needed and only to the extent necessary to gain access to the site.

2.2.3 Proposed Equipment

F3 proposes to use the following equipment to complete drilling and associated restoration of the Project:

- One to four diamond drill rigs
- Drill rod racks with drill pipe and casing pipe
- Six to eight four-wheel drive pickup trucks for access to drilling sites
- Four all-terrain vehicles for access to drilling sites
- Two snowmobiles for access to drilling sites (for winter use only)
- One water truck, as needed to fill water storage tanks
- One excavator
- One dozer
- One skid-steer
- One to three water storage tanks, up to 10,000 gallons in size
- Up to four water supply pumps
- Water line/hose, mud pump, and mixing tanks for grouting and/or cementing drill holes.

Drilling equipment (i.e., drill rigs, drill rod racks, drill pipe, casing pipe) would be used at each drilling site as this equipment is needed to perform the drilling. Other equipment, such as the excavator, dozer, and skid-steer would be used on an as-needed basis to facilitate access, maintenance, and reclamation. When not in use, this equipment would be stored at one of the staging areas.

2.2.4 Vegetation and Soil Removal

Tree clearing and other vegetation removal would be limited to only that which is needed to facilitate access. Any soils that may need to be removed for pad clearing would be stockpiled for later use in site reclamation.

2.2.5 Reclamation

Upon completion of drilling at each hole, the hole would be capped, sealed, and plugged per Administrative Rules of South Dakota 74:11:08.

Drill pads and staging areas would be reclaimed upon completion of drilling by re-grading the pads to pre-Project contours and reseeding with Black Hills reclamation seed mix, as noted in the PO (reference (1)). Safety signage would be removed from the area, and stockpiled soils would be either spread over the drill pad area, stacked in soil-free piles, or disposed off-site at an approved facility. Overland trails used for access to drill pads would be re-seeded and returned to pre-existing conditions under the direction of the USFS. The draft reclamation plan for the Project is provided in Appendix A.

2.2.6 Monitoring and Implementation

F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the Project. F3 is required to submit a reclamation plan to the USFS prior to authorization for Project initiation in accordance with USFS Manual 2840. In addition, F3 is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the USFS for the Project, with the bond amount determined by the USFS. F3's PO would be administered by the USFS Minerals Specialist, and other governmental entities with permitting authority will be responsible for enforcing their permit conditions as they deem appropriate. Sites will be monitored for a minimum of three years after reclamation.

2.2.7 Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures

As part of their Plan of Operations, F3 intends to implement impact minimization measures into Project design, as summarized in Table 2-1. These measures have been developed in response to comments received during the Project scoping process.

Table 2-1 Summary of Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Access and Transportation	• Overland trails used for access would be regraded and reseeded as directed by USFS. • Any unexpected road damage would be repaired as soon as possible based on contractor availability. • Contractor equipment would not exceed local road weight restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. • Traffic to and from the drill sites would be limited to site set-up, driller shift changes, management oversight, sample pickup, and site restoration. • Additional safety signage (construction use, warning signs, drill signs, trucks entering signs, etc.) would be posted throughout the work area to communicate construction equipment use of the road.
Botanical Resources/ Reclamation	• Tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary. In areas where tree removal is unavoidable, the affected area would be reseeded/replanted as part of reclamation with Black Hills seed mix. • Disturbed areas would be reclaimed and reseeded according to USFS standards.
Fisheries and Wildlife	• Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15 – August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger. • Drill sites would not be located in limestone areas to avoid potential vertigo snail habitat disturbance. In addition, protection of the WIZ surrounding streams/seeps/springs would also provide protection for vertigo snails. • Drilling within 500-feet of a known bat roost location would occur outside the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31). Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger.
Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	• Holding tanks would be used to store drilling water rather than sumps to minimize potential for sedimentation and infiltration. • All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • Materials used for the Project would be stored either at staging areas or at the drill sites; materials would not be stored along access roads or other locations. • Any soils that may need to be removed for clearing drill pads or staging areas would be stockpiled on-site for later use in site reclamation. • Upon completion of a drill hole, the drill cuttings and fines would be dispersed in the disturbed area. • Topsoil would be placed on cuttings and reseeded/replanted as necessary to match surrounding vegetation. • Drill pads, staging areas and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completion of all Project activities. • Drilling would primarily require the use of water. In addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. No other chemicals or solvents would be used in drilling. Rock core, water, and fine-grained rock drill cuttings generated by drilling would be stored in holding tanks. Water would be recycled back into the drilling process, and drill cuttings would be disposed as noted above.

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Hydrology – Water Quality/Quantity	• The only fluids used for the Project are fuel (for vehicles/machinery), oil (for vehicles/machinery), water, and industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds or other natural and/or biodegradable additives. • All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • Water would not be extracted from local surface waters; any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source. • Upon completion of drilling at each hole, the hole would be capped, sealed, and plugged per Administrative Rules of South Dakota 74:11:08. Drill holes would be sealed within 24 to 48 hours of drilling completion prior to moving the drill rig. • Casing will be used, when necessary, to protect groundwater in unconsolidated, surficial geologic units. The need for casing is expected to be minimal as most drilling is proposed directly on bedrock with little to no soil or surficial geologic units.
Public Health and Safety	• Residences in close proximity to drilling activities would be notified prior to Project initiation. • An emergency response plan would be developed for the Project and would be provided to local first responders in advance of Project initiation. This plan would be developed in coordination with local first responders and would address a number of emergency situations (i.e., fire, injury, etc.). • All drilling sites and staging areas would be equipped with spill kits to immediately address any fuel or oil spill. All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • All vehicles, drill rigs, and other on-site equipment would be inspected as part of daily safety checks and will be equipped with more than one fire extinguisher, which would also be inspected routinely. • A site security plan would be developed to maintain site safety and limit risk of public interference.

2.3 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Alternative C was developed in response to issues identified during Project scoping. This alternative meets the Project's purpose and need in a way that implements siting factors (i.e., factors that influence where features are sited or positioned) and additional mitigation measures to further minimize Project effects. The additional measures or siting differences included in Alternative C are summarized below. Specifically, Alternative C has been developed to minimize effects by avoiding cultural resources, eliminating the need for a Forest Plan Amendment, as discussed below, and to minimize effects to the water influence zone (WIZ). In order to minimize effects, additional drilling pads would be needed to achieve a comparable level of data collection as explained below.

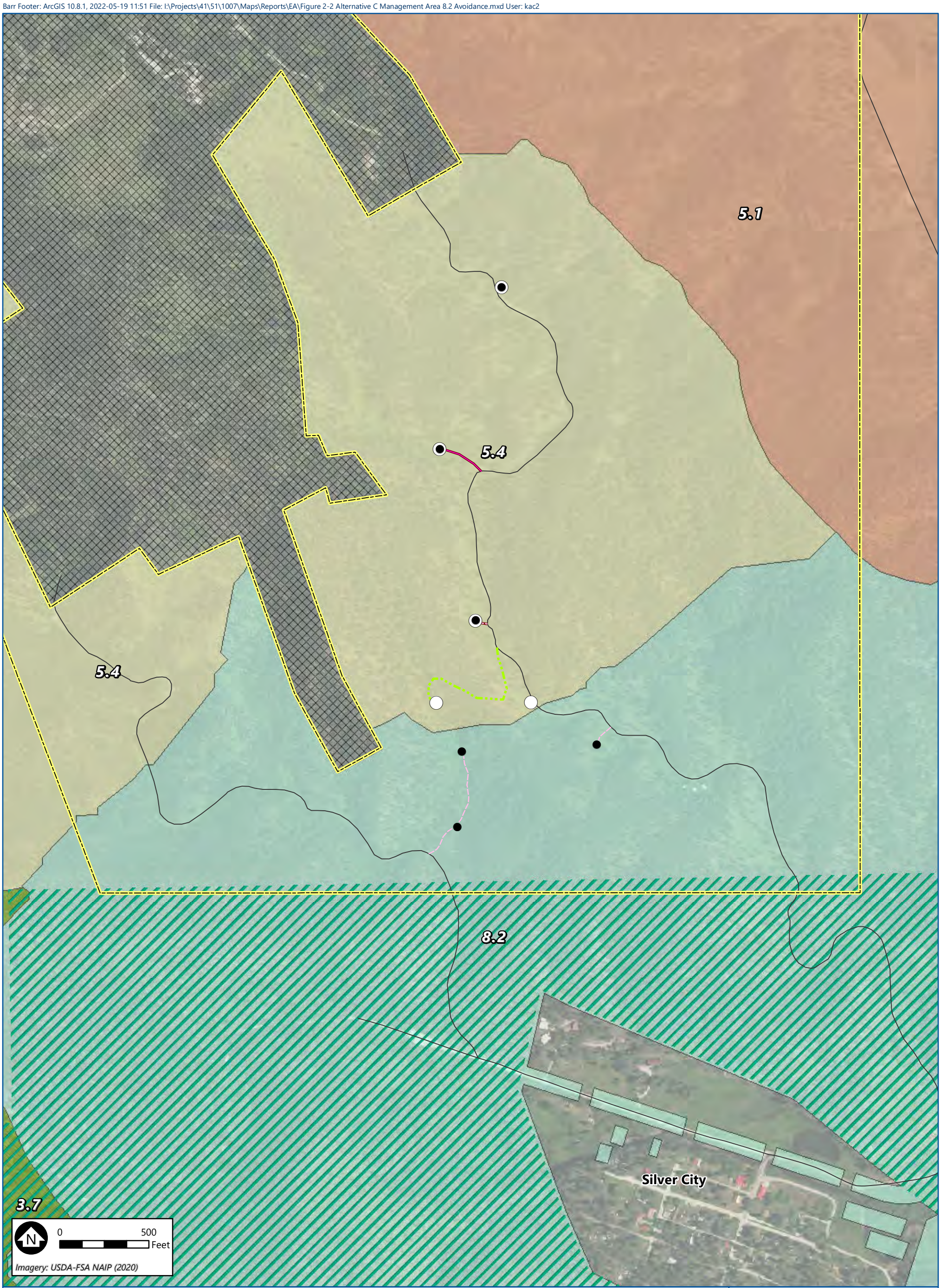
Alternative C proposes drilling 47 exploration drilling pads as shown in Figure 2-1; this number of drill pads in combination with the two staging areas would result in 3.3 acres of temporary surface disturbance. Alternative C relocates 5 drilling pads, one staging area, and associated access roads proposed in Alternative B to avoid effects to cultural resources; however, F3 has determined that additional drilling pads are needed to collect an equivalent level of information compared to Alternative B. Under Alternative C, approximately 5,700 feet (1.1 mile) of existing local roadways would be used to

access Project features. In addition, up to approximately 9,925 linear feet (1.88 miles) of 12-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access route may be developed for drill site access, resulting in up to approximately 2.73 acres of additional temporary surface disturbance as compared to Alternative B. Alternative C would require a 12-foot wide access corridor to accommodate the more rugged terrain traversed compared to Alternative B.

Existing USFS administrative roads not open for public use (i.e., administrative roads), as defined in the USFS 2010 Travel Management Record of Decision, would be used to access sites to the extent practicable; in some cases, this may include travel through the WIZ on existing administrative roads. Locations accessed through the WIZ would be planned for winter construction to the extent practicable; however, should site conditions at the time of construction warrant these administrative roads unusable (i.e., flooding in the WIZ or another reason), three drilling pads (SPC-045, SPC-046, and SPC-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ; this shift has been accounted for in the access road measurements provided above. The use of alternate drill pad and access road locations would require coordination with and authorization by USFS engineers and the District Ranger.

As mentioned above in Section 2.2, Alternative B includes three drilling sites in an area designated by the Forest Plan as MA 8.2, Developed Recreation Complexes. Alternative C relocates these three drilling sites from MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Project-specific Forest Plan amendment (Figure 2-2).

Alternative B includes three drilling sites immediately adjacent to USFS-identified WIZ. A WIZ is a designated zone adjacent to stream channels and other waterbodies for which focused efforts are made to maintain and improve water quality or other water and riparian dependent values such as habitat, recreation, and visual and aesthetic quality. In the interest of maintaining the integrity of established WIZ areas and minimizing water quality and recreation concerns, Alternative C relocates three drill sites outside of WIZ areas (Figure 2-3). To avoid the need for tree clearing and construction of new temporary site access, as mentioned above, it is possible that the WIZ may be crossed during frozen conditions to access certain drilling sites. If the WIZ is impassable without causing considerable damage to soils, wetlands, and other resources, three drilling pads immediately adjacent to the WIZ (SPC-45, SPC-46, and SPC-47) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ, as shown on Figure 2-3. This would be determined on a case by case basis and in coordination with the Forest Service hydrologist, engineers, PO administrator and District Ranger.



Drill Pad (Alternative B)
Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Project Area
Project Exlusion Area
Existing USFS Roads to be Utilized
Mineral Withdrawl Area

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)
New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)
New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

USFS Management Areas
Management Area 3.7
Management Area 5.1
Management Area 5.4
Management Area 8.2

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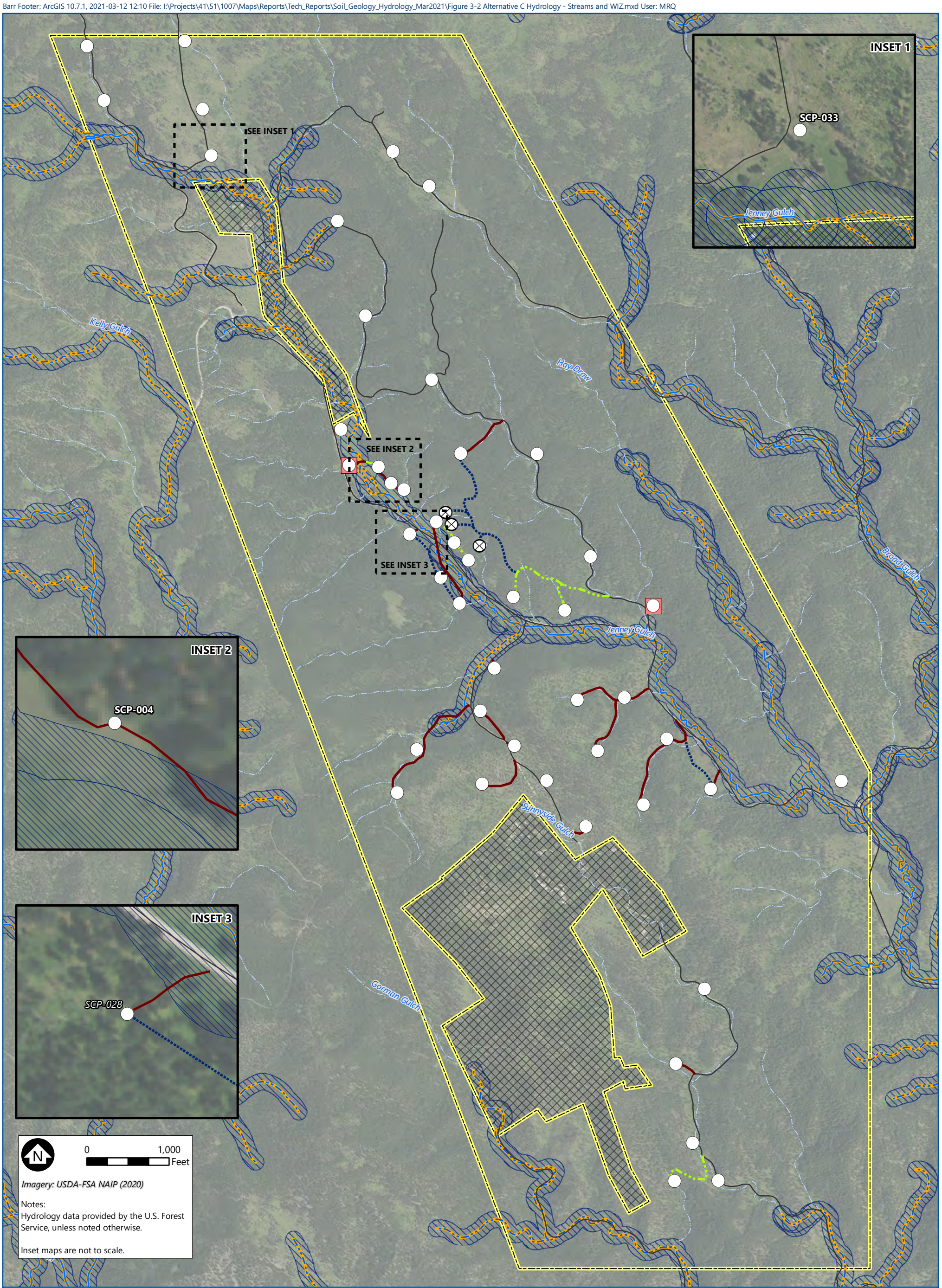
ALTERNATIVE C MANAGEMENT AREA 8.2 AVOIDANCE
Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project
Final EA
Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-2



Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Staging Area (Alternative C)
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)
New Access Route
Alternate New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

Hydology Data
Ephemeral Stream
Intermittent Stream
Perennial Stream
Protected Stream
Water Influence Zone (WIZ)

BARR

ALTERNATIVE C
WIZ AVOIDANCE
Jenny Gulch Gold
Exploration Drilling Project
Final EA
Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-3

The impact minimization measures noted in Table 2-1 would be applied to both Alternative B and Alternative C; however, Alternative C would also include impact minimization measures beyond those noted in Table 2-1; these additional impact minimization measures are summarized in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Summary of Alternative C Additional Impact Minimization Measures

Issue	Additional Impact Minimization Measures
Botanical Resources/ Reclamation	• Each drill pad and temporary overland access route would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of use rather than upon completion of all drilling activities.
Cultural/Heritage Resources	• Relocates drilling pads and access roads to avoid potential cultural resources conflicts.
Public Health and Safety	• Drilling pads within 500 feet of a residence would limit drilling to one, 12-hour daytime shift (7:00am – 7:00pm) to mitigate nighttime noise potential. This applies to drill pads SCP-012 and SCP-020.
Hydrology – Water Quality/Water Supply	• Alternative C includes a provision that the WIZ may be crossed during frozen conditions to access certain sites; however, if seasonal conditions indicate the WIZ is impassable without causing considerable damage to soils, wetlands, and other resources, the three drilling pads immediately adjacent to the WIZ (SPC-045, SPC-046, and SPC-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ. The use of alternate drill pad and access road locations would require coordination with and authorization by USFS engineers and the District Ranger.
Recreation and Travel Management	• Alternative C relocates three drill pads from MA 8.2, which is managed for recreational opportunities and visual qualities adjacent to developed recreation sites and bodies of water. • Alternative C relocates three drill pads (SPC-45, SPC-46, and SPC-47) from WIZ areas in the interest of maintaining WIZ integrity and minimizing water quality and recreation concerns.

2.4 Alternatives Carried Forward for Detailed Study

As described above, one No Action and two Action alternatives have been developed for the Project. Although Alternative A, No Action, does not meet the purpose and need of the Project, it provides a baseline from which Project effects and potential magnitude of effects can be assessed.

Alternative B and Alternative C are comparable action alternatives. However, Alternative C incorporates additional impact minimization measures and siting shifts compared to Alternative B. These additional impact minimization measures were developed by the USFS and F3 in response to issues identified during Project scoping. Alternative C positions Project features in a way that avoids cultural resources conflicts. In addition, Alternative C relocates six drilling sites to avoid environmentally sensitive areas – MA 8.2 and WIZ areas. Although Alternative B and Alternative C are similar, they do have several differences which warrants detailed effects assessment; as such, both alternatives are also carried forward for detailed study in this EA.

No other alternatives were identified that meet the Project's purpose and need while incorporating impact minimization measures.

3 Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

3.1 Overview of Resource Issues

This chapter summarizes the potential effects of the proposed action and alternatives for each resource issue identified based on a review of the Project setting and Project scoping comments. The resource issues, issue statements, which were formed from scoping comments, and evaluation criteria for each resource carried forward for impact assessment is in Table 3-1. It should be noted that public health and safety assessment was not originally considered, but was added to the issues summary based on scoping comments.

Table 3-1 Summary of Project Issues

Issue	Issue Statement	Evaluation Criteria
Access & Transportation	The Project would lead to an increase in construction traffic, which may damage roads.	Extent, location, and timing of construction traffic and potential for damage to roads.
Botanical Resources	The Project would require removal of existing vegetation and could negatively affect sensitive plant species.	Identification of listed (state and federal), Region 2 Sensitive Species (R2 SS, and management target species. Location and amount of vegetation removal.
Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Project could affect cultural resources and tribal sacred lands by altering the landscape adjacent to these sites. Access to some sites could be limited for the duration of Project activities.	Number of sites affected and nature of effects for specific sites. Project proximity to sites, access restrictions, timing, and length of effects.
Fisheries & Wildlife	The Project could affect wildlife and associated habitat due to a temporary loss of habitat, pollution, noise, and human activity.	Vegetation removal and effect on wildlife species. Potential for contamination of waters inhabited by fish and utilized by local wildlife. Level of wildlife displacement as a result of noise and human activity.
Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	The Project has the potential for soil compaction and erosion and geologic hazards through equipment use and drilling activities. The Project could affect groundwater quality through drilling activities.	Drilling processes, materials used, and well sealing plan.
Hydrology – Water Quality/Water Supply/Aquatic Resources	The Project would require subsurface drilling which could indirectly affect private wells and quality of the water supply. The Project could affect water quality in local surface waters through ground disturbing activities associated with access and drilling.	Proximity to surface waters and proposed surface water crossings, proximity to private wells, drilling processes, materials used, and well sealing plan.
Recreation & Travel Management	The Project could alter the quality of recreation and tourism as a result of increased traffic, noise, visual effects, and pollution.	Nature and extent of traffic, noise, and visual effects on tourists and recreational activities. Potential for pollution of local waters where recreational activities occur.
Public Health & Safety	The Project could produce noise and light pollution, as well as hazardous waste spills and subsequent contamination from Project construction vehicles and infrastructure.	Nature and extent of noise and light from Project construction vehicles and infrastructure. Nature and extent of materials used for the Project and the potential for spills.

The following resources were not identified as issues based on Project scoping and review of the proposed Project in the context of the environmental setting. As such, these resources are not discussed further in this document:

- Climate and air quality (beyond elements tied to public health and safety)
- Rangeland
- Non-native, invasive species (beyond applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines, as described in the Botany Technical Report located in Appendix C)
- Socioeconomics
- Vegetation and timber resources

3.2 Access and Transportation

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Several existing roadways are present throughout the Project area, as shown on Figure 2-1 of Appendix B. Some of these roads would be used to access the Project area. The main access from the north would be from National Forest System Road (NFSR) 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via county Highway 237 (Rochford Road). The primary access from the south would be from NFSR 671 (Sunnyside Gulch Road) or NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via Silver City Road. Additional NFSRs that are anticipated to be used for access include NFSR 720.2B, 141.2B, and 261.2B; as well as motorized NFSTs 6207, 6209, and 6210 (see Figure 2-1 in Appendix B).

As summarized in Appendix B, the USFS classifies maintenance NSFRs in categories ranging from 1 to 5. The Project would use roads classified as maintenance level 1 (NFSR 1412B, 261.2B, and 720.2B), 2 (NFSR 671), 3 (NFSR 261), and 4 (Silver City Road), as well as motorized trails (NFST 6207, 6209, and 6210). There are no maintenance level 5 roadways in the Project area.

Additional information on access and transportation conditions in the Project area is provided in Appendix B. Applicable laws, regulations, policy, and Forest Plan direction related to access and transportation can also be found in Appendix B.

3.2.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, the Project would not occur. As such, Alternative A would not result in changes to existing access and transportation conditions.

3.2.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct effects on access and transportation could occur primarily through Project-generated traffic and through construction of new temporary routes to access drill sites. In addition to the existing USFS roads and motorized trails the Project intends to use, approximately 4,700 linear feet of 8-foot wide temporary overland trails would be improved for drill site access, resulting in approximately 0.86 acres of additional temporary surface disturbance (see Figure 2-2 in Appendix B). These temporary overland trails would be obliterated and returned to natural conditions after Project completion. Existing access routes and overland trails would be improved to provide Project

access only if needed and only to the extent necessary to gain safe access to the site, and the level of improvement would match what is needed for equipment (work vehicle, drilling rig, water truck, etc.) to safely access the site.

Appendix B identifies the types and amount of construction vehicles that would be used at various points during the Project. Although the additional traffic generated by the Project would be staggered throughout the life of drilling and reclamation and is not expected to be significant in the context of the setting, it would pose a short-term change to maintenance level 2 and 3 roadway users who may not be accustomed to maneuvering in the presence of larger vehicles in this area. To minimize potential for vehicle and traffic conflicts, F3 would limit traffic to and from the drill sites and use signage and/or temporary fencing. Contractor equipment would not exceed local road width restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. Safety signage (i.e., construction use, warning signs, drilling signs, trucks entering signs, etc.) would be posted through the work area to communicate construction equipment use of the roadway. All signage placed on USFS roads and trails would meet guidelines in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and Engineering Management series 7100-15 Sign and Poster Guidelines for the USFS. USFS would review and approve the signage plan prior to implementation.

Additional traffic on maintenance level 1, 2, and 3 roadways has the potential to create or expand existing potholes, exacerbate washboard conditions on the road surface, cause rutting, increase soil erosion, and pose other roadway condition concerns. Travel on wet roads can enhance rutting to the road surface, which may require further additional measures (gravel surfacing, drainage, etc.). To minimize potential for roadway damages, F3 and/or its contractor's equipment would not exceed local road weight restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. In addition, all road improvements, reconstruction, maintenance, and/or restoration would need to be designed to USFS standards and approved by USFS personnel. F3 would be responsible for repairing any unexpected road damage to the appropriate maintenance level standards as soon as possible based on appropriate contractor availability, and all trails/roads would be returned to their original widths as part of reclamation. As such, roadway damage resulting from the Project is anticipated to be short-term and localized to the identified Project access routes. In addition, adjacent vegetation along existing roads and temporary overland access routes may need to be removed to provide adequate access for drilling activities. Upon completion of the Project, all overland trails would be regraded and reseeded as directed by USFS.

To address the potential effects on access and transportation, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to National BMPs and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix B.

3.2.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on access and transportation would generally be the same as those described for Alternative B with the following exceptions. Alternative C relocates some of the drilling pads and access routes proposed in Alternative B to avoid effects to sensitive resources; however, doing so would require additional drilling pads to collect an equivalent level of information compared to Alternative B. Under Alternative C, up to approximately 9,925 linear feet (1.88 miles) of 12-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access routes may be developed or improved for drill site

access, resulting in up to approximately 2.73 acres of temporary surface disturbance (see Figure 2-3 in Appendix B). Potential effects from site access and transportation would be similar as those described for Alternative B. Alternative C would result in more direct effects from the construction of temporary, overland access routes; however, it would avoid direct effects to sensitive resources and would require the same level of reclamation as Alternative B.

3.3 Botanical Resources

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The Project area is located within the Black Hills Plateau ecoregion of the Middle Rockies ecoregion. The Black Hills Plateau ecoregion is a relatively flat, elevated expanse covering the mid-elevation slopes and grasslands of the Black Hills. Plant communities within the Project area include forested areas and meadows. Botanical surveys conducted in the Project area in summer and fall of 2008 identified the following plant communities in order of prevalence: ponderosa pine forest, ponderosa pine/quaking aspen, meadow plant, and white spruce/quaking aspen communities. Additional information on plant communities in the Project can be found in Appendix C.

Sensitive flora species occur in the BHNF, including federally listed threatened or endangered species protected under the Endangered Species Act, USFS Region 2 Sensitive Species (R2 SS), and USFS species of local concern (SOLC). Lists of species that may be found in each of these categories is provided in Appendix C, along with the species occurrence within the Project area. Applicable laws, regulations, policy, and Forest Plan direction related to botanical resources can also be found in Appendix C.

3.3.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, no vegetation clearing or earth work would occur; as such Alternative A would not result in effects on botanical resources.

3.3.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Alternative B would result in direct effects to botanical resources due to the necessary clearing activities required to obtain site access and for grading some drill pad locations. Alternative B would result in approximately 3.8 acres of temporary vegetation disturbance from construction of site access, drill pads, and staging areas.

It is unlikely for sensitive flora species, including federally listed, USFS R2 SS, or SOLC to occur within the Project area, given lack of suitable habitat and/or given their lack of documented occurrences within direct proximity of the Project area. There is no suitable habitat present for federally listed species; therefore, there would be no effect to federally listed threatened or endangered species. There are no known occurrences of R2 SS within the areas that would be disturbed by the Project, and in some cases, there is also no suitable habitat. Therefore, Alternative B may adversely affect R2 SS individuals, but they are not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Project area or cause a trend toward federal listing. Similarly, there are no known occurrences of plant SOLC in the Project area. Potential effects of Alternative B on plant species are addressed in Table 6-1 of Appendix C.

To address the potential effects on botanical resources, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix C.

3.3.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

As is the case with Alternative B, Alternative C would result in direct effects to botanical resources, including meadows and trees, due to the necessary clearing activities required to obtain site access and for grading some drill pad locations; these activities would result in approximately 6.05 acres of temporary vegetation disturbance.

Potential effects on botany associated with Alternative C are the same as those identified for Alternative B, and potential Alternative C botany effects by species are addressed in Table 6-1 of Appendix C. To address the potential effects on botanical resources, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix C.

3.4 Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)

3.4.1 Affected Environment

A Level I cultural resources records search and targeted site visits were conducted to determine what previously recorded cultural resources are located within and nearby the Project area. A records search of the Project area and one mile around it was conducted on June 18, 2020, with the South Dakota State Archaeological Research Center (SARC). A second record search was conducted on March 3, 2021, and showed no changes to the data. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the National Historic Landmark online databases were also reviewed. The records searches revealed that the entire Project area has been covered by previous cultural resource inventories, and that 25 previously recorded cultural resources are located within the proposed Project area. Of these, two cultural resources sites are eligible for the NRHP. A site visit was completed for these two eligible sites to determine potential Project impacts.

Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements.

3.4.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, the Project would not occur. As such, Alternative A would not affect cultural resources.

3.4.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Direct effects on cultural resources could occur if ground-disturbing Project activities occur where cultural resources are present or if the Project permanently hinders the viewshed of historic structures. Under Alternative B, drill pads and proposed access roads would cross the boundaries of five cultural resources

sites, two of which are NRHP-eligible sites. A site visit confirmed that Alternative B would result in adverse effects to cultural resources due to Project access routes and drill pad siting. However, no long-term visual impacts to historic structures were anticipated to result from Alternative B. Under Alternative B, there are no anticipated long-term visual impacts to historic structures from the Project.

In the event that cultural resources are discovered or disturbed during Project implementation, work in the vicinity of the discovery or disturbance must cease immediately. The BHNF Mystic Ranger District must be contacted so the agency can take steps to avoid, minimize or mitigate possible adverse effects. The BHNF Mystic Ranger district will also notify the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) that have requested to be on the Forest's mailing list within 48 hours of the discovery or disturbance, as outlined in 36 CFR 800.13.

3.4.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Direct effects on cultural resources could occur if ground-disturbing Project activities occur where cultural resources are present or if the Project permanently hinders the viewshed of historic structures. Under Alternative C, Project access routes and drill pads have been shifted to avoid potential effects to cultural resources features. Under Alternative C, there are also no anticipated long-term visual impacts to historic structures from the Project.

An overall determination of *no adverse effect* to historic properties has been made for Alternative C. THPOs were forwarded a copy of the cultural resources report on July 2, 2021, with a request for comments on the determination of effect. The cultural resources report was provided to SHPO on August 2, 2021, with a request for concurrence.

Concurrence with this determination is currently pending from the SHPO and regional THPOs.

In the event that cultural resources are discovered or disturbed during Project implementation, work in the vicinity of the discovery or disturbance must cease immediately. The BHNF Mystic Ranger District must be contacted so the agency can take steps to avoid, minimize or mitigate possible adverse effects. The BHNF Mystic Ranger district will also notify the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) that have requested to be on the Forest's mailing list within 48 hours of the discovery or disturbance, as outlined in 36 CFR 800.13

3.5 Wildlife and Fisheries

3.5.1 Affected Environment

Wildlife species inhabiting the Project area are those species that are well-habituated to ponderosa pine forest communities, such as small to medium sized mammals (e.g., squirrels, fox, and deer), large ungulates (e.g., bighorn sheep, elk), migratory birds, raptors, and several insect species. Fisheries species inhabiting the Project area include species that are habituated to small mountain streams, such as various minnow species. Trout (e.g., brown trout and rainbow trout) are stocked annually by South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (SD GFP).

Sensitive wildlife and fish species occur in the BHNF, including federally protected species, USFS R2 SS, USFS SOLC, and USFS Management Indicator Species (MIS). Lists of species that may be found in each of these categories is provided in Appendix D, along with the species occurrence within the Project area. Applicable laws, regulations, policy, and Forest Plan direction related to wildlife and fisheries resources can also be found in Appendix D.

3.5.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, no vegetation clearing or earth work would occur; as such Alternative A would not result in effects on wildlife and fisheries resources.

3.5.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Short-term, indirect effects on wildlife could occur during vegetation clearing and drilling activities under Alternative B. These activities would result in increased noise and human activity. Many species, even those accustomed to human proximity, could temporarily abandon habitats within and near the Project area until the work is completed. These temporary effects are not expected to irreparably harm wildlife individuals or populations, and it is expected that once the Project is complete, wildlife would return to previous habitats within the Project area. Potential short-term, indirect effects on fish species could occur during Project activities as a result of sedimentation in aquatic habitat.

Short-term, direct effects on wildlife habitat could result from vegetation/habitat removal associated with drill sites, staging areas, and temporary access trails. Vegetation and tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary to facilitate access to the site and drilling activities. Fish species habitat would not be directly affected by Project activities, as no activities are planned to occur within permanent waterbodies or watercourses.

As summarized in Section 4.1 of Appendix D, four federally protected species are known to occur in Pennington County. The USFS has concluded that Alternative B would have *no effect* on three of these species (whooping crane, rufa red knot, and bald eagles) and that Alternative B *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the northern long-eared bat. Additional discussion and justification for these determinations is provided in Section 4.5.1 of Appendix D.

As summarized in Section 4.2 and on Table 4-1 of Appendix D, there are 33 R2 SS in the BHNF, 17 of which have the potential to occur in the Project area. For these 17 R2 SS, the USFS has concluded that Alternative B *may adversely impact individuals but is not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Project area nor cause a trend toward federal listing*. Additional discussion and justification for these determinations is provided in Section 4.5.2 of Appendix D.

As summarized in Section 5.1 and on Table 5-1 of Appendix D, there are 19 wildlife and fish SOLC that occur in the BHNF, 17 of which have the potential to occur within the Project area. While habitat does exist in the Project area for these 17 SOLC, due to the small scale of the Project in relation to habitats available across the BHNF, the USFS has concluded that these 17 SOLC are likely to persist because the Project is consistent with Forest Plan direction for SOLC habitats. Additional discussion and justification for these determinations is provided in Section 5.4.1 of Appendix D.

As summarized in Section 5.2 and on Table 5-2 of Appendix D, there are nine wildlife and fish MIS that occur in the BHNF, eight of which have the potential to occur within the Project area. While habitat does exist in the Project area for these eight MIS, due to the small scale of the Project in relation to habitats available across the BHNF, the USFS has concluded that there would be limited effect on BHNF-wide habitat trends for any of these eight MIS. Additional discussion and justification for these determinations is provided in Section 5.4.2 of Appendix D.

To address the potential effects on wildlife and fisheries resources, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix D.

3.5.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on wildlife and fisheries resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

3.6 Soils and Geology

3.6.1 Affected Environment

3.6.1.1 Soils

Soils in the Project area are relatively young and weakly developed, having formed from material weathered from underlying bedrock, alluvial and colluvial deposits, or various combinations of these materials. Soils are thin to absent on rock outcroppings; generally shallow on steep hills slopes; and relatively deep on the gentler hill slopes and in alluvial valleys. The Project area contains four soil map units, as shown on Figure 2-1 and 2-2 of Appendix E. The Pactola-Virkula-Rock outcrop complex and the Pactola-Pactola, shallow Rock outcrop complex soil map units represent approximately 97% of the soil resources in the Project area. Additional information on the soil map units in the Project area can be found in Appendix E.

3.6.1.2 Geology

The Black Hills area consists of a Precambrian crystalline core surrounded by dipping Phanerozoic sedimentary units, as shown on Figure 2-3 of Appendix E. The core generally consists of steeply dipping metasedimentary and metaigneous schist with granitic intrusions. Surrounding the core are limestone, shale, and sandstone units, which originally were deposited over and now dip at lower angles away from the core. Igneous emplacement at depth, during the Laramide orogeny (approximately 50-60 million years ago), led to an uplift event. Following the uplift, the overlying sedimentary layers have eroded, partially exposing the more resistant crystalline core. The Project area is located within the core, and the local bedrock is mainly metagraywacke and metamorphosed black and tuffaceous shale. Quartz veins and iron-rich chert, which may contain gold and mineralization, are localized in the schist, making up a very small percent of the overall rock mass. The majority of the rock does not contain gold or mineralization.

3.6.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, no vegetation clearing, earth work, or other activities would occur; as such Alternative A would not result in effects on soil or geologic resources.

3.6.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, potential short-term direct and indirect effects on soil and geologic resources could occur from Project activities associated with access, clearing, and drilling. To address the potential effects on soil and geologic resources, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the National BMPs, Region 2 WCPs, and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix E. Applicable laws, regulations, and policy related to soil and geology resources can also be found in Appendix E.

3.6.3.1 Soils

The equipment used for drilling and clearing required for Alternative B have the potential to lead to soil compaction and erosion within drill pad locations, staging areas, and temporary overland trails. The soil map units identified in the Project area are ranked slight to severe for their compaction potential, as summarized on Table 2-1 of Appendix E. As such, with the exception of the Pactola-Pactola shallow rock outcrop complex, which is ranked "slight" for compaction potential, soils throughout the entire Project area have a significant potential for being compacted if Project activities occur when soils are wet.

The Pactola-Pactola, shallow Rock outcrop complex and the Pactola-Virkula-Rock outcrop complex, which collectively represent 97% of the Project area, have soil erosion hazard ratings of very severe and moderate, respectively. These soil map units are also located on slopes of 40 to 80% and 10 to 40%, respectively. As such, soils across the majority of the Project area have the potential for erosion.

Any soils that may need to be removed for clearing drill pads or staging areas would be stockpiled for later use in site reclamation. Upon completion of a drill hole, the drill cuttings and fines would be dispersed in the disturbed area. Topsoil would be placed atop cuttings and the disturbed area reseeded/replanted as necessary to match surrounding vegetation. Drill pads, staging areas and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completion of all Project activities. The reclamation plan for the Project is provided in Appendix A.

3.6.3.2 Geology

Extraction of rock through drilling may result in the removal of mineral resources; however, the amounts are anticipated to be negligible. The presence of sulfide minerals in the bedrock suggests that the rock is potentially acid-generating. To mitigate this risk, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock will be buried on site or disposed of off-site at an approved location.

The potential geologic hazards associated with Alternative B include seismicity, subsidence, and slope failure. Additional information on geologic hazards in the Project area can be found in Appendix E.

With a minimal risk of seismic disturbance to the Project, disruption of Project activities and the need for containment is unlikely. The Project does not include activities with the potential to cause significant induced seismicity.

Due to the absence of karst in the Project area, there is no potential for subsidence due to karst features (e.g., due to water injected during drilling). The movement and operation of equipment could lead to failure of historic underground mine workings. Known mining-related features have been mapped and considered in Project planning; planned drill holes are not anticipated to intersect any known historical mine shafts, holes, adits, or workings. The historic underground mines have been small, and workings have been within crystalline rock. Therefore, there is a low risk of activity triggering ground subsidence into underground mine workings.

Steep slopes (>40%) and the presence of slate indicate a potential for erosion and/or slope failure, although the area is considered a "low-incidence" zone for landslides. Additional assessment may be completed as part of Project design.

3.6.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Generalized potential for short-term direct and indirect effects on soil and geological resources associated with Alternative C are the same as those discussed in Section 3.6.3 for Alternative B. To address the potential effects on soil and geologic resources, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the National BMPs, Region 2 WCPs, and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix E. Applicable laws, regulations, and policy related to soil and geology resources can also be found in Appendix E.

3.6.4.1 Soils

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on soil resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B with the following exception. Under Alternative C, each drill pad and temporary overland access would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of use, rather than upon completion of all drilling activities. This change would further minimize the potential for erosion by stabilizing the soil immediately versus waiting until all drilling activities are completed.

3.6.4.2 Geology

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on geological resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

3.7 Hydrology

3.7.1 Affected Environment

3.7.1.1 Surface Water

The Project area is located within the Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek watershed (HUC12 101201100110). According to the National Forest Watershed Condition Framework, the Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek watershed falls under Class 2, which means it is "functioning at risk" and exhibits moderate geomorphic,

hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. The Rapid Creek watershed, which is located in the Project area and supplies water to Rapid City, is listed as a municipal watershed.

Stream networks throughout the Black Hills, including the Project area, are characterized by geology, climate, and constructed reservoirs that influence stream permanence, volume, temperature, etc. Approximately 22 miles of streams are present throughout the Project area, including perennial (3.7 miles), intermittent (3.2 miles), and ephemeral (15.1 miles) streams. All of the perennial streams and approximately 3.2 miles of the intermittent streams in the Project area are protected by water influence zones (WIZ) located adjacent to protected streams. Figures 3-1 and 3-2 in Appendix E show the streams and WIZs across the Project area. Jenny Gulch, a perennial stream in the Project area, has assigned beneficial uses, including: coldwater permanent fish life propagation waters; limited-contact recreation waters; fish and wildlife propagation, recreation, and stock watering waters; and irrigation waters. No impaired streams are present in the Project area, and no lakes are present in the Project area.

According to the FEMA Flood Hazard map, the majority of the Project area (1,493 acres) is mapped as Flood Zone X, an area of minimal flood hazard, which occurs outside of the 500-year floodplain. The northern 244 acres is mapped as Flood Zone D, which indicates that the flood hazard has not been determined.

Additional surface water resources found across the Project area are shown on Figures 3-3 and 3-4 in Appendix E; these include approximately 13.2 acres of wetlands, 28 springs, 3 fens, and 16 impoundments.

Additional information on surface water resources in the Project area is provided in Appendix E.

3.7.1.2 Groundwater

The major bedrock aquifers in the Black Hills and surrounding area are the Deadwood, Madison, Minnelusa, Minnekahta, and Inyan Kara. None of these sedimentary bedrock aquifers occur within the Project area; the edge of the nearest, the Deadwood aquifer, is approximately five miles west of the Project area. The major source of recharge to the sedimentary aquifers of the region is precipitation.

Additional localized aquifers are present in unconsolidated alluvial and colluvial deposits along streams and hillsides. The unconsolidated deposits are considered aquifers when saturated and are much smaller than other regional aquifers. Similar to the regional bedrock aquifers, precipitation is the major source of recharge to these aquifers. Some of these aquifers host springs that feed surface water features. Additional information on groundwater resources in the Project area is provided in Appendix E. Water quality within these smaller, localized unconsolidated aquifers can be influenced by the underlying geology, with concentrations generally increasing away from the crystalline core (i.e., towards sedimentary aquifers). Groundwater from these aquifers has relatively high dissolved solids, particularly calcium, bicarbonate, and sulfate. High iron and manganese have also been observed in alluvial wells in the region. In populated locations, these aquifers can be contaminated by septic systems.

Aquifer vulnerability is the potential or likelihood that any contaminant could reach the ground-water supply, based on the presence of on-site wastewater disposal systems and roads over the crystalline

aquifer. A South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSMT) aquifer vulnerability study indicates that most of the Project area is rated as low to medium risk due to wastewater disposal systems, but an area around the southern exclusion zone is rated as medium to high risk. The study rates the potential effects of trails and roads on aquifer vulnerability; for trails, a 100-foot buffer on either side of the trail is rated low risk, and a 100-foot buffer on either side of dirt roads is rates as low to medium risk.

The Project area is partially included in areas of concern for arsenic, iron, and total (but not fecal) coliform. The arsenic in water samples is most likely from weathering of sulfide minerals (either natural or accelerated by historical mining activities), particularly within faulted and mineralized zones. Iron in drinking water is considered a nuisance due to its effects on taste and potential for staining and scaling, but it is not a health threat. High iron is widespread in groundwater in the Black Hills crystalline core, though there appears to be a relationship between high values and mineralized zones. Total coliform bacteria are naturally present in the environment and are not considered a health threat by themselves, but they indicate that other potentially harmful bacteria might be present. Manganese has also been reported as being elevated in the crystalline core aquifers. The SDSMT study notes that conditions in the regional aquifers are highly variable and can change over relatively short distances; due to this, not every well in an area may have elevated values of these elements.

There are seven domestic water supply wells across the Project area; these are shown on Figures 3-3 and 3-4 of Appendix E. Recorded wells in the Project area generally range in depth from 80-140 feet below the surface, with reported static water levels of around 20-50 feet below the surface. Well test data report yields of approximately 10-60 gallons per minute.

3.7.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, no vegetation clearing, earth work, drilling, or other Project activities would occur; as such Alternative A would not result in effects on surface water or groundwater resources.

3.7.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, potential short-term direct and indirect effects on surface and groundwater resources could occur from Project activities associated with access, clearing, and drilling. To address the potential for effects on surface water and groundwater, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the National BMPs, Region 2 WCPs, and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix E. Applicable laws, regulations, and policy related to surface water and groundwater resources can also be found in Appendix E.

3.7.3.1 Surface Water

Under Alternative B, water supply needed for the Project would not be extracted from local surface waters; any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source and brought to the site via water trucks. Under Alternative B, three drilling sites (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) are located within designated WIZ areas (see Figure 3-1 in Appendix E); as such, there is a potential for direct effects on surface water resources associated with these WIZ areas. One drill site (SCP-018) is

located in the edge of a Zone A source water protection buffer; as such, there is a potential for direct effects on source water associated with this buffer.

The remaining 38 drill sites and two staging areas are not located within perennial or intermittent streams, springs, wetlands, fens, impoundments, WIZ areas, FEMA mapped 100-year floodplain, or Zone A source water protection buffers (see Figure 3-1 and 3-3 in Appendix E); as such, direct effects to surface water resources are not anticipated from these Project activities.

Potential short-term indirect effects on surface water resources, including run-off and subsequent sedimentation of nearby surface waters, could occur from Project activities associated with access to the sites, site development, and drilling. The new temporary overland access routes would cross a wetland, several WIZ areas, two protected perennial streams (Jenny Gulch and an unnamed stream), one protected intermittent stream (Gorman Gulch), and several ephemeral streams (see Figure 3-1 in Appendix E). In addition, existing roads used for access would cross perennial and ephemeral streams, wetlands, and WIZ areas (see Figure 3-1 in Appendix E); however, new environmental effects associated with these existing access roads are not anticipated. Existing access roads and temporary overland access routes would only be improved if needed to gain access to the site. As discussed in Section 2.3, existing USFS administrative roads would be used to access sites to the extent practicable; in some cases, this may include travel through the WIZ on these existing roads. Locations accessed through the WIZ would be planned for winter construction to the extent practicable.

Project activities are not anticipated to affect watershed condition classes, water yield, or the assigned beneficial uses or impairment statuses of any streams in the Project area. As stated above, any water used for drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced directly from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters.

Drill pads, staging areas and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completion of all Project activities. The draft reclamation plan for the Project is provided in Appendix A.

3.7.3.2 Groundwater

Under Alternative B, direct effects on groundwater resources are anticipated to be minor. Project drilling would be completed under the supervision of a licensed driller. The downhole activity (drilling, drilling fluid, abandonment, etc.) is essentially the same as if a residential well were being constructed or abandoned. The primary difference is that a core would be extracted from the hole for analysis. The exploratory drill holes would be cased through unconsolidated overburden for stability and to minimize mixing with any surface water.

Water would not be extracted from local groundwater; any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source and brought to the site via water trucks. To the extent possible, water will be captured in holding tanks and recirculated. The drilling water will initially meet any water quality standards applicable to its original source. However, it may be different in composition from any groundwater encountered within the Project area, which may result in limited dissolution and precipitation reactions. The introduction of oxygenated water into mineralized zones could lead to

mobilization of acidity and/or metals, including arsenic, iron, and manganese, as occurs with drilling and installation of residential water wells. Both of these potential effects would be minor, localized and short-term due to the limited quantity of drilling water. The reaction between the oxygen and sulfide minerals that leads to transport of the reacted materials by groundwater can occur over short time scales. Subsequent reactions may limit the ability of the metals to travel long distances in the groundwater, although additional reactions can remobilize the metals, depending on aquifer conditions. Without further changes in the amount of oxygen present, the aquifer will eventually restabilize. Given the fact that the majority of drilling will be completed in rock with no notable amounts of mineralization, the risk of these reactions causing a measurable impact to groundwater quality is very low.

Similarly, extracted mineralized cuttings could undergo these reactions and release acidity and/or metals to runoff or infiltration water. As noted in Section 3.6.1.2, drill cuttings, a small percent of which may contain mineralized rock, will be buried (i.e., isolated from oxygen) on site or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. In addition, the bentonite clays and muds used in drilling (contained in the drill mud) help to isolate potential mineralized rock from the environment and tend to absorb and immobilize metal ions that may be released. This further minimizes the risk of groundwater contamination.

Potential short-term indirect effects on groundwater resources could occur from Project activities, including changes in water levels in any fracture-flow aquifers and wells encountered during drilling. If there are enough exploration holes that happen to intersect enough of the right fracture(s), it could temporarily reduce the yield for other wells including domestic wells, though this risk is low due to the discontinuous nature of the aquifer, multiple fractures supplying wells, and low number of wells in close proximity to planned borehole locations.

During the borehole abandonment process, grout will be injected into the holes to seal them so that surface water cannot enter the aquifer. The injected grout does not expand far beyond the hole within the overburden. As such, the effect of the grout in the overburden is very local; however, the injected grout can spread into the fractures of the aquifer if they intersect the borehole, although grout is unlikely to migrate more than a few feet from the borehole within the narrow width of the fractures.

To address the potential for effects on groundwater, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the National BMPs, Region 2 WCPs, and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix E. The Project will follow the guidelines set forth by the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SD DANR) that pertain to monitoring groundwater and wells. The Project will be required to follow South Dakota Rules Chapter 74-11-08, Capping, Sealing, and Plugging Exploration Test Holes. In addition, the USFS will require that plugging reports are submitted as part of the reclamation plan and borehole plugging will be subject to inspection by the State. The draft reclamation plan for the Project is provided in Appendix A.

3.7.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the potential generalized short-term direct and indirect effects on surface and groundwater resources that could occur from Project activities associated with access, clearing, and

drilling are similar to those described for Alternative B, with some exceptions as described below. To address the potential for effects on surface water and groundwater, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to the National BMPs, Region 2 WCPs, and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix E. Applicable laws, regulations, and policy related to surface water and groundwater resources can also be found in Appendix E.

3.7.4.1 Surface Water

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on surface water resources would be generally similar to those described for Alternative B with some exceptions. Alternative C would relocate the placement of three drill sites (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) outside of WIZ areas (see Figure 3-2 in Appendix E), thereby removing the potential direct effects and maintaining the purpose and integrity of the WIZ. As discussed in Section 2.3, existing USFS administrative roads would be used to access sites to the extent practicable; in some cases, this may include travel through the WIZ on these existing roads. Locations accessed through the WIZ would be planned for winter construction to the extent practicable; however, should site conditions at the time of construction warrant these administrative roads unusable (i.e., flooding in the WIZ or another reason), three drilling pads (SCP-045, SCP-046, and SCP-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ. In addition, drill site SCP-018, which is located in the edge of a Zone A source water protection buffer under Alternative B, would not be used as a drill site location for Alternative C.

None of the drill sites or two staging areas under Alternative C are located within perennial or intermittent streams, springs, wetlands, fens, impoundments, WIZ areas, FEMA mapped 100-year floodplain, or Zone A source water protection buffers (see Figure 3-2 and 3-4 in Appendix E); as such, direct effects to surface water resources are not anticipated from these Project activities.

Potential short-term indirect effects on surface water resources, including run-off and subsequent sedimentation of nearby surface waters, could occur from Project activities associated with access to the sites, site development, and drilling. The new temporary overland access routes would cross several WIZ areas; these crossings primarily occur along the edges of the WIZ (see Figure 3-2 in Appendix E). One exception to this is the overland access crossing of an intermittent and protected section of Jenny Gulch and the WIZ associated with it (see Figure 3-2 in Appendix E). The new temporary overland access routes would also cross several ephemeral streams (see Figure 3-2 in Appendix E). Existing access roads would cross WIZ areas (as described above) and perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams (see Figure 3-2 in Appendix E); however, new environmental effects associated with these existing access roads are not anticipated.

Project activities are not anticipated to affect watershed condition classes, public water supply systems, water yield, or the assigned beneficial uses or impairment statuses of any streams in the Project area. As stated above, any water used for drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced directly from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters.

Under Alternative C, each drill pad and temporary overland access would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of use, rather than upon completion of all drilling activities, as is the case under Alternative B. This change would stabilize the soil immediately, and therefore further minimize the potential for runoff and subsequent sedimentation of nearby surface waters. The draft reclamation plan for the Project is provided in Appendix A.

3.7.4.2 Groundwater

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on groundwater resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

3.8 Recreation

3.8.1 Affected Environment

As described in Section 1.3.3.1, the Project area is located within three MAs: MA 5.1 (Resource Production Emphasis), MA 5.4 (Big Game Winter Range Emphases), and MA 8.2 (Developed Recreation Complexes). MA 8.2 is managed for recreational opportunities and aesthetics adjacent to developed recreation sites and bodies of water and does not list new mineral development as an activity/opportunity; however, mineral development is allowed in MA 5.1 and MA 5.4. Approximately 122.6 acres within the Project area are classified as MA 8.2 (see Figure 3-1 in Appendix B).

As summarized in Appendix B, approximately 7.3 miles of motorized trails are located in the Project area (see Figure 3-1 in Appendix B). These trails are available for both motorized and non-motorized use. Bear Gulch Campground is the closest campground to the Project area and is located approximately two miles southeast of the Project area near the Pactola Reservoir. There is one privately owned recreational residence located within the Project area, along Sunnyside Gulch Road in the southeastern corner of the Project area (see Figure 3-1 in Appendix B).

There are no natural lakes present in the Project area. One perennial stream, Jenny Gulch Stream, is located within the Project area and flows southeast to the outlet into Pactola Reservoir, which is approximately 0.5 miles south of the Project area and represents the primary source of aquatic recreation in this region. The reservoir offers recreation opportunities such as fishing, ice fishing, swimming, and boating.

As summarized in Appendix B, the Project area is primarily located in areas with low and moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives, with smaller portions classified as high. This means there are noticeable alterations from development on the landscape presently that affect aesthetics.

Applicable laws, regulations, policy, and Forest Plan direction related to recreational resources can be found in Appendix B.

3.8.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, the Project would not occur. As such Alternative A would not result in changes to existing recreational amenities.

3.8.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct effects on recreation could occur primarily through generation of Project-related traffic and potential for noise and visual disturbances in the Project area. Traffic-related effects to recreation are similar to those described in Section 3.2.3. Project equipment would primarily use existing motorized trails and some new access trails during Project drilling and reclamation. Increased traffic, construction-related noise, and the visual effects of large equipment may temporarily disrupt outdoor-based recreation activities in the Project area, causing recreational users to either be inconvenienced or to temporarily find other locations for these activities. Before returning areas of disturbance to original grades and final reclamation, drilling pads and access routes may create unnatural shapes on the landscape. However, the purpose of contouring and re-vegetation during reclamation is to blend Project-related disturbance back into the landscape. Potential effects would be temporary and are anticipated to last until reclaimed vegetation becomes established.

Three drilling sites would be located within MA 8.2, which focuses on recreational opportunities. The Forest Plan designates that no new mineral development is allowed and the majority of the MA around Pactola Lake has been withdrawn from mineral entry. However, the three drill pads (SCP -017, SCP-018, SCP -019) proposed in MA 8.2 for Alternative B are positioned in an area that is not withdrawn from mineral entry. Though exploration drilling is not prohibited in portions of the MA that are not currently withdrawn from mineral entry, the USFS would need to issue a site-specific Forest Plan amendment to authorize this activity.

The existing recreational residence is located 0.08 miles from the nearest drilling pad and may experience short-term, localized effects from increased traffic and noise. Potential Project-generated noise effects are described further in Section 3.9.3.

No long-term effects on fishing or aquatic activities are anticipated as a result of Alternative B; however, Alternative B does include placement of three drill pads (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) within designated WIZ areas, which may result in short-term, localized alteration of visual and aesthetic qualities in adjacent waterways and potential increased short-term sedimentation and turbidity in this reach of the Jenny Gulch Stream.

To address the potential effects on recreational resources, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix B.

3.8.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on recreation resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B, with some exceptions. Under Alternative C, three drill pads (SCP -017, SCP-018, SCP -019) would be relocated outside of MA 8.2 and would avoid the need for a site-specific Forest Plan amendment to authorize drilling and preserve the MA 8.2 recreation focus.

In addition, Alternative C includes relocating three drill pads (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) outside of WIZ areas in the interest of maintaining WIZ integrity and minimizing water quality and recreation (including visual and aesthetic) concerns.

3.9 Public Health & Safety

3.9.1 Affected Environment

Public health and safety conditions across the Project area were assessed with regards to air quality, light pollution, noise pollution, and hazardous waste and contamination. The closest air quality monitoring site to the Project area is located in Black Hawk at Black Hawk Elementary. At this monitoring location, air quality is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses little or no risk to human health or safety.

Existing sources of light pollution in the Project area consist of residential lighting (both homes and outbuildings), as well as headlights from existing vehicular and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) traffic.

Existing noise in the Project area is consistent with that of a rural setting and includes residential noise sources (lawn mowing, barking dogs, vehicular traffic, etc.). The Project area experiences regular noise from recreational ATV use on existing roadways and motorized vehicle trails, and there is also snowmobile noise during winter months. In addition, there are temporary increases in motorcycle-generated noise during the annual Sturgis motorcycle rally.

The Project is located in an area that has historically been used for mining. According to the SD DANR tanks and spills database, no hazardous waste sites, spills, or tank facilities are known to occur within the Project area. The SD DANR database is limited to reportable quantities for petroleum products greater than 25 gallons. Smaller spills/releases are often not reported and may have occurred within the Project area.

The Project area has limited direct access to emergency services. The nearest hospital clinic and emergency medical facilities are located in Rapid City, approximately 15.5 miles from the Project area. The Project is located in the service area of the Silver City Volunteer Fire Department (approximately 0.6 miles from the Project area) which provides fire suppression and emergency medical treatment (EMT) services. In addition, the BHNF Mystic Ranger District maintains a fire crew in its Rapid City and Hill City locations, which primarily responds to fires on National Forest System lands within the Mystic District.

Additional information on public health and safety conditions in the Project area is provided in Appendix F. Applicable laws, regulations, policy, and Forest Plan direction related to public health and safety can also be found in Appendix F.

3.9.2 Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, the Project would not occur. As such Alternative A would not result in changes to existing public health and safety conditions.

3.9.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct and indirect effects on air quality, light pollution, noise, and hazardous waste contamination could occur. Use of construction equipment would generate carbon dioxide. Site access and earth work would also temporarily generate dust within the immediate Project vicinity. It is not anticipated that the generated amounts of carbon dioxide and dust would reduce air quality standards below the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These effects would be limited to the immediate construction area and only last for the duration of construction activities.

Light pollution from drilling could temporarily affect residences or recreationists that are within close proximity of the drill pads, causing temporary irritation to residents or causing recreationists to use other areas of the BHNF. These short-term light pollution effects would be minimized by natural visual barriers provided by the steep terrain and forested areas surrounding drill pads. Overall, light effects are anticipated to be minimal.

Short-term, localized noise from heavy equipment and increased vehicle traffic is expected to occur in the Project area during the day and night. Noise, associated with drilling, could temporarily affect residences or recreationists that are close to the drill pads, causing temporary irritation to residents or causing recreationists to use other areas of the BHNF. Noise may also be either lessened or exacerbated depending on wind direction. Based on the equipment F3 proposes to use, noise levels within 400 feet of the drilling equipment are anticipated to be 38.2 dB(A), approximately the equivalent noise levels experienced in suburban areas at night or a refrigerator hum and align with current ambient noise levels. Overall, noise effects are anticipated to be minimal. Once drilling is complete at a specific location, noise would once again match ambient conditions. Although all residences are more than 500 feet from Alternative B drilling locations, residences in closer proximity to Project activities would be notified prior to initiation.

Contamination could occur through inadvertent spills or leaks of fuel or oils from access/site preparation, drilling equipment, and/or lighting equipment. Project drilling would use water; no chemical-based solutions or fluids would be used. As such, drilling activities would not directly generate hazardous waste. As summarized in Appendix F, should any fluid leaks or spills occur, they would be handled in a manner consistent with permitting and regulatory requirements.

To address the potential effects on public health and safety, the Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (Table 2-1), in addition to Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines summarized in Appendix F.

3.9.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on air quality and hazardous waste contamination would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

Under Alternative C, the potential effects of light pollution and noise would be the same as those described for Alternative B except drilling would be limited to one, 12-hour daytime shift (7:00am to 7:00pm) for drill pads within 500 feet of a residence. This timing restriction would mitigate potential

nighttime light pollution via use of floodlights and other equipment lighting, as well as mitigate potential nighttime equipment and drilling noise. This applies to drill pads SCP-12, SCP-020, and SCP-033 (see Figure 2-1 in Appendix F).

3.10 Cumulative Effects Analysis

Cumulative effects result from incremental consequences of an action "when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions" (40 CFR 1508.7). The effects of an action may be minor when evaluated in an individual context, but these effects can add to other disturbances and collectively may lead to a measurable environmental change. By evaluating the effects of the proposed action with the effects of other actions, the relative contribution of the proposed action to a projected cumulative effect can be estimated.

3.10.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

The Project is anticipated to last approximately one year from start-up through reclamation. Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape.

The following projects are proposed near the Project vicinity in the reasonably foreseeable future:

- SD Network is proposing installation of a buried fiberoptic line in the Project vicinity in 2021. The project will consist of placement of approximately 15 miles of buried fiberoptic cable, primarily within existing road rights-of-way, as well as installation of several new service towers. Although the project construction area is primarily outside the Project area, the SD Network project would introduce construction traffic and potential roadside distractions to the Project vicinity.

- The South Dakota Network LLC (SDN) Tower Construction Project is being proposed near the communities of Silver City and Rochford. The proposed network project is a centralized 5G wireless solution with towers that will wirelessly provide high speed broadband internet to customers. The Silver City portion of the project is located near Silver City Community Hall, approximately 0.2 miles south of Project area. The Rochford location is approximately 6 miles west of the Project area.

- The USFS maintains the Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures of the Silver City Allotment within the Project area. Permitted numbers in the Silver City Allotment are 93 cow/calf pairs with a period of use from June 1 through October 15. Grazing may occur within the allotments during construction of the Project.

- The USFS maintains a number of other routine land management practices in the Project area and has approved timber sales and prescribed burns on parcels overlapping the Project boundaries. Timber harvests must occur within five years of an approved sale, and prescribed burns occur on an as needed basis under suitable weather conditions. It is possible that timber harvest and/or

prescribed burns could occur during construction of the Project; should this be the case the Project would coordinate with USFS staff.

- The USFS administers permits for annual recreational events in the Project vicinity, including permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses from May through October and for Off Road Riders Association events on Memorial Day and Labor Day.
- As noted above, USFS has constructed roads and trails for vehicular, OHV, and recreation use. These facilities are expected to continue to be available for these uses both during and after the Project.

3.10.2 Alternative A – No Action

There would be no cumulative effects under Alternative A because the Project would not occur and would therefore not result in direct or indirect effects.

3.10.3 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B), and implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1), National BMPs (see Appendix E), Region 2 WCPs (see Appendix E), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Appendix B through Appendix F), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on the following resources: botanical, cultural, soil, geology, hydrology, wildlife and fisheries, and public health and safety. There is a potential for minor cumulative effects on transportation and recreation resources. See Appendix B through Appendix F for additional information on potential cumulative effects for each resource.

3.10.4 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), and implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1), National BMPs (see Appendix E), Region 2 WCPs (see Appendix E), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Appendix B through Appendix F), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on the following resources: botanical, cultural, soil, geology, hydrology, wildlife and fisheries, and public health and safety. There is a potential for minor cumulative effects on transportation and recreation resources. See Appendix B through Appendix F for additional information on potential cumulative effects for each resource.

4 Agency and Public Engagement

4.1 Public Involvement Plan

A Public Involvement Plan was prepared for the Project to identify and document collaborative efforts that were made to involve, interact, and cooperate with Project stakeholders. The Public Involvement Plan is provided in Appendix G.

Individuals and organizations with an interest in the Project were encouraged to participate in the public involvement process to express concerns and identify issues related to the Project. Stakeholders were identified by the USFS, F3, review of stakeholder lists from projects in similar geographies, or were self-identified or assumed (e.g., non-governmental organizations or nearby landowners with an assumed interested in the Project). Stakeholders also included governmental organizations such as tribal, federal, state, and local agencies with overlapping permitting authority or information pertaining to local resource conditions. The stakeholder list was updated throughout the EA development process and is provided in Appendix G.

4.2 Project Scoping Letters

Scoping letters were distributed on January 6, 2020, to 308 stakeholders and adjacent landowners; this date also represented the start of the 30-day public scoping period. Comments were requested via mail, email, or by facsimile for a period of 30-days following the public scoping mailing; all comments received after this date were also accepted by USFS.

A total of 339 comment letters were submitted. One comment letter consisted of a form letter that was submitted by 196 people. Comments were reviewed and cataloged based on resource issues. Issues identified in the comment letters were used to help inform the development of this EA. Project scoping letters and comments provided in Appendix H.

4.3 Interagency Scoping Meeting

On January 6, 2020, the USFS extended an invitation to 16 potentially interested agencies to participate in an interagency scoping meeting hosted on January 16, 2020, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. MST at the USFS Mystic Ranger District Office. The purpose of the meeting was to review the Project, discuss data needs, and solicit input regarding possible issues and concerns. A total of 20 people attended the meeting, including representatives from the following entities: USFS, Oglala Lakota Nation, SD GFP, SD DANR – Mining and Minerals Program, Pennington County, City of Rapid City, and Barr Engineering Co.

4.4 Government to Government Consultation

The USFS solicited government to government consultation interest in a mailing distributed to 16 Tribal entities on January 6, 2020, including the following tribes; Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux

Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Yankton Sioux Tribe each responded with requests for consultation. The USFS responded in writing to determine consultation meeting dates on March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. The National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Cultural Resources Inventory was provided to Tribal Historic Preservation Officers as identified per 36 CFR 800.3, to provide comment on the Agency's (USFS) determination of the proposed undertaking's effect to cultural resources on July 2, 2021.

Consultation efforts resumed in early 2022. Government to government consultation was held with the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe on January 27, 2022, the Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe on January 28, 2022, and with the Three Affiliated Tribes (MHA Nation) on February 22, 2022, and April 11, 2022. In addition, pre-consultation meetings occurred with the Yankton Sioux Tribe on February 2 and February 23, 2022.

4.5 Public Information Meeting

A public information meeting was held on January 16, 2020, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm at the USFS Mystic Ranger District Office to provide information on the Project and as a means of allowing the public to bring forward Project questions or comments. Barr and USFS staff members attended this meeting in person and were available to answer questions throughout the meeting. The public information meeting was an open-house format for the majority of meeting with a short presentation toward the middle of the meeting. A total of 101 people attended the meeting.

The USFS also participated in the following two additional stakeholder outreach meetings to discuss the Project and address any Project-specific questions:

- City of Rapid City Public Works Department and Ellsworth Air Force Base - March 11, 2020
- National Forest Advisory Board – April 15, 2020

4.6 Draft EA Public Review and Comment Period

A legal notice was published on September 22, 2021, in the Rapid City Journal, newspaper of record, announcing availability of and an opportunity to comment on the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Draft EA. In addition, all parties who submitted a scoping comment or requested to be added to the Project mailing list received a postcard or email notifying them of the availability of the Draft EA and opportunity to comment on it. In situations where a mailing address was not provided, an email notification was sent.

All Project materials were made available on the Black Hills National Forest website at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Draft EA was made available for a 30-day agency and public review period. During this time, comments on the Draft EA were accepted via US Mail (8221

Mount Rushmore Rd, Rapid City, SD 57702), via email (Comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-mystic@usda.gov) with "F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project" as the subject, or by facsimile (605-343-7134). Comments were requested within 30 days of the date of the legal notice. Comments submitted, including names and addresses of commenters, are public information.

Approximately 416 comment letters, including 6 form letters, were received; however, 20 of these comment letters were received after the 30-day comment period. All comments that were received were reviewed and cataloged based on resource issue and USFS provided responses to each comment. Draft EA comments and responses are included in Appendix I.

5 References

1. **Big Rock Exploration LLC.** Plan of Operations for Mining Activities on National Forest System Lands: F3 Gold LLC. November 30, 2018.

2. **U.S. Department of Agriculture U.S. Forest Service.** Black Hills National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan: 1997 Revision Phase II Amendment. March 2006.

Appendix A

Draft Reclamation Plan

F3 Gold, LLC
1620 Central Ave NE
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Minneapolis, MN 55413

F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Exploratory Drilling Project
Supplemental Reclamation Plan
Prepared by Big Rock Exploration
May 14th, 2021

Introduction

F3 Gold's proposed Jenny Gulch Exploratory Drilling Project will be conducted entirely within the Black Hills National Forest, South Dakota. Guidance for project operating, reporting and reclamation parameters and requirements are defined by the State of South Dakota Codified Law (SDCL) 45-6C. Surface impact reclamation, travel restrictions and timing will be guided by SDCL 45-6C and 36 CFR Part 228 (A). The following parameters, processes and considerations represent F3 Gold's best management practices for conducting a minimally invasive, safe exploratory drilling program. Pending input from the United States Forest Service (USFS), F3 Gold, its representatives and contractors will abide the following guidance.

General

F3 Gold and its contractors will strive to minimize the surface impact of the exploratory drilling program through constant vigilance and open communication with regulatory authorities. F3 Gold representatives and contractors working on the project shall employ low-impact methodology aimed at minimizing surface occupancy, the generation of new surface disturbance, and the creation of visual changes to the project area.

The goal of the reclamation process will be to restore surface impacts of the proposed exploratory drilling program to pre-project conditions, or as near as possible. Deviation from this objective will be guided exclusively by the surface owner (USFS) and State of South Dakota.

General project-wide surface impact reclamation will include:

Concurrently with project operations:

- Stockpiling of removed topsoil for later regrading
- Installment of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to manage drainage and sedimentation during precipitation and snow melt (e.g., berm installation, sediment logs, use of swales and water bars)

Following project completion:

- Recontouring drill pads and temporary access routes to conform with surrounding topography following project completion

- Spreading stockpiled topsoils and brushed vegetation to encourage flora regrowth

- Seeding with local native species as guided by the surface owner and local conservation office. Stabilizing and/or growth medium may be used to encourage regrowth of native species, the use of which will be directed by the Forest Service and local conservation office.

Replanting and reseeding will take place following recontouring and regrading of disturbed areas. Reclamation processes, seed mixes, seasonal constraints and timing and guidance will be based on USFS (36 CFR 228.8 (G)), State of South Dakota(SDCL 45-6C) and Pennington County NRCS requirements and preferences.

Access Route Maintenance and Reclamation

Existing Access Routes

Minor modification and/or maintenance of existing U.S. Forest Service infrastructure will be coordinated directly with the Forest Service on an as-needed basis. Anticipated modification/maintenance may include minor brush cutting to provide adequate clearance for vehicles and equipment. Maintenance of existing access routes will be performed during project operations and will maintain or improve road bed conditions. Actions will include:

- Grading/back blading existing and/or developed ruts

- Maintaining adequate/existing drainage

- Snow clearing/plowing as needed during winter months

Following project completion, previously existing access routes will be restored to pre-existing conditions, or improved or reclaimed as required by the USFS and State of South Dakota.

New Access Routes

New access routes proposed for access to drill pads for this Plan of Operations will be constructed for safe passage of project personnel and materials. During project operations, proposed maintenance of new access routes will reflect similar actions as those defined for *Existing* access routes, above. Following project completion, new access routes will be reclaimed to pre-project conditions or as near as possible. This may involve the following actions, as directed by the USFS and State of South Dakota:

- Recontouring to pre-existing surrounding topography

- Redistribution of topsoil as available
- Spreading of brushed materials
- Seeding and placement of growth medium as directed by the USFS and State of South Dakota, and approved by the Pennington County NRCS office

Drill Pads and Laydowns Reclamation

Drill pads and staging areas will be reclaimed following the completion of the project. Reclamation will constitute:

- smoothing and contouring to pre-existing topography using stockpiled topsoils and excavation materials
- Reseeding with an approved seeding reclamation mix, as directed by USFS, State of South Dakota and Pennington County NRCS

Safety signage will be removed from the area, and stockpiled brushed materials will be either spread over the pad/laydown clearing area, stacked in soil-free piles or removed and disposed of offsite (as guided by USFS and State of South Dakota).

Operations

Drilling & Borehole Abandonment

Drill holes will be plugged in accordance with ARSD 74:11:08, and will be permanently abandoned upon the completion of the drill hole.

F3 Gold does not anticipate a need to leave a drill hole open for longer than 30 days following completion. However, in the unlikely event that a drill hole needs to remain open for more than 30 days for downhole data collection purposes, F3 Gold will apply in writing to the Board of Minerals and Environment for permission to temporarily keep the test hole open, per SDLC 45-6C-28. If the application is approved, temporary capping will be performed per ARSD 74:11:08:08.

Drill cuttings and water used to flush the drill hole will be collected in tanks at the drill site. Cuttings and fines will settle out and the water will be recycled and reused for drilling. Upon completion of each drill hole, cuttings and fines will be dispersed in the disturbed area. Topsoil will be placed on the cuttings for reclamation including reseeding and planting as necessary.

Drill Sites, Refuse and Hazardous Materials

All refuse, solid waste, garbage, or trash associated with this Plan of Operations will be removed from site on a regular basis and disposed of in proper disposal containers or sites.

Human waste will be contained in the Porta-Potty/Porta-John located at staging areas and subsequently transported and disposed of at the proper facilities.

No hazardous materials or toxic substances are used to conduct the proposed drilling. The only hazardous materials utilized for the proposed project are for refueling the drill rig and support equipment and lubricating the mechanical parts. These materials include petroleum products, oils, lubricants and fuels, including diesel and gasoline.

Refueling and relubrication of the drill rig and its components will occur on an as-needed basis. Transportation of fuel and materials to an active drill rig will occur using DOT-compliant fuel tanks mounted on 4x4 pickup truck support vehicles. All storage of fuel and lubricant materials at the proposed laydown will be in DOT-compliant containers that are properly labeled and signed as necessary. Additional containment will be in accordance with EPA SPCC regulations as necessary. Petroleum product-specific spill kits will be available at all sites where petroleum products are stored or utilized.

In the event of a spill, F3 Gold and its contractors will report the spill immediately to the USFS and the State of South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Active containment and cleanup will be initiated and coordinated as necessary, in accordance with federal and state requirements. All reporting and response processes will be in accordance with SDCL Chapter 34A-12 and ARSD Chapter 74:34, and 40 CFR 302.

Water Quality Monitoring

Ongoing visual inspection of water used during the drilling operations will be conducted by project personnel to ensure proper capture and flow into the holding and settling tank circuit of the drill rigs. Erosion from drilling operations or water usage is not anticipated due to the nature of the water recycling measures that will be applied at the drill sites. Berming, silt fencing and sediment logs will be used as necessary on drill sites. Open and regular communication with the State of South Dakota during the drill program will ensure all SDCL 45-6C requirements are met with respect to water quality monitoring.

Consideration of topography and slope for surface water runoff and erosion control has been considered for the proposed drill pad locations. The size of the drill pads is relatively small (average 50 feet x 50 feet) which will limit overall surface disturbance and avoid significant impacts to surface water runoff from average rainfall or other normal weather events.

Appendix B

Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report

Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Prepared for
United States Forest Service

May 2022

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Access, Transportation, and Recreation and Technical Report

May 2022

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Abbreviations

ATVs	all-terrain vehicles
BHNF	Black Hills National Forest
BMP	Best Management Practices
EA	Environmental Assessment
MA	management area
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFSR	National Forest System Road
USFS	United States Forest Service
WIZ	Watershed Influence Zone

1 Introduction

This technical report summarizes access, transportation, and recreation resources within the vicinity of the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Gold Exploratory Drilling Project in Pennington County, South Dakota (Project; Figure 1-1 of the Environmental Assessment (EA)), as well as potential effects resulting from Project alternatives. This technical report is intended to supplement the assessment of environmental effects related to access, transportation and recreation resources found in the accompanying EA.

The purpose and need of the Project is discussed in Section 1.2 of the EA. This technical report analyzes environmental effects for three alternatives: Alternative A (No Action), Alternative B (Proposed Action), and Alternative C (Modified Proposed Action). Each of these alternatives is described in detail in Section 2 of the EA.

2 Access and Transportation

2.1 Introduction

This section addresses access and transportation in the Project area and its immediate surroundings and the potential effects on these resources as a result of the Project. The only issue relevant to the analysis, as identified by comments received during scoping, was that the project could lead to an increase in construction traffic, which may damage roads.

2.1.1 Information Sources

There are several existing documents and data sources containing baseline information on transportation in the Project area. The three documents reviewed were:

- Forest Service Handbook 7709.59 Road System Operations and Maintenance Handbook
- United States Forest Service (USFS) Guidelines for Road Maintenance Levels
- USFS Motor Vehicle Use Map

Other sources of information used in the analysis include the following GIS information provided by USFS:

- Motorized Trails
- Roads
- Level 1 Roads
- Recreation Residence

2.1.2 Applicable Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction

Direction for USFS transportation management is directed by regulations found in the Forest Service Plan and Road Systems Operations and Maintenance Handbook (reference (1)). The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (16 U.S.C. 4321) governs USFS transportation management:

2.1.2.1 Forest Plan Direction

The Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) Forest Plan identifies standards and guidelines to inform management related to various resources, including transportation. As summarized in the Forest Plan, a standard is defined as a limitation on management activities that is within the authority and ability of the agency to meet or enforce. Standards are used to determine if individual projects are in compliance with the Forest Plan. Deviation from the requirement requires a Forest Plan amendment. A guideline is a preferred or advisable course of action. Deviation from a guideline is permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.

Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the transportation considered applicable to the Project are those related to transportation system management, transportation and travel management in riparian areas and wetlands, and forest development roads.

Transportation System Management

Forest Plan standard 9105 (Construct temporary roads when there is a one-time need for a transportation facility. Return the road to vegetative production when the one-time need is fulfilled) is related to transportation system management and applies to the Project.

Forest Plan guideline 9103 (Management of motorized vehicle travel as summarized in Table 2-1, which only includes Management Areas applicable to the project) is related to transportation system management and applies to the Project.

Table 2-1 Motorized Vehicle Travel Management by Applicable Management Area

Management Area Number – Management Area Name	Motorized Road Travel	Motorized Off-Road Travel	Snowmobile on Snow
5.1 – Resource Production Emphasis	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed
5.4 – Big Game Winter Range Emphasis	Restricted[1]	Restricted[1]	Restricted[2]
8.2 – Developed Recreation Complexes	Restricted[2]	Prohibited	Restricted[2]

[1] Seasonal or yearlong restrictions may apply.
[2] To designated routes.

Transportation and Travel Management in Riparian Areas and Wetlands

The following Forest Plan guidelines related to transportation and travel management in riparian areas and wetlands apply to the Project:

- 9107. Prohibit land vehicles from entering perennial streams where resource damage would occur except to cross at specified points.
- 9108. Vehicular traffic, except for snowmobiles, will be restricted to roads and trails in riparian areas.
- 9109. Walk-in fisheries are closed to motorized travel.

The Forest Plan does not contain standards related to transportation and travel management in riparian areas and wetlands.

Forest Development Roads

The following Forest Plan guidelines related to forest development roads apply to the Project:

- 9202. Reduce the long-term impact of roads on soils:
    a. Revegetate the entire road prism of temporary and local native-surface roads upon completion of project work;
    b. Revegetate cut-and-fill slopes of all newly constructed or reconstructed roads;
    c. Give roads and trails special design considerations to prevent resource damage on capability areas containing soils with high shrink/swell capacity;
    d. Provide permanent drainage and establish protective vegetative cover on all new temporary roads or equipment ways, and all existing roads that are being removed from the transportation system; and
    e. Provide adequate road and trail cross drainage to reduce erosion.

- 9204. Reduce the impact of new Forest Development and temporary road construction on wildlife. New roads will generally not be located in meadows. When topography allows, roads should not be within 400 feet of the meadow edge.

The Forest Plan does not contain standards related to Forest Development roads; however, the USFS has national BMPs related to Road Management Activities that are applicable to the Project. In addition, the handbook and guidelines noted in Section 2.1.1 of this document also establish requirements for managing USFS roads and trails.

2.1.3 Study Methodology

Based on the information sources gathered, review of public scoping comments, and using professional experience and judgment, this analysis:

- Identifies the activities that could affect access and transportation; and
- Discusses the likely effects of the three alternatives on access and roadways.

Project scoping indicated concerns related to potential effects from access and transportation, primarily due to the increase in construction traffic and potential for this to damage roads. Potential effects are assessed by evaluating the extent, location, and timing of construction traffic and potential for roadway damage.

2.2 Affected Environment

2.2.1 Access and Transportation

Several existing roadways would be used to access the Project area. The main access from the north would be from National Forest System Road (NFSR) 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via county Highway 237 (Rochford Road). The primary access from the south would be from NFSR 671 (Sunnyside Gulch Road) or NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via Silver City Road. Additional NFSRs that are anticipated to be used for access are NFSR 720.2B, 141.2B, and 261.2B; National Forest System Trails (NFSTs) 6207, 6209, and 6210 will also likely be used (Figure 2-1).

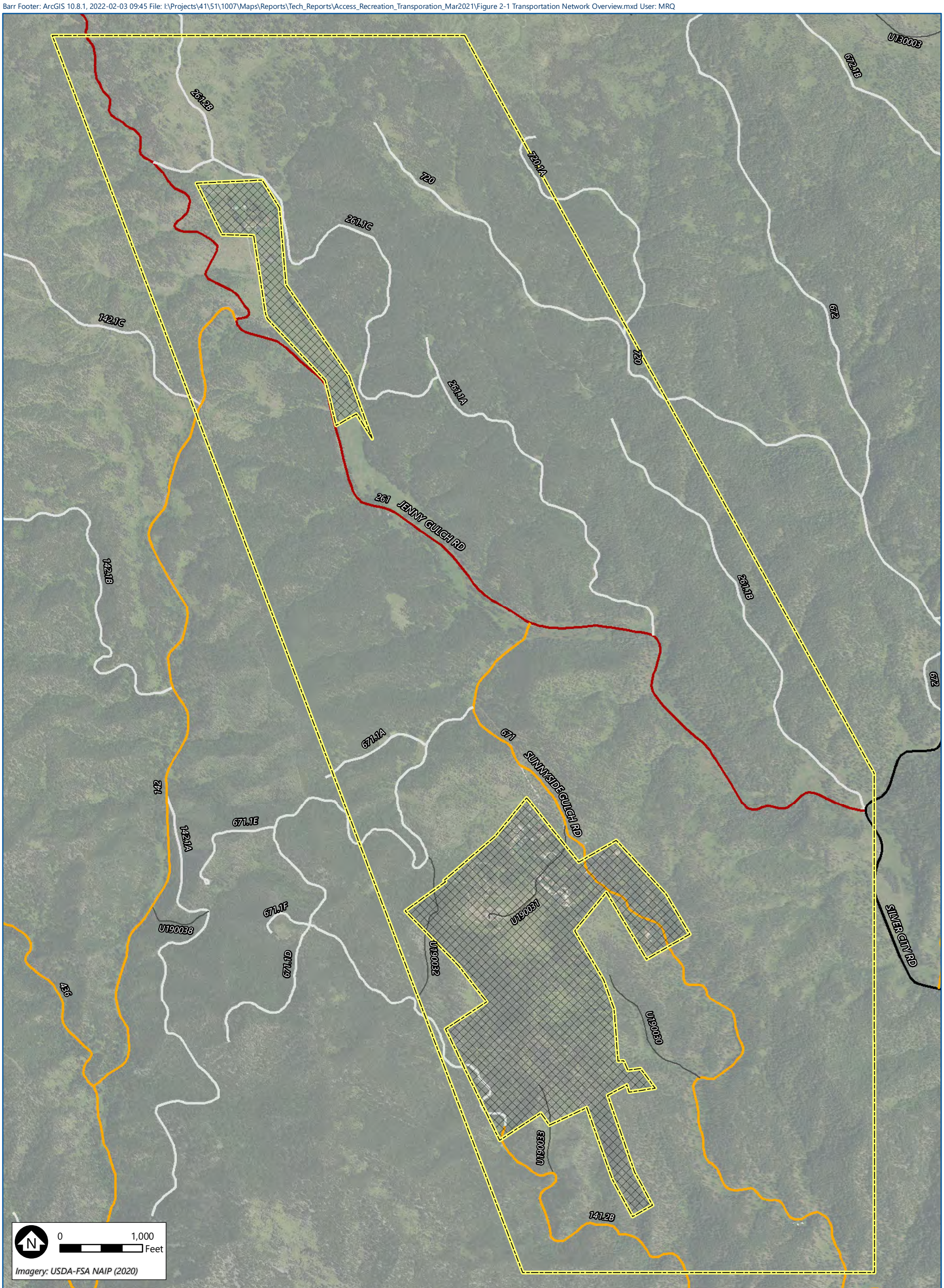
The USFS classifies maintenance of NSFRs in categories ranging from 1 to 5 (reference (2)). These maintenance classifications are briefly described as:

- The Maintenance level 1 road classification is a temporary classification used to designate roads that are temporarily closed to public motor vehicle use. Level 1 roads may be opened any time and managed at any other maintenance level. These roadways are closed to vehicular traffic but may be available and suitable for public nonmotorized use.
- Maintenance level 2 roads are maintained for high-clearance vehicles and generally are not suitable for passenger cars. Level 2 roads are designed for low traffic volumes traveling at low speeds and have little signage or other traffic control measures. This type of roadway is considered a local road that connects to collector roads and other local roads and may not be passable during periods of inclement weather.

- Maintenance level 3 roads are designed for low to moderate traffic volumes traveling at low speeds. These roads are typically single laned with an aggregate surface that may be subject to potholes and washboarding. Level 3 roads are considered local or collector roadways, typically connecting to arterial and collector roads or other Level 3 roads.
- Maintenance level 4 roads are designed to accommodate moderate traffic volumes and speeds. These roads are typically double laned with a paved or aggregate surface, though some may only contain a single driving lane. Level 4 roads are intended to be collector roads and may connect to Level 5 roads or state and county roads.
- Maintenance level 5 roads are designed to accommodate high traffic volumes and speeds. These roads are normally double lane, paved facilities with defined shoulders, though some may have an aggregate surface. Level 5 roads are intended to be arterial or collector roads and typically connect to state and county roadways.

The Project will use roads classified as maintenance level 1 (NFSR 141.2B, 261.2B, and 720.2B), 2 (NFSR 671), 3 (NFSR 261), and 4 (Silver City Road) (Figure 2-1), as well as trails (NFST 6207, 6209, and 6210). There are no maintenance level 5 roadways in the Project area.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2022-02-03 09:45 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Access_Recreation_Transporation_Mar2021\Figure 2-1 Transportation Network Overview.mxd User: MRQ



Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

National Forest System Roads

Maintenance Level 1

Maintenance Level 2

Maintenance Level 3

Maintenance Level 4

Other

BARR

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK OVERVIEW

Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project

Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report

Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-1

2.3 Environmental Consequences

The analysis of effects to access and transportation assumes that applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines and applicant-proposed impact minimization measures would be implemented during all Project activities. This analysis discusses the expected effects resulting from the implementation of the no action alternative (Alternative A), the proposed action (Alternative B), and the modified proposed action (Alternative C).

2.3.1 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Alternative A (No Action Alternative) provides a baseline to evaluate the effects of the proposed action (Alternative B) and the modified proposed action (Alternative C) as described in Section 2 of the EA. Alternative A would not result in any changes to existing access and transportation conditions.

2.3.2 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct effects on access and transportation could occur primarily through generation of project-related traffic and through construction of new temporary routes to access drill sites. In addition to the existing USFS roads, the Project intends to use, approximately 4,700 linear feet of 8-foot wide temporary overland trails which would be improved for drill site access, resulting in approximately 0.86 acres of additional temporary surface disturbance (Figure 2-2). These temporary overland trails would be obliterated and returned to natural conditions after Project completion. Existing access routes and overland trails would be improved to provide Project access only if needed and only to the extent necessary to gain safe access to the site, and the level of improvement would match what is needed for equipment (work vehicle, drilling rig, water truck, etc.) to safely access the site.

Alternative B anticipates using the following types and numbers of construction vehicles at various points during the Project:

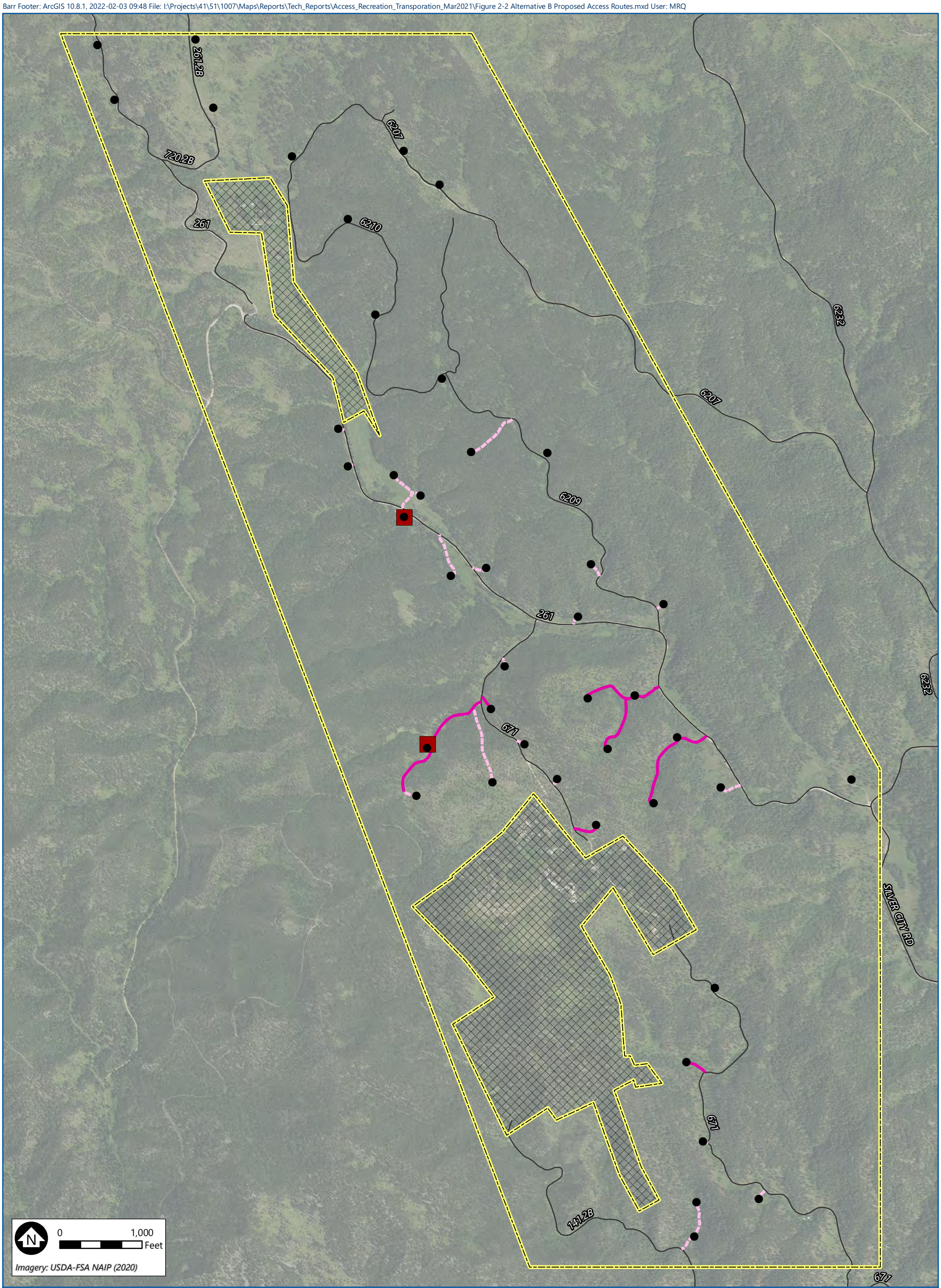
- One to four diamond drill rigs;
- Six to eight four-wheel drive pickup trucks for access to drilling sites;
- Four all-terrain vehicles for access to drilling sites;
- Two snowmobiles for access to drilling sites (for winter use only);
- One water truck, as needed to fill water storage tanks;
- One excavator;
- One dozer; and
- One skid-steer.

Although the additional traffic generated by the Project would be staggered throughout the life of drilling, and reclamation and is not expected to be significant in the context of the setting, it would pose a short-term change to maintenance level 2 and 3 roadway users who may not be accustomed to maneuvering in the presence of larger vehicles in this area. To minimize potential for vehicle and traffic conflicts, F3 would limit traffic to and from the drill sites through use of signage and/or temporary fencing. Access to the sites would only be authorized to F3 personnel for shift changes, management oversight, sample pickup, water and fuel re-filling, unplanned/emergency equipment maintenance, and

site restoration. It is expected that the water truck would be used one to two times per day for each active drilling site. Refueling would also occur one to two times per day for each active drilling site. Refueling would typically occur at the start of each shift, and fuel would be supplied as part of normal drilling operations to minimize traffic beyond normal work crew traffic. Contractor equipment would not exceed local road width restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. Safety signage (i.e., construction use, warning signs, drilling signs, trucks entering signs, etc.) would be posted through the work area to communicate construction equipment use of the roadway. All signage placed on USFS roads and trails would meet guidelines in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and Engineering Management series 7100-15 Sign and Poster Guidelines for the USFS. USFS would review and approve the signage plan prior to implementation.

Additional traffic on maintenance level 1, 2, and 3 roadways has the potential to create or expand existing potholes, exacerbate washboard conditions on the road surface, cause rutting, increase soil erosion, and pose other roadway condition concerns. Travel on wet roads can enhance rutting to the road surface, which may require further additional measures (gravel surfacing, drainage, etc.). To minimize potential for roadway damages, F3 and/or its contractors would adhere to seasonal road restrictions and equipment would not exceed local road weight restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. In addition, all road improvements, reconstruction, maintenance, and/or restoration would need to be designed to USFS standards and approved by USFS engineering personnel. F3 would be responsible for repairing any unexpected road damage to the appropriate maintenance level standards as soon as possible based on appropriate contractor availability, and all trails/roads would be returned to their original widths as part of reclamation. As such, roadway damage resulting from the Project is anticipated to be short-term and localized to the identified project access routes. In addition, adjacent vegetation along existing roads and temporary overland access routes may need to be removed to provide adequate access for drilling activities. Upon completion of the Project, all overland trails would be regraded and reseeded using the appropriate seed mixture as directed by the USFS. Localized, short-term increases in traffic-generated noise may also occur under Alternative B; these affects are addressed in the Public Health and Safety technical report.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2022-02-03 09:48 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Access_Recreation_Transporation_Mar2021\Figure 2-2 Alternative B Proposed Access Routes.mxd User: MRQ



Drill Pad (Alternative B)

Staging Area (Alternative B)

Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)

New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

BARR

ALTERNATIVE B PROPOSED ACCESS ROUTES

Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project

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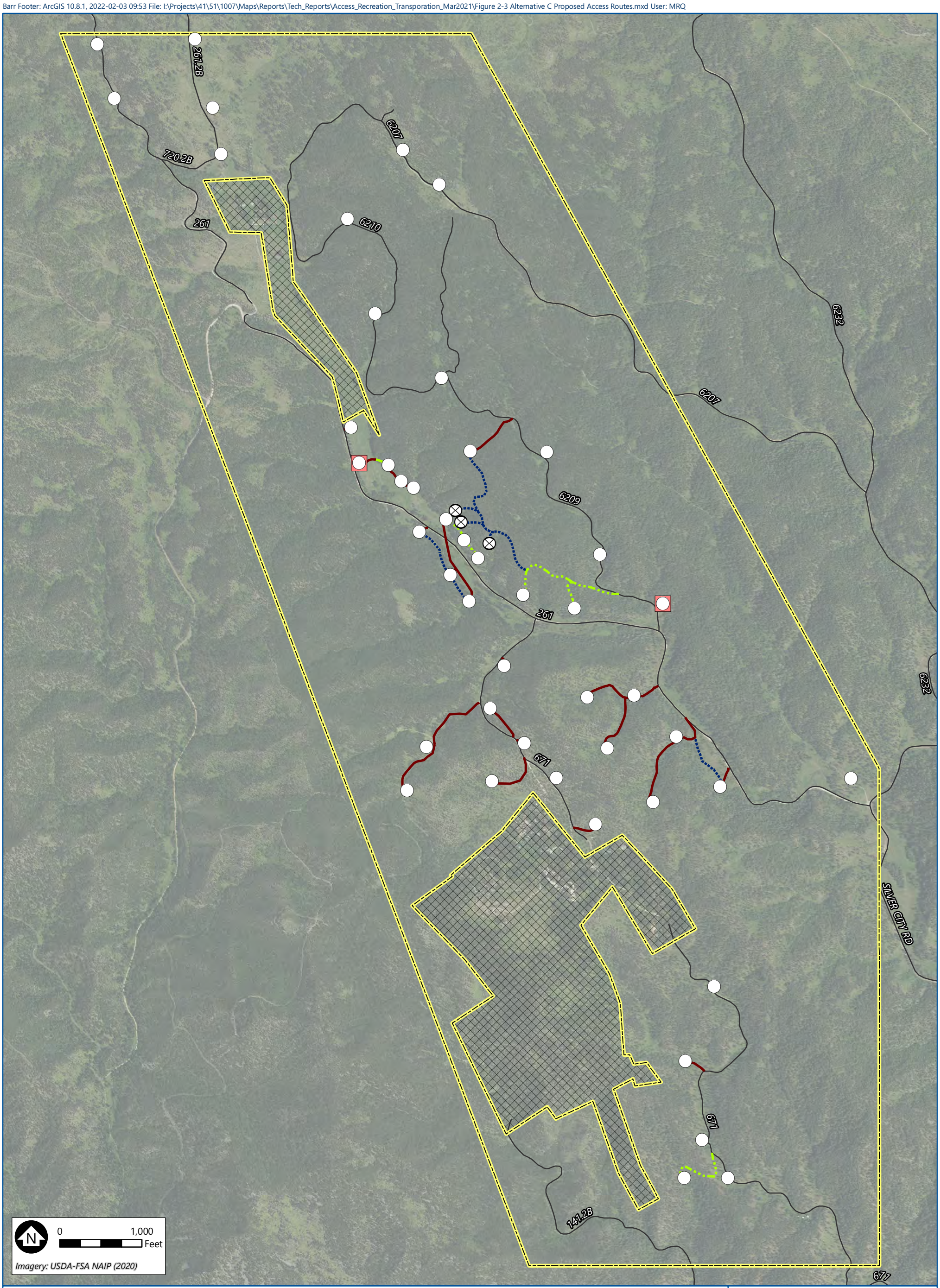
Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-2

2.3.3 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative C

Alternative C relocates some of the drilling pads and access routes proposed in Alternative B to avoid impacts to sensitive resources; however additional drilling pads are needed to collect an equivalent level of information compared to Alternative B. Under Alternative C, approximately 5,700 feet (1.1 mile) of existing local roadways would be used to access Project features. In addition, up to approximately 9,925 linear feet (1.88 miles) of 12-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access routes may be developed or improved for drill site access, resulting in up to approximately 2.73 acres of additional temporary surface disturbance (Figure 2-3). Potential effects from site access and transportation would be similar as those described for Alternative B. Alternative C would result in more direct effects from the construction of new and overland access routes; however, it would avoid direct impacts to sensitive resources and would require the same level of reclamation as Alternative B.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2022-02-03 09:53 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Access_Recreation_Transporation_Mar2021\Figure 2-3 Alternative C Proposed Access Routes.mxd User: MRQ



Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Staging Area (Alternative C)

Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)

New Access Route

Alternate New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

BARR

ALTERNATIVE C PROPOSED ACCESS ROUTES

Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project

Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report

Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-3

3 Recreation

3.1 Introduction

This section identifies recreational resources within the Project area and its immediate surroundings, and the Project's potential effects to recreational resources. The only issue relevant to the analysis, as identified by comments received during scoping, was concern the Project could alter the quality of recreation and tourism as a result of increased traffic, noise, visual impacts, and pollution.

3.1.1 Information Sources

Sources of information used in the analysis were publicly available GIS data and information provided by the USFS.

3.1.2 Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction

USFS recreation policy is dictated by federal regulations and the Forest Plan. NEPA (16 U.S.C. 4321) governs Forest Service recreation resources:

3.1.2.1 Forest Plan Direction

The BHNF Forest Plan identifies standards and guidelines to inform management related to various resources, including transportation. As summarized in the Forest Plan, a standard is defined as a limitation on management activities that is within the authority and ability of the agency to meet or enforce. Standards are used to determine if individual projects are in compliance with the Forest Plan. Deviation from the requirement requires a Forest Plan amendment. A guideline is a preferred or advisable course of action. Deviation from a guideline is permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.

The following Forest Plan standards related to developed recreation apply to the Project:

- 5204. Facilities may dominate but must harmonize and blend with the adjacent natural landscape.
- 5207. In areas of high to moderate potential for valuable mineral deposits, perform site-specific mineral evaluations prior to making substantial capital investments, such as recreational developments.
- 5211. Do not issue special-use permits that will preclude future recreational developments.

3.1.3 Study Methodology

Based on the information sources gathered, review of public scoping comments, and using professional experience and judgment, this analysis:

- Identifies the activities that could affect recreation; and
- Discusses the likely effects of the three alternatives on recreation.

3.2 Affected Environment

3.2.1 Management Areas

The Project area is located within three management areas (MAs): MA 5.1 (Resource Production Emphasis), MA 5.4 (Big Game Winter Range Emphases), and MA 8.2 (Developed Recreation Complexes). These management areas are described further in Section 1.3.3.1 of the EA.

MA 8.2 is managed for recreational opportunities and aesthetics adjacent to developed recreation sites and bodies of water and does not list new mineral development as an activity/opportunity. This MA encompasses 11,368 acres of land (excluding water), or less than 1% of the BHNF (Figure 3-1). Approximately 122.6 acres within the Project area are classified as MA 8.2.

3.2.2 Motorized/Non-motorized Trails

The BHNF offers over 3,600 miles of motorized travel in the forest, including over 700 miles of system trails (reference (3)). There are approximately 7.33 miles of motorized trails in the Project area (Table 3-1 and Figure 3-1). These trails are available for both motorized and non-motorized use. Motorized uses may include snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, and vehicular traffic, while non-motorized uses may include hiking, horseback riding, nature viewing. No non-motorized trails are located within the Project area.

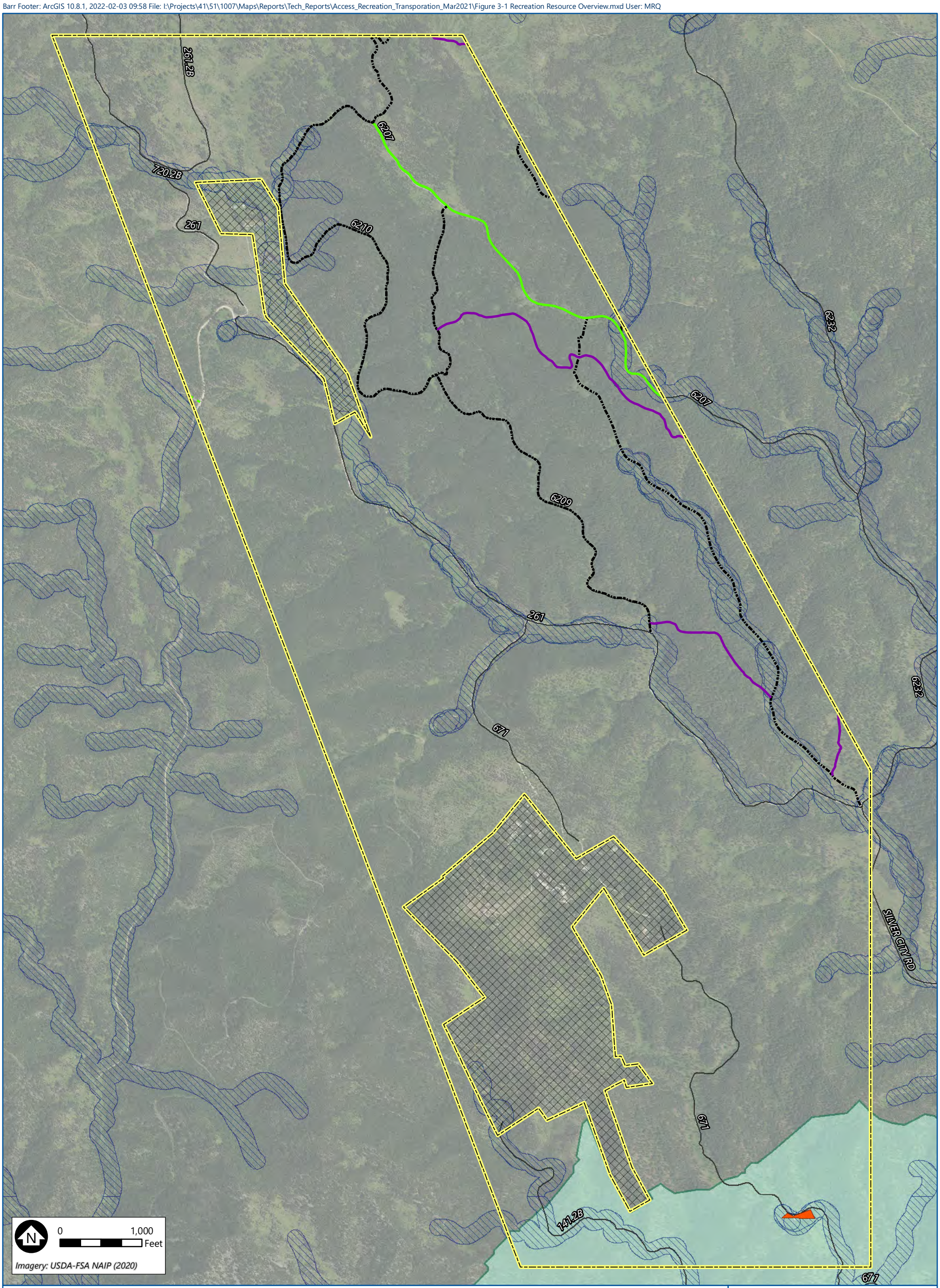
Table 3-1 Existing Trails within the Project Area

Trail ID	Authorized Vehicle Type	Timing of Allowed Use	Length (miles)
6208	Open to vehicles 62 inches or less in width	Yearlong	1.42
6245	Open to vehicles 62 inches or less in width	Yearlong	0.21
6224	Open to all vehicle	Seasonal	0.03
6207	Open to all vehicles	Yearlong	1.27
6244	Open to motorcycles	Yearlong	0.36
6210	Open to vehicles 62 inches or less in width	Yearlong	1.65
6209	Open to vehicles 62 inches or less in width	Yearlong	1.37
6242	Open to motorcycles	Yearlong	0.93
6233	Open to motorcycles	Yearlong	0.09
		Total:	7.33

3.2.3 Campgrounds and Cabins

The BHNF has 30 campgrounds with more than 682 individual camp sites (reference (4)). There are no public campgrounds located within the Project area. Bear Gulch Campground is the closest campground to the Project area and is located approximately two miles southeast of the Project area near the Pactola Reservoir. There is one privately owned residence located within the Project area, along Sunnyside Gulch Road in the southeastern corner of the Project area (Figure 3-1).

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2022-02-03 09:58 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Access_Recreation_Transporation_Mar2021\Figure 3-1 Recreation Resource Overview.mxd User: MRQ



Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Management Area 8.2

Recreation Residence

Water Influence Zone (WIZ)

Existing USFS Roads Used

Motorized Trails

Trails Open to All Vehicles (Yearlong)

Trails Open to All Vehicles (Seasonal)

Trails Open to Motercyles (Yearlong)

Trails Open to Vehicles 62" or less in width (Yearlong)

BARR

RECREATION RESOURCE OVERVIEW

Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project

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FIGURE 3-1

3.2.4 Aquatic Recreation

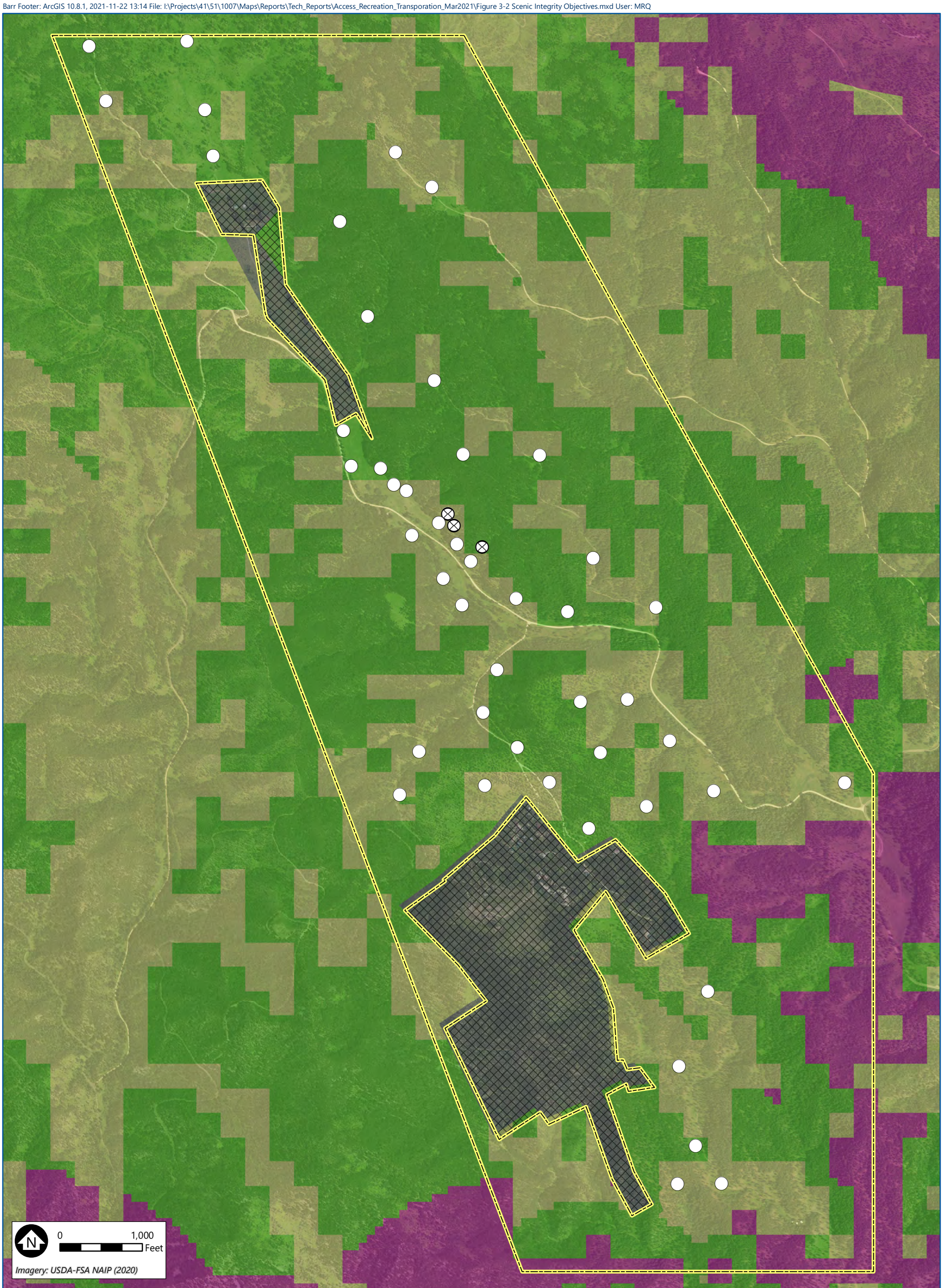
The Pactola Reservoir is located approximately 0.5 miles southeast of the Project area and is the primary source of aquatic recreation in this region of the BHNF. There are no natural lakes present in the Project area. One perennial stream, Jenny Gulch Stream, is located within the Project area and flows southeast to the outlet into Pactola Reservoir. The reservoir offers visitors with recreation opportunities such as fishing, ice fishing, swimming, and boating.

There are several USFS-designated Watershed Influence Zones (WIZ) in the Project area (Figure 3-1). A WIZ is a designated zone adjacent to stream channels and other waterbodies for which focused efforts are made to maintain and improve water quality or other water and riparian dependent values such as habitat, recreation, and visual and aesthetic qualities.

3.2.5 Aesthetics

The USFS Scenery Management System provides an overall framework for inventory, analysis, and management of scenery. The Forest Plan establishes Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) for the BHNF. A SIO is the state of naturalness or the state of disturbance by human activities or alteration. The highest SIO ratings are given to those landscapes that have little or no deviation from the character valued by its constituents for its aesthetic appeal. SIO rankings in the Project area are primarily low and moderate, with smaller amounts of high areas (Figure 3-2). A high value indicates that human activities are not visually evident. A moderate value indicates the landscape character appears slightly altered, and noticeable deviations remain visually subordinate to the greater landscape character. A low value indicates the scenic integrity of the landscape appears moderately altered and deviations from the natural (i.e., unaltered) state begin to dominate the setting.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2021-11-22 13:14 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Access_Recreation_Transporation_Mar2021\Figure 3-2 Scenic Integrity Objectives.mxd User: MRQ



Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Drill Pad Locations - Alternative C

Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Scenic Integrity Objectives

High

Moderate

Low

Other Ownership

BARR

SCENIC INTEGRITY OBJECTIVES

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

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FIGURE 3-2

3.3 Environmental Consequences

The analysis of effects for recreation resources assumes that Forest Plan standards and guidelines and applicant-proposed impact minimization measures would be implemented during all Project activities. This analysis discusses the expected disturbance resulting from the implementation of the no action alternative (Alternative A), the proposed action (Alternative B), and the modified proposed action (Alternative C).

3.3.1 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Alternative A (No Action Alternative) provides a baseline to evaluate the effects of the proposed action (Alternative B) and the modified proposed action (Alternative C) as described in Section 2 of the EA. Alternative A would not result in any changes to existing recreational amenities.

3.3.2 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct effects on recreation could occur primarily through generation of project-related traffic and potential for noise and visual disturbances in the Project area. Traffic-related impacts to recreation are similar to those described in Section 2.3.2 of this technical report. Project equipment used for drilling and clearing would primarily utilize existing motorized trails and some new trails during Project drilling and reclamation. Increased traffic, construction-related noise, and the visual impacts of large equipment may temporarily disrupt outdoor-based recreation activities in the Project area, causing recreational users to either be inconvenienced or to temporarily find other locations for these activities. In addition, off-road vehicle users would need to be mindful of the construction-related traffic that would be traveling the area. As stated in Section 2.3.2, safety signage would be posted through the work area to communicate construction equipment use of the roadway.

Three drilling sites would be located within MA 8.2, which focuses on recreational opportunities. The Forest Plan designates that no new mineral development is allowed and the majority of the MA around Pactola Lake has been withdrawn from mineral entry. However, the three drill pads (SCP -017, SCP-018, SCP -019) proposed in MA 8.2 for Alternative B are positioned in an area that is not withdrawn from mineral entry. Though exploration drilling is not prohibited in portions of the MA that are not currently withdrawn from mineral entry, the USFS would need to issue a site-specific Forest Plan amendment to authorize this activity.

No direct effects on the existing recreational cabin or campgrounds are anticipated as a result of Alternative B. There are no campgrounds in the Project area. The existing recreational cabin is located 0.08 miles from the nearest drilling pad and may experience short-term, localized impacts from increased traffic, noise, and dust. Potential Project-generated noise effects are described further in the Public Health and Safety technical report.

No long-term effects to fishing or aquatic activities are anticipated as a result of Alternative B; however, Alternative B does include placement of three drill pads (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) within designated WIZ areas, which may result in short-term, localized alteration of visual and aesthetic qualities in adjacent waterways and potential increased short-term sedimentation and turbidity in this reach of the

Jenny Gulch Stream. F3 would be responsible for restoring these sites to pre-Project conditions after completing drilling activities.

Alternative B would include implementing site-specific design criteria, Forest Plan direction, and BMPs to address the potential for effects on surface water and associated aquatic recreation. This could include installing silt fencing to minimize sedimentation; storing all fuels and oils associated with Project activities in appropriate containers/tanks and secondary containment to mitigate or minimize any spill hazards; and ensuring crossing ephemeral streams occurs in a manner that maintains stream integrity. Water used during drilling operations would be visually inspected to make sure the water is being properly captured into the holding and settling tank circuit. Drill pads, staging areas, and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completing all Project activities.

Alternative B would include short-term disruption to aesthetics in the immediate Project viewshed due to the presence of equipment during drilling and associated ground disturbance. Disturbances would be located in areas of low or moderate SIO. Before returning areas of disturbance to original grades and final reclamation, drilling pads and access routes may create unnatural shapes on the landscape. However, the purpose of contouring and re-vegetation during reclamation is to blend project-related disturbance back into the landscape. Potential effects would be temporary and are anticipated to last until reclaimed vegetation becomes established.

3.3.3 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative C – Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the potential effects to recreation resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B, with some exceptions. Under Alternative C, three drill pads (SCP -017, SCP-018, SCP -019) would be relocated outside of MA 8.2. Although exploration drilling is allowed in this portion of MA 8.2, selecting Alternative C would avoid the need for a site-specific Forest Plan amendment to authorize drilling and preserve the MA 8.2 recreation focus.

In addition, Alternative C includes relocating three drill pads (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) from WIZ areas in the interest of maintaining WIZ integrity and minimizing water quality and recreation (including visual and aesthetic) concerns.

4 Cumulative Effects

The following section provides an assessment of the potential cumulative effects on transportation and recreation resources resulting from implementation of the Project and the potential interaction with the effects on these resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects. Because the potential effects to transportation and recreation resources are comparable for Alternative B and Alternative C, they are discussed together with regard for their potential for cumulative effects.

4.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the foreseeable future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. Present and foreseeable future activities may contribute to effects on transportation and recreation resources. The effects of these present and foreseeable future projects combined with the effects of Alternative B and/or C could potentially result in cumulative effects on transportation and recreation resources. The foreseeable future projects that could potentially contribute to cumulative effects are listed below and are further described in the Environmental Assessment.

- South Dakota Network Fiberoptic Cable – 15 miles northwest of Project area
- New radio tower near Silver City Community Hall – 0.2 miles south of Project area
- Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures
- Timber sales located within the Project vicinity and approved to occur within the next 5 years
- Prescribed burns – eastern two-thirds of Project area
- Recreational event permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses

4.2 Cumulative Effects to Transportation and Recreation

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), and F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines, the Project in combination with other present and reasonably foreseeable actions is anticipated to result in minor cumulative effects on transportation and recreation resources.

5 References

1. **U.S. Forest Service.** FSH 7709.59 - Road System Operations and Maintenance Handbook. February 5, 2009.

2. **U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.** Guidelines for Road Maintenance Levels. June 2012.

3. **U.S. Forest Service Black Hills National Forest.** Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM). [Online] 2020. [Cited: August 28, 2020.] https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/blackhills/maps-pubs/?cid=FSEPRD533421.

4. **U.S. Forest Service**. Campground Camping. *Camping & Cabins.* [Online] [Cited: September 11, 2020.] https://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/blackhills/recreation/camping-cabins/?recid=25823&actid=29.

Appendix C

Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Prepared for
United States Forest Service

May 2022

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Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

May 2022

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Abbreviations

BHNF	Black Hills National Forest
ESA	Endangered Species Act
MA	Management Area
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFSR	National Forest System Road
PO	plan of operations
R2	Region 2
SOLC	species of local concern
SS	Sensitive Species
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
WIZ	water influence zone

1 Introduction

This technical report summarizes the botanical resources within the vicinity of the F3 Gold, LLC (F3) Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project in Pennington County, South Dakota (Project; Figure 1-1), as well as potential effects resulting from Project alternatives. This technical report is intended to supplement the assessment of environmental effects related to botanical resources found in the accompanying Environmental Assessment.

1.1 Purpose and Need

F3 has submitted a PO proposing exploration drilling on National Forest System Lands open to mineral location. F3 has a statutory right to perform exploration drilling as proposed per the General Mining Act of 1872. The USFS administers exploration and development on National Forest System lands under mining regulations defined in 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228, Subpart A. Entities wishing to undertake mineral exploration are required to submit a PO for review by the District Ranger.

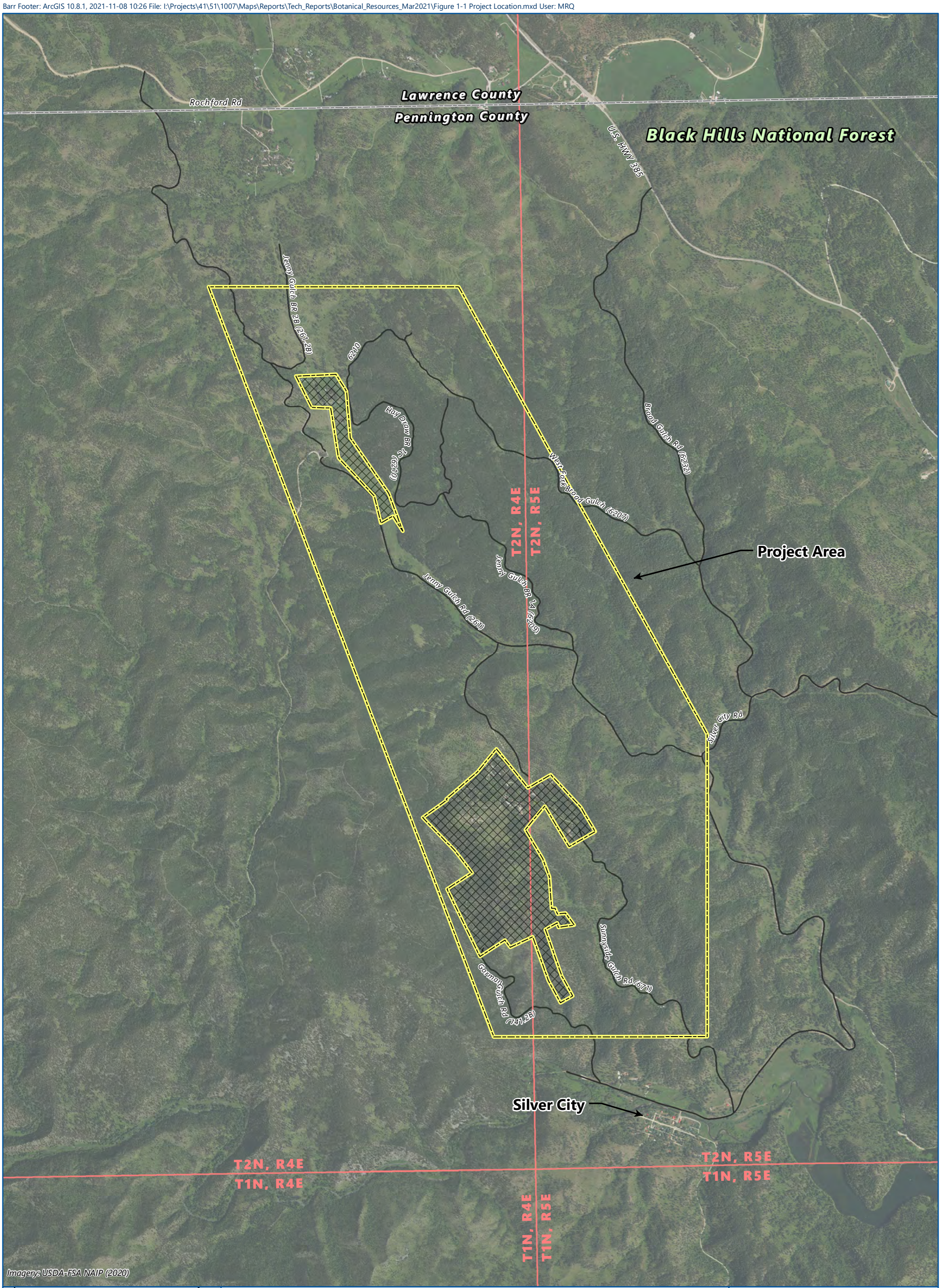
The purpose of the exploration drilling is to identify the geological resources located with the Project area. The need for this Project relates to F3's statutory right to access for exploration purposes. F3 is seeking USFS authorization of their proposal to exercise their rights under current mining laws to perform exploration drilling while minimizing environmental effects in accordance with USFS regulations for locatable minerals.

The Forest Service's purpose is to decide whether to approve F3's proposed PO and, if approved, what requirements are appropriate to minimize impacts on surface resources in accordance with 36 CFR 228, subpart A. After evaluating the proposed PO, the Forest Service determined that approving the proposed mining plan of operations would be a major Federal action subject to the National Environmental Policy Act as defined in 40 CFR 1508.1. Accordingly, the Forest Service prepared an Environmental Assessment, which this report is a part of.

The need for the Forest Service's action is to comply with regulations governing the use of surface resources for operations authorized by the United States mining laws on National Forest System lands under 36 CFR 228, subpart A. These regulations require that the Forest Service respond to parties who submit a proposed plan of operations for approval to conduct operations authorized by the United States mining laws on National Forest System lands for part or all of their planned actions including mining, mineral processing, and uses reasonably incident thereto. In accordance with 36 CFR 228.5, the submittal of F3's proposed PO requires the Forest Service to consider whether to approve the proposed mining plan of operations or to require changes or additions necessary for the plan to meet the purpose of the regulations for locatable mineral operations.

1.2 Project Area Location

The Project area is located north of Silver City and includes all or portions of Sections 19, 30, 31, T2N R5E and Sections 13, 14, 24, 25, T2N R4E, Black Hills Meridian, Pennington County, South Dakota (Figure 1-1).



Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Public Land Survey Township
County Boundary
Existing USFS Roads to be Utilized

N

0 2,000
Feet

BARR

PREOJCT LOCATION
Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project
Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report
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FIGURE 1-1

2 Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A – No Action

The NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14) requires a study of the No Action Alternative to use as a basis for comparing the effects of the proposed action and other action alternatives. Under the No Action Alternative (Alternative A), the USFS would not approve F3's plan of operations (PO) to conduct exploration drilling activities. There would be no environmental effects associated with Alternative A. However, Alternative A does not meet the Project's purpose and need to allow F3 to access and explore for minerals on lands open to the public domain in accordance with the General Mining Act of 1872.

2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Alternative B is the proposed action as described in the PO submitted by F3. Alternative B includes diamond core drilling at up to 42 drill sites, access road maintenance (as needed), drill pad clearing (as needed), and reclamation activities (Figure 2-1). Alternative B would require an amendment to the Forest Plan to allow three drill pads in Management Area (MA) 8.2. The Forest Plan designates that no new mineral development (including exploratory drilling to inform future mineral development) is allowed and the majority of the MA around Pactola Lake has been withdrawn from mineral entry (reference [1]). The USFS would be required to prepare a Project specific amendment to the Forest Plan to authorize the drilling activities, despite the F3-proposed drilling locations coinciding with one of the areas that has not been withdrawn from mineral entry.

2.2.1 Drilling and Staging

Each drill site would have a maximum footprint of approximately 2,500 square feet (0.06 acres), where the drilling rig, rod tray, support vehicles, portable cutting tank, and water truck will be placed. Drill holes would range from 500 to 6,000 feet in depth dependent on the results of each hole. Although depths up to 6,000 feet would be authorized, very few holes are planned to extend to this depth; most holes would be drilled to a depth of approximately 1,000 feet. Exploration drilling involves drilling holes vertically and at an angle from the surface. That angle can vary between -90 degrees (vertical) and -45 degrees. Once the angle is set, the drill will remain at that angle until completion of the drill hole. Directional drilling that controls the direction of the boring during drilling (as commonly used in oil and gas development) or horizontal drilling methods will not be used. The number of holes drilled on each drill pad will depend on the findings in the field, with the average drill pad having one to two holes and some having up to four holes. Depending on the results of preceding drill holes, some of the drill sites may not end up being required and would ultimately not be constructed. Drilling operations would take place 24-hours a day divided between two 12-hour shifts. Two staging areas (0.25 acres each) would be used to store equipment and tools. Drill pads and staging areas would result in 3.0 acres of temporary surface disturbance. Drill pad locations were selected based on local geology, subsurface target concepts, and surface conditions that allow F3 to best test its scientific theories while minimizing surface disturbance.

The drilling process proposed by F3 would use water mixed with industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds or other natural and/or biodegradable additives to more efficiently and

safely drill and seal boreholes. No other chemicals or solvents would be used in drilling. Any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters. Water would be trucked from the municipal or industrial source to storage holding tanks either at a drill site and/or one of the staging areas. Approximately 5,000 to 10,000 gallons of water would be used per day per drill rig. During drilling activities, water would be circulated using a water pump with water lines transporting water from the storage tanks to the drill site. At the end of drilling operations, excess water would be disposed of at a municipal wastewater disposal location, in agreement with the municipality.

Drill cuttings and used water would be recovered and collected in tanks at the drill site. Settlement would be used to separate the cuttings, allowing the water to be reused in the drilling process. Upon completion of a drill hole, the cuttings would be either thin-spread and buried beneath the topsoil (which is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the western U.S.) or transported off-site to an approved disposal location. Spread drill cutting depth would be dependent on hole depth with most sites resulting in a spread drill cuttings depth of 0.25 inches; however, some sites (holes up to 6,000 feet deep) may result in up to approximately 1.50 inches of drill cuttings spread across the drill pad. Topsoil would be placed on on-site cuttings and reseeded/replanted to match surrounding vegetation. Burying cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Drill pads would be reclaimed upon completion of all drilling activities, as one reclamation effort at the end.

2.2.2 Site Access

Main access from the north would be from NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via county Highway 237 (Rochford Road). The primary access from the south would be from NFSR 671 (Sunnyside Gulch Road) or NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via Silver City Road. Additional NFSRs that are anticipated to be used for access include NFSR 261, 720.2B, 671, 141.2B, and 261.2B. National Forest System Trails (NFST) 6207, 6209, and 6210 are also anticipated to be used for access, all of which allow motorized vehicle use (Figure 1-1). Approximately 5,280 feet (one mile) of existing local roadways noted above would be used to access Project features. In addition, approximately 4,700 linear feet (0.89 miles) of 8-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access route may be constructed for drill site access, resulting in less than 1 acre of additional temporary surface disturbance. These temporary overland trails would be obliterated and returned to natural conditions after Project completion. Existing access roads and overland trails would be improved only if needed and only to the extent necessary to gain access to the site.

2.2.3 Proposed Equipment

F3 proposes to use the following equipment to complete drilling and associated restoration of the Project:

- One to four diamond drill rigs;
- Drill rod racks with drill pipe and casing pipe;
- Six to eight four-wheel drive pickup trucks for access to drilling sites;
- Four all-terrain vehicles for access to drilling sites;
- Two snowmobiles for access to drilling sites (for winter use only);

- One water truck, as needed to fill water storage tanks;
- One excavator;
- One dozer;
- One skid-steer;
- One to three water storage tanks, up to 10,000 gallons in size;
- Up to four water supply pumps; and
- Water line/hose, mud pump, and mixing tanks for grouting and/or cementing drill holes.

Drilling equipment (e.g., drill rigs, drill rod racks, drill pipe, casing pipe) would be used at each drilling site as this equipment is needed to perform the drilling. Other equipment, such as the excavator, dozer, and skid-steer would be used on an as-needed basis to facilitate access, maintenance, and reclamation. When not in use, this equipment would be stored at one of the staging areas.

2.2.4 Vegetation and Soil Removal

Tree clearing and other vegetation removal would be limited to only that which is needed to facilitate access. Any soils that may need to be removed for pad clearing would be stockpiled for later use in site reclamation.

2.2.5 Reclamation

Upon completion of drilling at each hole, the hole would be capped, sealed, and plugged per Administrative Rules of South Dakota 74:11:08.

Drill pads and staging areas would be reclaimed upon completion of drilling by re-grading the pads to pre-Project contours and reseeding with Black Hills reclamation seed mix, as noted in the PO. Safety signage would be removed from the area, and stockpiled soils would be either spread over the drill pad area, stacked in soil-free piles, or disposed off-site at an approved facility. Overland trails used for access to drill pads would be re-seeded and returned to pre-existing conditions under the direction of the USFS.

2.2.6 Monitoring and Implementation

F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the Project. F3 is required to submit a reclamation plan to the USFS prior to authorization for Project initiation in accordance with USFS Manual 2840. In addition, F3 is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the USFS for the Project, with the bond amount determined by the USFS. F3's PO would be administered by the USFS Minerals Specialist, and other governmental entities with permitting authority will be responsible for enforcing their permit conditions as they deem appropriate. Sites will be monitored for a minimum of three years after reclamation.

2.2.7 Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures

As part of their Plan of Operations, F3 intends to implement impact minimization measures into Project design, as summarized in Table 2-1. These measures have been developed in response to comments received during the Project scoping process.

Table 2-1 Summary of Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Access and Transportation	• Overland trails used for access would be regraded and reseeded as directed by USFS. • Any unexpected road damage would be repaired as soon as possible based on contractor availability. • Contractor equipment would not exceed local road weight restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. • Traffic to and from the drill sites would be limited to site set-up, driller shift changes, management oversight, sample pickup, and site restoration. • Additional safety signage (construction use, warning signs, drill signs, trucks entering signs, etc.) would be posted throughout the work area to communicate construction equipment use of the road.
Botanical Resources/ Reclamation	• Tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary. In areas where tree removal is unavoidable, the affected area would be reseeded/replanted as part of reclamation with Black Hills seed mix. • Disturbed areas would be reclaimed and reseeded according to USFS standards.
Fisheries and Wildlife	• Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15 – August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger. • Drill sites would not be located in limestone areas to avoid potential vertigo snail habitat disturbance. In addition, protection of the WIZ surrounding streams/seeps/springs would also provide protection for vertigo snails. • Drilling within 500-feet of a known bat roost location would occur outside the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31). Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger.

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	• Holding tanks would be used to store drilling water rather than sumps to minimize potential for sedimentation and infiltration. • All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • Materials used for the Project would be stored either at staging areas or at the drill sites; materials would not be stored along access roads or other locations. • Any soils that may need to be removed for clearing drill pads or staging areas would be stockpiled on-site for later use in site reclamation. • Upon completion of a drill hole, the drill cuttings and fines would be dispersed in the disturbed area. • Topsoil would be placed on cuttings and reseeded/replanted as necessary to match surrounding vegetation. • Drill pads, staging areas and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completion of all Project activities. • Drilling would primarily require the use of water. In addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. No other chemicals or solvents would be used in drilling. Rock core, water, and fine-grained rock drill cuttings generated by drilling would be stored in holding tanks. Water would be recycled back into the drilling process, and drill cuttings would be disposed as noted above.
Hydrology – Water Quality/Quantity	• The only fluids used for the Project are fuel (for vehicles/machinery), oil (for vehicles/machinery), water, and industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds or other natural and/or biodegradable additives. • All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • Water would not be extracted from local surface waters; any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source. • Upon completion of drilling at each hole, the hole would be capped, sealed, and plugged per Administrative Rules of South Dakota 74:11:08. Drill holes would be sealed within 24 to 48 hours of drilling completion prior to moving the drill rig. • Casing will be used, when necessary, to protect groundwater in unconsolidated, surficial geologic units. The need for casing is expected to be minimal as most drilling is proposed directly on bedrock with little to no soil or surficial geologic units.

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Public Health and Safety	• Residences in close proximity to drilling activities would be notified prior to Project initiation. • An emergency response plan would be developed for the Project and would be provided to local first responders in advance of Project initiation. This plan would be developed in coordination with local first responders and would address a number of emergency situations (i.e., fire, injury, etc.). • All drilling sites and staging areas would be equipped with spill kits to immediately address any fuel or oil spill. All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • All vehicles, drill rigs, and other on-site equipment would be inspected as part of daily safety checks and will be equipped with more than one fire extinguisher, which would also be inspected routinely. • A site security plan would be developed to maintain site safety and limit risk of public interference.

2.3 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Alternative C was developed in response to issues identified during Project scoping. This alternative meets the Project's purpose and need in a way that implements siting factors (i.e., factors that influence where features are sited or positioned) and additional mitigation measures to further minimize Project effects. The additional measures or siting differences included in Alternative C are summarized below. Specifically, Alternative C has been developed to minimize effects by avoiding cultural resources, eliminating the need for a Forest Plan Amendment, as discussed below, and to minimize effects to the water influence zone (WIZ). In order to minimize effects, additional drilling pads would be needed to achieve a comparable level of data collection as explained below.

Alternative C proposes drilling 47 exploration drilling pads as shown in Figure 2-1; this number of drill pads in combination with the two staging areas would result in 3.3 acres of temporary surface disturbance. Alternative C relocates 5 drilling pads, one staging area, and associated access roads proposed in Alternative B to avoid effects to cultural resources; however, F3 has determined that additional drilling pads are needed to collect an equivalent level of information compared to Alternative B. Under Alternative C, approximately 5,700 feet (1.1 mile) of existing local roadways would be used to access Project features. In addition, up to approximately 9,925 linear feet (1.88 miles) of 12-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access route may be developed for drill site access, resulting in up to approximately 2.73 acres of additional temporary surface disturbance as compared to Alternative B. Alternative C would require a 12-foot wide access corridor to accommodate the more rugged terrain traversed compared to Alternative B.

Existing USFS administrative roads not open for public use (i.e., administrative roads), as defined in the USFS 2010 Travel Management Record of Decision, would be used to access sites to the extent practicable; in some cases, this may include travel through the WIZ on existing administrative roads. Locations accessed through the WIZ would be planned for winter construction to the extent practicable; however, should site conditions at the time of construction warrant these administrative roads unusable

(i.e., flooding in the WIZ or another reason), three drilling pads (SPC-045, SPC-046, and SPC-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ; this shift has been accounted for in the access road measurements provided above. The use of alternate drill pad and access road locations would require coordination with and authorization by USFS engineers and the District Ranger.

As mentioned above in Section 2.2, Alternative B includes three drilling sites in an area designated by the Forest Plan as MA 8.2, Developed Recreation Complexes. Alternative C relocates these three drilling sites from MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Project-specific Forest Plan amendment.

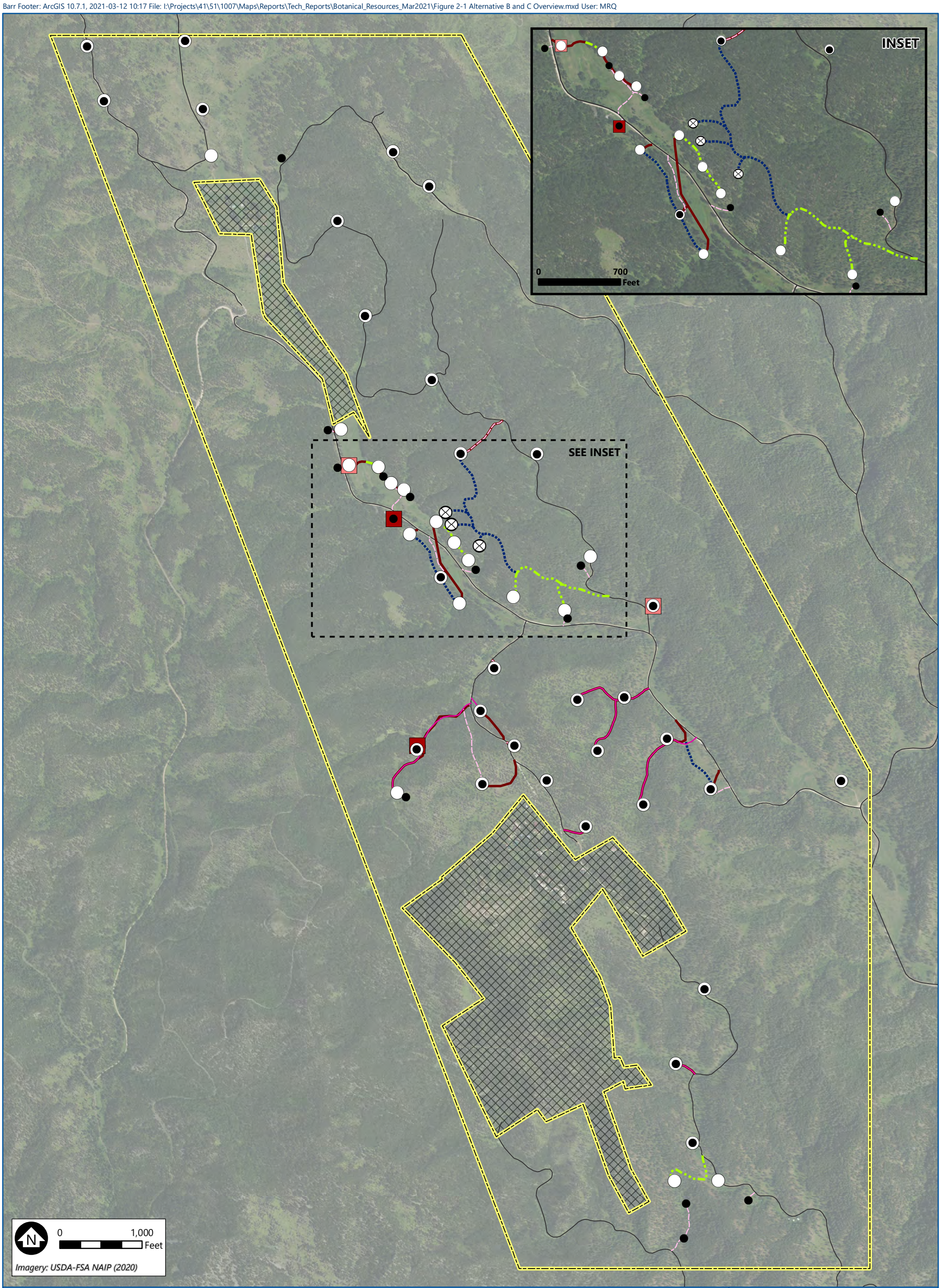
Alternative B includes three drilling sites immediately adjacent to USFS-identified WIZ. A WIZ is a designated zone adjacent to stream channels and other waterbodies for which focused efforts are made to maintain and improve water quality or other water and riparian dependent values such as habitat, recreation, and visual and aesthetic quality. In the interest of maintaining the integrity of established WIZ areas and minimizing water quality and recreation concerns, Alternative C relocates three drill sites outside of WIZ areas. To avoid the need for tree clearing and construction of new temporary site access, as mentioned above, it is possible that the WIZ may be crossed during frozen conditions to access certain drilling sites. If the WIZ is impassable without causing considerable damage to soils, wetlands, and other resources, three drilling pads immediately adjacent to the WIZ (SPC-45, SPC-46, and SPC-47) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ. This would be determined on a case by case basis and in coordination with the Forest Service hydrologist, engineers, PO administrator and District Ranger.

The impact minimization measures noted in Table 2-1 would be applied to both Alternative B and Alternative C; however, Alternative C would also include impact minimization measures beyond those noted in Table 2-1; these additional impact minimization measures are summarized in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Summary of Alternative C Additional Impact Minimization Measures

Issue	Additional Impact Minimization Measures
Botanical Resources/ Reclamation	• Each drill pad and temporary overland access route would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of use rather than upon completion of all drilling activities.
Cultural/Heritage Resources	• Relocates drilling pads and access roads to avoid potential cultural resources conflicts.
Public Health and Safety	• Drilling pads within 500 feet of a residence would limit drilling to one, 12-hour daytime shift (7:00am – 7:00pm) to mitigate nighttime noise potential. This applies to drill pads SCP-012 and SCP-020.
Hydrology – Water Quality/Water Supply	• Alternative C includes a provision that the WIZ may be crossed during frozen conditions to access certain sites; however, if seasonal conditions indicate the WIZ is impassable without causing considerable damage to soils, wetlands, and other resources, the three drilling pads immediately adjacent to the WIZ (SPC-045, SPC-046, and SPC-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ. The use of alternate drill pad and access road locations would require coordination with and authorization by USFS engineers and the District Ranger.
Recreation and Travel Management	• Alternative C relocates three drill pads from MA 8.2, which is managed for recreational opportunities and visual qualities adjacent to developed recreation sites and bodies of water. • Alternative C relocates three drill pads (SPC-45, SPC-46, and SPC-47) from WIZ areas in the interest of maintaining WIZ integrity and minimizing water quality and recreation concerns.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.7.1, 2021-03-12 10:17 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Botanical_Resources_Mar2021\Figure 2-1 Alternative B and C Overview.mxd User: MRQ



Drill Pad (Alternative B)

Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Laydown Area (Alternative B)

Laydown Area (Alternative C)

Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Existing USFS Roads to be Utilized

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)

New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)

New Access Route

Alternate New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

BARR

ALTERNATIVE B AND C OVERVIEW

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-1

3 Existing Conditions

The Project area is located within the Black Hills Plateau ecoregion of the Middle Rockies ecoregion. The area shares a similar montane climate, hydrography, and land use pattern as the Rocky Mountains. The Black Hills Plateau ecoregion is a relatively flat, elevated expanse covering the mid-elevation slopes and grasslands of the Black Hills. It includes areas of sharply tilted metamorphic rock and lower elevation granite outcrops (reference [2]). Elevations along the Project area range from approximately 4,700 feet above sea level at the southern edge of the Project area to about 5,500 feet above mean sea level near the western edge of the Project area.

The Black Hills region has a continental climate that experiences very hot summers and very cold winters. According to the Koppen Climate Classification, the Project area is within a warm-summer humid continual climate (reference [3]). The Black Hills tend to have a higher mean temperature and receive more precipitation annually than the surrounding Great Plains. Hill City, a town close to the Project area with accessible climate data, has an annual high temperature of 82° Fahrenheit (F) and an annual low of 12° (F), with an average of 21 inches of precipitation annually and 58 inches of snow annually (reference [4]).

Plant communities within the Project area include forested areas and meadows. Mergen Ecological Delineations, Inc. previously conducted botanical surveys within the Project area in the summer and fall of 2008 (reference [5]). The following plant communities, listed in order of prevalence, were identified within the Impact area:

- Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) forest;
- Ponderosa pine/quaking aspen;
- Meadow plant; and
- White spruce (*Picea glauca*)/quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*).

The ponderosa pine occurs on low to high elevations on all soil types and on all aspects and is the most abundant and widely distributed tree in the BHNF (reference [6]). It is a seral or an occasional species in white spruce and quaking aspen dominated forests, and an occasional tree in more xerophytic bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa)* dominated woodlands or in shrub-steppe or steppe vegetation (reference [6]). In the BHNF, ponderosa pine is aggressive; reproduction of the species is prompt and in sufficient quantities to maintain the population. After fire or logging, ponderosa pine reestablishes and often produces extremely dense stands. The understory vegetation in ponderosa pine forests consists of shrubs such as, common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), russet buffaloberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*), common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), and bur oak.

In the Black Hills, it is common for quaking aspen to occur between ponderosa pine forests on coarse textured soils on mountain slopes and adjacent grasslands parks with fine-textured soils. Most stands of quaking aspen are initiated by destruction of coniferous forests (reference [6]). In most ponderosa pine/quaking aspen stands, paper birch is a codominant species; its height is less than that of quaking

aspen, and in numerous places, its ecologic role is that of an undergrowth shrub. Quaking aspen is an early successional species and will typically come in after a disturbance.

In the Black Hills, meadow plant communities are typically found in the narrower drainage bottoms surrounded by pine forest, often with ponderosa pine encroaching. The common descriptions of the meadows includes grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Forbs are often represented by a diverse array of herbaceous species. Grasses are often introduced species.

In the Black Hills, white spruce occurs at high elevations and in cool canyon bottoms, on soils derived from both igneous and limestone parent material (reference [6]). White spruce dominates at the higher elevation subalpine forest zone. Ponderosa pine, quaking aspen, and paper birch are common seral species in white spruce communities. However, white spruce rarely occurs in vegetation dominated by either ponderosa pine or quaking aspen.

4 Sensitive Flora Species

Sensitive flora species with the potential to occur in the Project area are described in the following subsections. Specifically, the following subsections include descriptions of the habitat, distribution, and conservation status of sensitive plant species that are designated as:

- federally listed threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA);
- USFS Region 2 (R2) Sensitive Species (SS); and
- USFS species of local concern (SOLC).

4.1 Federally Listed Flora Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation website was queried for federally listed threatened and endangered species within the Project area (reference [7]). There is one federally listed flora species listed within Pennington County, the Leedy's roseroot (*Rhodiola integrifolia ssp. Leedyi*). It was listed as threatened in April 1992 (57 FR 14649 14653). The global conservation status of Leedy's roseroot is G5T1 (critically imperiled subspecies of a widespread global species). In South Dakota, this species is ranked S1 (Critically imperiled) (reference [8]).

Leedy's roseroot is typically found on specialized cliffside habitat along the shore of a lake; in South Dakota, this species has been documented on granite cliffsides (reference [9]). The species is known to occur in one location in the Black Hills in the Black Elk Wilderness in Pennington County outside of the Project area. Additionally, there is no suitable habitat for the species within the Project area.

4.2 U.S. Forest Service Region 2 Sensitive Species

SS are USFS-designated species whose population trends or habitat capacity is of concern. Table 4-1 lists the 13 USFS R2 SS within the BHNF and summarizes information regarding their potential habitat, distribution, and potential to be effected by the Project.

4.3 Species of Local Concern

SOLC are USFS designated species that do not meet the criteria for sensitive status. These could include species with declining trends in only a portion of R2, or those that are important components of diversity in a local area. Table 4-2 below summarizes suitable habitat, distribution, and potential affects to SOLC.

Table 4-1 U.S. Forest Service Region 2 Sensitive Plant Species: Summary of Suitable Habitat, Distribution, and Potential Affects

Species; Growth Habit	Suitable Habitat Characteristics	Documented Distribution	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species known within or near Project area?	Potential for Project Effect?
Autumn willow (*Salix serissima*); shrub/tree	Obligate wetland shrub species that occurs predominantly in boreal regions where it occupies cold, often calcareous bogs, and fens, swamps, lakeshore, sandy habitats, and stream banks at low to mid elevations. In the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF), autumn willow's known habitats are limited to cold seep or spring-fed saturated substrates from 5,200 to 6,000 feet in elevation (reference [10]).	Populations of the species in South Dakota are disjunct from its main distribution in northeastern North America. Known occurrences of autumn willow in the Black Hills consist of two populations in the BHNF and two populations on private land in Lawrence County (reference [10]).	G4/S1	No	Not likely; the species is not known to occur within Pennington County where the Project is located.
Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*); forb	Perennial forb that is a common in eastern deciduous forests. In the Black Hills, bloodroot occupies floodplains, forested terraces, drainage bottoms, and north-facing footslopes in open, rich hardwood plant communities, including bur oak, hophornbeam (*Ostrya*) forest; (black) hawthorne (*Crataegus douglasii-Crateagus chrysocarpa*) shrubland; and paper birch-hazelnut (*Betula papyrifera-Corylus cornuta*) forest (reference [11]).	Populations of the species in South Dakota are disjunct from its main distribution in eastern North America. To date, 22 occurrences of bloodroot have been found in the northern and northeastern portions of the Black Hills. In the BHNF, bloodroot occurrences are locally abundant, possibly in response to the open conditions within its habitats (reference [11]).	G5/S4	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented to occur within the Project area.
Foxtail sedge (*Carex alopecoidea*); herb	Foxtail sedge is typically found in riparian wetlands. It is associated with perennial flowing water and can be found above the saturated edge of the water line, especially on and along the edges of abandoned beaver ponds (reference [12]) In the Black Hills, foxtail sedge is typically found adjacent to ponderosa pine and quaking aspen within riparian wetlands dominated by bebb willow (*Salix bebbiana*), fireberry hawthorn (*Crataegus chrysocarpa*), beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), and paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*) (reference [12]).	Foxtail sedge is endemic to North America, occurring in 5 Canadian provinces and in 21 states within the United States. Documented occurrences are distributed throughout the northeastern United States extending westward to the Rocky Mountains and southward to Tennessee. Seven of the 10 documented locations in South Dakota occur in the Black Hills in Lawrence County (reference [12]).	G5/S2S3	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented to occur within the Project area.
Giant Helleborine (*Epipactis gigantea*); forb	Giant helleborine occupies a variety of habitats such as seeps, springs and perennial springs (reference [13]) In the Black Hills giant helleborine is known to occur in calcareous habitats such as minerotrophic fens, thermal seeps and springs. Giant helleborines distribution follows other rare taxa including geysers panicgrass (*Dicanthelium acuminatum* Var *thermal*) southern maidenhair fern (*Adiantum capillus veneris*). The occurrence of the species in the Black Hills appears to be dependent upon the constant moisture and warmth provided by Cascade springs (reference [13]). It is unlikely for the species to survive elsewhere in the BHNF.	The giant helleborine is widely but sparsely distributed west of the continental divide from southern British Columbia to central Mexico and east to western Montana, South Dakota and western Texas. In the Rocky Mountains the orchid occurs from 2,630 to 8,000 feet elevation in association with thermal springs and seeps, non-thermal springs, seeps and fens, on sandstone cliffs and hillsides, and on both limestone and granitic substrates reference [14]).	G3G4/S1	No	Not likely; no warm springs in the Project area.
Great-spurred violet (*Viola selkirkii*)/ forb	Great-spurred violet is typically found in the boreal and Rocky Mountain regions of North America. In the Black Hills, the species is restricted to spruce-dominated forests in cold, shady ravines from 5,400 to 7,000 feet elevation on soil derived from granite parent material.	Great-spurred violet is a circumboreal species that occupies the boreal regions of North America south to Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and British Columbia, with disjunction occurrences in the Black Hills of South Dakota and the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and New Mexico. There are 10 known occurrences of great-spurred violet in Black Hills National Forest; 8 in the Black Elk Wilderness, and 2 in the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve (reference [15]).	G5/S2S3	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented to occur within the Project area.
Highbush cranberry (*Viburnum opulus var. americanum*)	Highbush tends to grow in part shade in areas with moist soil, such as fens, shores, and river banks. Across both South Dakota and North Dakota, highbush cranberry is described as occurring along wooded lakeshores and low wet woods, in moist, springy substrates or even on rocky and bushy hillsides that are moist (reference [16]).	Highbush cranberry has a wide range in North America, it occurs from the east coast in the United States and Canada, westward to the Pacific Coast in Canada, south to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming. . South Dakota Populations of the species are considered peripheral and disjunct from the eastern populations.	G5/Not ranked in SD	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented to occur within the Project area.
Large round-leaf orchid (*Platanthera orbiculata*)	The Large round-leaf orchid typically occupies damp, rich humus oil in the deep shade of heavily forested areas (reference [17]).In the BHNF, the large round-leaf orchid populations are restricted to the Northern Hills, higher elevations of the granitic Central Core, and the Bear Lodge Mountains. The occurrences are scattered in sheltered, northwest – to northeast-facing cool, shady slopes and draws in mid- to late-successional paper birch/hazelnut forest, often with an over story of white spruce.	The Large round-leaved orchid is endemic to North America from Newfoundland to southern Alaska and south to Tennessee, Minnesota, and Oregon. In the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming, the large round-leaf orchid has a disjunct distribution. The Black Hills population are distributed in the northwestern Black Hills, the Bear Lodge Mountains of Wyoming, and in the Black Elk Wilderness Area.	G5/S3	No	Not likely; north facing birch/hardwood stands are not found within the Project area

Species; Growth Habit	Suitable Habitat Characteristics	Documented Distribution	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species known within or near Project area?	Potential for Project Effect?
Mountain lady's slipper (*Cypripedium montanum*)	Mountain lady's slippers most often occur in open mixed conifer or mixed conifer hardwood forests but are also documented in forest openings, shrub thickets and alpine meadows. Moisture regimes vary from dry to moist. Elevation ranges from approximately 1,600 to 6,900 feet. Associated tree species include Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), various species of fir (*Abies*), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), ponderosa pine, quaking aspen, and oak (*Quercus* spp.) (reference [18])	Few occurrences of Mountain Lady's slipper are found in Region 2. The known populations are limited to two counties (Johnson and Sheridan) in Wyoming (reference [19]).	G4/S2	No	Not likely; the Project area occurs well outside of known geographic area of the species.
Narrowleaf peatmoss (*Sphagnum angustifolium*)	Throughout its range, narrow-leaf peatmoss is typically found growing in wet peat in low- to mineral-rich fens, sedge fens, exposed bogs, forming blankets, floating carpets or hillocks, filling in cavities but remain above the water table (reference [20]).	In the United States, narrowleaf peatmoss is found in northeastern states to North Carolina, inland to Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, extending west to Washington, Wyoming, Utah, Oregon, and California. In South Dakota, it has been recorded in Pennington County, at four separate occurrences along South Rochford Road.	G5/S1`	No	Not likely; the Project will not directly impact an Fens or bogs.
Prairie moonwort (*Botrychium campestre*)	Prairie moonwort is typically found in tall to mid-grass prairies where dead leaf litter from grasses is present, Populations are susceptible to drought, and light cover helps shade soils and keep soils moist (reference [21]). In the BHNF, populations are typically found in calcareous meadows and grasslands.	Prairie moonwort is distributed across North America in 14 states and five Canadian provinces. There are seven known occurrences of the species in South Dakota. It is estimated that a total of over 1000 plants occur at these sites (with the majority of them a single site in Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota) (reference [22]).	G3G4/S2S3	No	Potentially; suitable habitat for the species occurs within the Project area.
Sage willow (*Salix candida*)	Throughout its range, sage willow is typically associated with fens, bogs, marshes, and other areas of permanently saturated soils where peat is present. Theses habitats often have high mineral content and alkaline pH and are characterized as "rich" or "extreme rice" fens. In South Dakota, the species appears to prefer calcareous fen communities (reference [23]).	Sage willow is a boreal species whose distribution is concentrated in the northern tier of the United States including Alaska, and in Canada from Newfoundland to British Columbia. In R2 occurrences are rare and scattered in South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado, where they are peripheral or disjunct from the more northern center of distribution. In South Dakota, sage willow is restricted to the southwestern corner of the state.	G5/S1	No	Not likely; the Project will not affect any fens or bogs.
Trailing clubmoss (*Lycopodium complanatum*)	In North America, trailing clubmoss are associated with temperate to sub-arctic boreal forest, dry open coniferous forest, mixed sub-alpine and northern forests, thickets and bogs, and sheltered north-facing slopes. In the BHNF, clubmoss is associated with high moisture microhabitats within remnant boreal spruce habitats. occurring primarily in the northern Black Hills on north facing slopes with paper birch (reference [24])	Trailing clubmoss is distributed across North America from Alaska to Newfoundland south in the Rocky Mountains to Arizona and New Mexico, and in the Appalachians south to Kentucky and North Carolina with disjunct occurrences in Saskatchewan and South Dakota. There are only two currently verified occurrences of stiff clubmoss in the Black Hills. A relatively large occurrence is in the Upper Sand Creek Botanical Area, and a second, smaller occurrence of approximately 50 stems is on Strawberry Creek in Lawrence County, South Dakota (reference [24]).	G5/S2	No	Not likely; no suitable boreal spruce habitats are located within the Project area.
Yellow lady's slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum*)	The yellow lady's slipper is often found in shady deciduous and mixed woods. In South Dakota, the species is most often found in shady deciduous and mixed woodlands, usually between 3,500 and 6,445 ft in elevation. The mixed forests typically include species of oak, ash (*Fraxinus spp.*), and hazelnut (*Corylus spp.*) woodland; or shrublands, swamps, bogs, and spruce (*Picea spp.*) and pine (*Pinus spp.*) forests (reference [25]).	Yellow lady's slipper is distributed in boreal regions of the northern hemisphere. The species can be found in all five states of R2. Occurrences of the species within the BHNF represents a minor disjunction from the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming, Western Montana, and northeastern North and South Dakota (Mergen 2006). An estimated 4,000 individuals exist in over 200 locations on the Forest (Bearlodge, Mystic and Northern Hills Ranger Districts).	G5/S3S4	No	Not likely; Project area does not countian suitable deciduous mixed forest.

All available information regarding the F3 Project was compiled using field reconnaissance, survey records, district records, and available database(s) information (GIS and Black Hills National Forest plant database (reference [26]).

[1] Species Rank information was gathered from South Dakota Game Fish and Parks (reference [8]).

Table 4-2 Species of Local Concern: Summary of Suitable Habitat, Distribution, and Potential Affects

Species; Growth Habit	Suitable Habitat Characteristics	Documented Distribution	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank	Previously known within or near Project area?	Potential for Project Effect?
Alpine mountain sorrel (*Oxyria digyna*)	Alpine mountain sorrel is typically found in stony, moist to wet soil of moraine, rock outcrops, meadows, talus slopes; upper subalpine and alpine areas (reference [27]). The species prefers high elevations from 1,000 to 8,700 feet with a west facing aspect (reference [28]).	Alpine Mountain sorrel is common in the tundra of the artic and can be found growing in high mountainous areas in the northern Hemisphere.	G5/S2	No	Not likely; the geographical and elevational range and steep granite outcrops do not occur within the Project area.
Arrowleaf sweet coltsfoot (*Petasites frigidus var. sagittatus*)	Arrowleaf sweet coltsfoot is an obligate wetland species that occurs predominantly in boreal regions. Typically found in bogs, marshes, fens, marshy tundra, alluvial flats, roadside ditches and disturbed sites such as clear cuts. In the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF), Arrowleaf sweet coltsfoot is found in open or shaded, low-lying habitats, along streams, often with peaty substrate (reference [29]).	Arrowleaf sweet coltsfoot is distributed from eastern Alaska and southern Yukon east to Labrador and south to Washington, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota and Colorado.. In the BHNF, arrowleaf sweet coltsfoot is known only from two locations along Rapid Creek, one in Pennington County near Solomon Gulch, the other in the Black Fox Valley Botanical Area in Lawrence County (reference [29]). Two other occurrences are known from private lands in Lawrence County (reference [29]).	G5/S2	No	Not likely; project features will not cross existing wetlands.
Beaked spikerush (*Eleocharis rostellata*)	Beaked spikerush is an obligate wetland species, (reference [30]) that occurs in many types of alkaline wetlands including salt and brackish marshes, tidal flats, alkaline seeps, bogs, stream margins, hot spring edges, and swamps. In BHNF, beaked spikerush is typically associated with warm, calcareous, perennial water source, with open canopies (reference [31]).	Beaked spikerush distribution is widespread in the Americas from across southern Canada to northern Mexico, to the West Indies, the Caribbean, and the Andes of South America. The South Dakota population of beaked spikerush extends along Cascade Creek from the headwaters at Cascade Springs to within one-half mile of the confluence with the Cheyenne River, and the species is especially abundant along the reach between Cascade Springs to just below Cascade Falls (reference [31]).	G5/S1	No	Not likely; no warm springs are located within the Project area.
Broad-lipped twayblade (*Listera convallarioides*)	Broad-lipped twayblade most often grows in somewhat acidic mulch in forest seeps, northern white cedar swamps, boreal forests, and other wet-mesic forests in the eastern part of its range. With some populations growing in moist sand along streams under cedar (reference [32]).	Broad-lipped twayblade is endemic to North America, found across most of the continent, with a gap across the drier climates in Minnesota and South Dakota and areas to the north. In the west it is restricted to mountainous areas, from British Columbia to Arizona and Nevada (reference [32]). There are four known occurrences on the BHNF with one site extending onto BLM land. Occurrences are restricted to a 20 square mile area in the northern Black Hills, south of Lead, South Dakota	G5/S1	No	Not likely; the Project area is outside of the geographical range of the existing populations in the BHNF.
Common maidenhair (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*)	Common maidenhair occupies shaded, calcareous, moist banks, canyon walls, or pours rocky sites, often within the spray of waterfalls, and grows on masonry storm drains and limestone. In the BHNF, southern maidenhair fern is dependent on constant moisture and warmth provided by Cascade Springs (reference [24]).	In North America, common maidenhair fern is distributed across the southern third of the United States, with disjunct populations in South Dakota and British Columbia Canada. All occurrences of the species in the BHNF occur within Cascade Valley. The fern is not believed to have ever occurred at other warm springs habitats in the Black Hills.	G5/S1	No	Not likely; warm springs in Project area
Downy gentian (*Gentiana puberulenta*)	Downy gentian typically occurs in dry to mesic grassland and forest transition habitats, often with patchy shrub-cover. In the Great Plains, downy gentian occurs in moist big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) uplands and open woodlands (reference [33]).	Downy gentian is an eastern North American species ranging from Quebec and Virginia to the eastern Dakotas and scattered in sandy parts of Nebraska. Typically confined to wet meadows, wet prairies, and wet woods. A few colonies exist in the eastern edge of the Black Hills (reference [33]).	G4G5/S4	No	Not likely; mesic limestone meadows do not occur in the Project area.
Fivestamen miterwort (*Mitella pentandra*)	Fivestamen miterwort typically occurs in moist woods, stream banks, avalanche tracks and wet mountain meadows, bogs, fens, and wetlands. The species can be found at elevations of 3,280 to 12,100 feet frequently in moist slightly shaded environments. Occasional in middle elevation forests (reference [34]).	In North America, fivestamen is distributed across the western third of the United States and Canada. In the BHNF, the species occurs in white spruce, paper birch, and hazelnut communities along small perennial and intermittent streams.	G5/S1	No	Not likely; project features wont effect suitable perennial and intermittent stream habitat.

Species; Growth Habit	Suitable Habitat Characteristics	Documented Distribution	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank	Previously known within or near Project area?	Potential for Project Effect?
Leathery grape fern (*Botrychium multifidum*)	Leathery grapefern typically occurs in old pastures, meadows, woodland margins, riverbanks and bottomlands in sub acidic soil (Anderson 2005). In Region 2 (R2), leathery grapefern has been documented in a variety of habitats including wet meadows, forest edges, lake shores, stony lake margins, in willow clumps at the edge of a pond, next to trails and near beaver dams.	Leathery grapefern is distributed worldwide in temperate and north temperate habitats. In North America, the area of highest diversity for this subgenus is east of the Mississippi River from the southern Gulf Coast to the northern coasts of the Great Lakes. In South Dakota, the species is known from 5 sites in the Black Hills. Of these five sites three are located within the Black Elk Wilderness Area and one is the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve in Pennington County.	G5/S1	No	Not likely; Project area is outside of the range of the current BHNF populations.
Limber pine (*Pinus flexis*)	Limber pine typically occurs on steep, rocky, well drained windswept, and nutrient-poor sites on exposed ridges and summits, often reported growing on calcareous soil. The species can be found across a wider range of elevations, inhabiting some of the driest sites capable of supporting trees. A population of limber pine in the Black Hills is associated with interior ponderosa pine and white spruce. Understory species include bearberry and common juniper (reference [35]).	Limber pine occurs from Alberta and British Columbia south to California, Arizona, and New Mexico. It is scattered widely across the Great Basin in Utah, Nevada, and into Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. Isolated populations occur in the Dakotas and Nebraska (reference [35]). In the Black Hills *P. flexilis* is known to occur within a two square mile area of the Black Elk Wilderness (Harney Peak area) and Custer State Park. Black Hills sites are characterized by large granite outcrops	G5/S1	No	Not likely; no granite outcrops are located within the Project area.
Northern hollyfern (*Polystichum lonchitis*)	Northern hollyfern typically occurs in rock crevices or at base of boulders, mostly in boreal and subalpine coniferous forests or alpine regions (reference [36]). It is commonly associated with white spruce, paper birch, and hazel in moist, shaded north facing slopes in forested ravines and gulches on limestone substrate at elevations from 4,160 to 5,540 feet (reference [37]).	Northern hollyfern can be found throughout much of western North America and northeastern North America. The species has been reported in the northern Black Hills and Bear Lodge Mountains (USFS 2006).	G5/S2S3	No	Not likely; moist, shaded, forested limestone ravines are not located in project area
Eastern shining willow (*Salix lucida*)	Eastern shining willow grows in wet to moist sites along streams, rivers, and lakeshores and in seeps, wet meadows, freshwater swamps, and moist alluvial bottomlands. Typically found at middle to high elevations. It dominates many tall willow shrublands, and codominates some riparian mixed-shrublands and mixed-deciduous woodlands.. The species is commonly associated with other willows, cottonwoods, and balsam poplar (reference [38]).	Eastern shining willow is distributed from Alaska east to Labrador and south to California, Kansas, and North Carolina. There is only one documented occurrence of *S. lucida* on the Black Hills National Forest. An additional historical (1913) location near Deadwood, SD has not been relocated and is likely extirpated. The single central Black Hills site has two individuals and is in a dense willow (*Salix* spp.) shrubland floodplain along Rapid Creek at an elevation of 5,140 feet.	G5/S1	No	Not likely; suitable riverine habitat will not be disturbed by the Project.
Western shining willow (*Salix lasiandra var. caudata*)	Western shining willow grows in wet to moist sites; along streams, rivers, and lakeshores and in seeps, wet meadows, freshwater swamps, and moist alluvial bottomlands. The species occurs from sea level to 10,000 feet across its range (reference [38]).	Western shining willow is widely distributed in western United States and Canada with the Black Hills being the easternmost occurrence of the species. It is mostly absent from dry interior regions of the intermountain west. There are four documented occurrences of western shinning willow on the BHNF all of which occur on floodplains or stream banks. Black Hills occurrences range in elevation from 4,260 to 5,620 feet.	G5	No	Not likely; suitable floodplain habitat will not be disturbed by the Project.
Southwestern showy sedge (*Carex bella*)	Southwestern showy sedge typical habitat includes streambanks, meadows and moist woods or open slopes at high altitude in the mountains often above timberline (reference [39]). Within the BHNF, southwestern showy sedge is restricted to moist sites at high elevations, about 6,000 feet or higher, most found in damp woods and along low order streams often partial to full shade.	Southwestern show sedge occurs in the high mountains of Arizona and New México, northern to central Utah, northern Colorado, and South Dakota. In the BHNF, the species is found within the Black Elk Wilderness and in the adjacent Custer State Park (Glisson 2003d).	G5/S1	No	Not likely; outside geographical distribution and no high elevation white spruce forests are found in Project area
Stiff clubmoss (*Lycopodium annotinum*)	In North America, stiff clubmoss is associated with temperate to sub-arctic boreal forest, dry open coniferous forest, mixed sub-alpine and northern forests, thickets and bogs, and sheltered north-facing slopes. In the BHNF, stiff clubmoss is associated with high moisture microhabitats within remnant boreal spruce habitats that are disjunct from the main distribution of white spruce to the north (Hornbeck 2003h).	Stiff clubmoss is distributed across North America from Alaska to Newfoundland south in the Rocky Mountains to Arizona and New Mexico, and in the Appalachians south to Kentucky and North Carolina with disjunct occurrences in Saskatchewan and South Dakota. There are only two currently verified occurrences of stiff clubmoss in the BHNF. One population in Upper Sand Creek Botanical area and the second along Strawberry Creek in Lawrence County (Hornbeck 2003h).	G5/S1	No	Not likely; boreal white spruce/birch habitat does not occur within the Project area

All available information regarding the F3 Project was compiled using field reconnaissance, survey records, district records, and available database(s) information (GIS and Black Hills National Forest plant database (reference [26]).

5 Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction Related to Botanical Resources

Direction for USFS botanical resources is dictated by laws, regulations, and the Forest Plan. The following are the primary laws and regulations that govern USFS botanical resources management:

- Endangered Species Act of 1973; and
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970

Impacts to federally listed species are prohibited under the ESA. Impacts to sensitive plant species must be avoided, minimized, and/or mitigated under NEPA.

5.1 Forest Plan Direction

The BHNF Forest Plan identifies standards and guidelines to inform management related to various resources, including botanical resources. As summarized in the Forest Plan, a standard is defined as a limitation on management activities that is within the authority and ability of the agency to meet or enforce (reference [1]). Standards are used to determine if individual projects are in compliance with the Forest Plan. Deviation from the requirement requires a Forest Plan amendment. A guideline is a preferred or advisable course of action. Deviation from a guideline is permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.

Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the botanical resources considered applicable to the Project include those related to soil disturbance, rehabilitation and revegetation, and surface water runoff, stream channels, reclamation, and riparian protection. F3 will be required to comply with the applicable standards and guidelines, as described in further detail below, throughout the duration of the Project.

5.1.1 Soil Disturbance

Standard 1105: Limit roads and other disturbed sites to the minimum feasible number, width, and total length consistent with the purpose of specific operations, local topography, and climate.

Standard 1106: Stabilize and maintain roads and other disturbed sites during and after construction to control erosion.

5.1.2 Rehabilitation and Revegetation

Standard 1109: Reclaim roads and other disturbed sites when use ends, as needed, to prevent resource damage.

Standard 1110: Initiate re-vegetation as soon as possible, not to exceed 6 months after termination of ground-disturbing activities. Re-vegetate all disturbed soils with native species in seed and plant mixtures that are noxious-weed free. On areas needing immediate establishment of vegetation, non-native, non-aggressive annuals (for example, wheat, oats, and rye) or sterile species may be used while native perennials are becoming established, or when native species are not available (for example, during

drought years when wildfires burn large acreages in the United States). Other aggressive non-native perennials (for example, smooth brome and timothy) would not be used. Seed would be tested for noxious weeds. If mulches are used, they are to be noxious-weed free. Weed-free alfalfa seed may be used only when native legume seed is not available and only when there is extensive disturbance associated with road construction or mine reclamation where topsoil is no longer available.

- High Elevations Uplands
    - 25% slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachcaulus*)
    - 30% annual ryegrass (*Liolium multiflorum*)
    - 10% Canada wildrye (*Elymus Canadensis*)
    - 10% Canby bluegrass (*Poa canbyi*)
    - 20% green needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*)
    - 5% purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea)* or American vetch (*Vicia Americana*)

- Low Elevations Uplands
    - 35 % annual ryegrass (*Lolium multifolorum*)
    - 25% slender wheatgrsss (*Elymus trachycaulus*)
    - 5% purple prairie clover (*Dale purpurea*) or American vetch (*Vicia Americana*)
    - 20% any combination of four warm season grasses, including bluegrama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), indiangrass (*Sorghastrum mutans*), or sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)

Guideline 1111. Stabilize, scarify or recontour temporary roads, constructed skid trails, and landings prior to seeding.

5.1.3 Surface Water Runoff

Standard 1114: When construction of maintenance level 1 roads, temporary roads, skid trails and landings occur, install structures to divert runoff when needed.

Standard 1115: When ground disturbing or vegetation management occurs, use vegetative buffer strips or barriers to reduce sediment. Determine buffer width between stream and road or trails using equation in Appendix J of the Forest Plan.

5.1.4 Stream Channels

Standard 1203: Design and construct all stream crossings and other instream structures to provide for passage of flow and sediment, withstand expected flood flows, and allow free movement of resident aquatic life.

5.1.5 Reclamation

Standard 1501: A Plan of Operations shall contain proposed reclamation objectives and practices to maintain water quality and soil stability during mining and exploration activities, including post mining

and exploration, and any temporary shutdowns. Reclamation objectives should include the planned uses of the management area or reasons why these uses can no longer be achieved.

Standard 1502: Reclamation will be considered satisfactory when the disturbed area has been reclaimed in accordance with the operating plan.

5.1.6 Riparian Protection

Guideline 1506: Minimize disturbance to the riparian area by mineral activities. Initiate timely and effective rehabilitation of disturbed areas and restore riparian areas to a state of productivity comparable to that before disturbance.

a. a. Prohibit the depositing of material from drilling, processing or site preparation in natural drainages.
b. b. Locate the lower edge of disturbed or deposited soil banks outside of natural drainages and riparian areas.
c. c. Prohibit stockpiling of topsoil or any other disturbed soil in natural drainages or riparian areas.
d. d. Prohibit mineral processing (milling) activities within natural drainages or riparian areas.

6 Summary of Potential Effects

Impacts to botanical resources would be minimized by F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Additionally, applicant-proposed impact minimization measures would be implemented during all Project activities. This analysis discusses the potential effects resulting from the implementation of the no action alternative (Alternative A), the proposed action (Alternative B), and the modified proposed action (Alternative C).

6.1 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, no vegetation clearing or earth work would occur. Therefore, Alternative A would not result in direct or indirect effects.

6.2 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative B and C

Alternatives B and C would result in direct impacts to botanical resources, including meadows and trees, due to the necessary clearing activities required to construct temporary access roads and for grading some drill pad locations. Alternative B would result in approximately 3.88 acres of temporary vegetation disturbance from the construction of site access, drill pads, and staging areas. Alternative C would result in approximately 6.05 acres of temporary vegetation disturbance from the construction of site access, drill pads, and staging areas. These effects would be temporary and/or negligible.

It is unlikely for sensitive flora species, including federally listed, USFS R2 SS, or SOLC to occur within the Project area, given lack of suitable habitat and/or given their lack of documented occurrences within direct proximity of the Project area.

There is no suitable habitat present within the impact area for the federally listed Leedy's roseroot and; therefore, the determination is there wpi;d be no effect to federally listed threatened or endangered species.

Survey of the impact area has not been completed to confirm the absence of sensitive plant species including R2 SS and SOLC; however, there are no known occurrences of the species within the impact area, and in some cases there is not suitable habitat. Therefore, it was determined the Alternative B and C may adversely affect R2 SS individuals, but they are not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Project area, nor cause a trend toward federal listing for any of the R2 SS as summarized in Table 6-1.

There are no known occurrences of plant SOLC in the Project area. Due to the small scale of the proposed project in relation to habitats available across the BHNF, SOLC are likely to persist because the proposed project is consistent with Forest Plan direction for SOLC habitats, and therefore Objective 221 (*conserve or enhance habitat for … species of local concern*).

Table 6-1 Summary of Potential Effects by Alternative

Species Name	Status	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C
Leedy's roseroot (*Rhodiola integrifolia ssp. Leedyi*)	Threatened	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Autumn willow (*Salix serissima*)	SS	No Effect	MAII[1]	MAII
Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Foxtail sedge (*Carex alopecoidea*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Giant helleborine (*Epipactis gigantea*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Great-spurred violet (*Viola selkirkii*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Highbush cranberry (*Viburnum opulus var. americanum*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Large round-leaf orchid (*Platanthera orbiculata*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Mountain lady's slipper (*Cypripedium montanum*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Narrowleaf peatmoss (*Sphagnum angustifolium*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Prairie moonwort (*Botrychium campestre*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Sage willow (*Salix candida*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Trailing clubmoss (*Lycopodium complanatum*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII
Yellow lady's slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum*)	SS	No Effect	MAII	MAII

[1] MAII – May adversely impact individuals but not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Planning area nor cause a trend toward federal listing

6.3 Cumulative Effects

The following section provides an assessment of the potential cumulative effects on sensitive flora species from implementation of the Project and the potential interaction with the effects on these resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects. Because the potential effects to sensitive flora species are comparable for Alternative B and Alternative C, they are discussed together with regard for their potential for cumulative effects.

6.3.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the foreseeable future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. Present and foreseeable future activities may contribute to effects on federally listed species and USFS Region 2 sensitive species. The effects of present and foreseeable future projects combined with the effects of Alternative B or Alternative C could potentially result in cumulative effects on federally listed species and USFS Region 2 sensitive species. The foreseeable future projects that could potentially contribute to cumulative effects are listed below and are further described in the Environmental Assessment.

Foreseeable Future Projects

- South Dakota Network Fiberoptic Cable – 15 miles northwest of Project area
- New radio tower near Silver City Community Hall – 0.2 miles south of Project area
- Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures
- Timber sales located within the Project vicinity and approved to occur within the next 5 years
- Prescribed burns – eastern two-thirds of Project area
- Recreational event permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses

6.3.2 Cumulative Effects to Botany

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), and F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines, the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on federally listed species and USFS Region 2 sensitive species or SOLC.

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Appendix D

Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Prepared for
United States Forest Service

May 2022

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Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

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Abbreviations

amsl	above mean sea level
BA	Biological Assessment
BE	Biological Evaluation
BHNF	Black Hills National Forest
ESA	Endangered Species Act
IPaC	Information Planning and Conservation
MA	Management Area
MIS	Management Indicator Species
NFMA	National Forest Management Act
NFSR	National Forest System Road
NRM	National Resource Manager
OHV	off highway vehicle
PO	Plan of Operations
SOLC	Species of Local Concern
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WIZ	water influence zone

1 Introduction

This document contains a wildlife and fisheries Biological Assessment (BA)/Biological Evaluation (BE) and a technical report to assess the potential effects of F3 Gold's, LLC (F3) Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project (Project) on sensitive wildlife and fisheries resources. The Project is located on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands within the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) in South Dakota (Figure 1-1).

This report describes the Project, alternatives, and existing conditions. The next part of this document (Section 4) is the BA/BE, which assesses the potential effects of the Project on federally listed threatened, endangered, and candidate species and their habitats, as well as USFS Region 2 sensitive species and their habitats (reference (1)). This BA/BE meets the requirements of section 7(a)(2) of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, which requires federal agencies to ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species, or result in the adverse modification of critical habitat and follows the standards established in the Forest Service Manual direction (2672.42). This document also meets the requirements of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), which requires that the USFS manage wildlife and fish habitat to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area and ensures that its actions do not contribute to trends toward federal listing. This document tiers directly to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Black Hills Forest Plan (reference (2)) and the Phase II Amendment to the Forest Plan (reference (3)).

The final part of the document (Section 5) is the wildlife and fisheries technical report. This technical report assesses the potential effects of the Project on Species of Local Concern (SOLC) (reference (4)) and Management Indicator Species (MIS) to ensure the Project is consistent with the 1997 BHNF Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), as amended by the 2006 Phase II amendment (reference (3)). The Forest Plan is required by the rules implementing the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Act of 1974, as amended by the NFMA.

The Forest Plan, as amended, provides management direction for all resource management activities on the BHNF. In regard to wildlife and fisheries resources, the Forest Plan establishes goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for maintaining an appropriate mix and balance of habitats that support populations that will be sustainable and would not result in any individual species trending toward or becoming listed as threatened or endangered.

1.1 Purpose and Need

F3 has submitted a PO proposing exploration drilling on National Forest System Lands open to mineral location. F3 has a statutory right to perform exploration drilling as proposed per the General Mining Act of 1872. The USFS administers exploration and development on National Forest System lands under mining regulations defined in 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228, Subpart A. Entities wishing to undertake mineral exploration are required to submit a PO for review by the District Ranger.

The purpose of the exploration drilling is to identify the geological resources located with the Project area. The need for this Project relates to F3's statutory right to access for exploration purposes. F3 is seeking USFS authorization of their proposal to exercise their rights under current mining laws to perform exploration drilling while minimizing environmental effects in accordance with USFS regulations for locatable minerals.

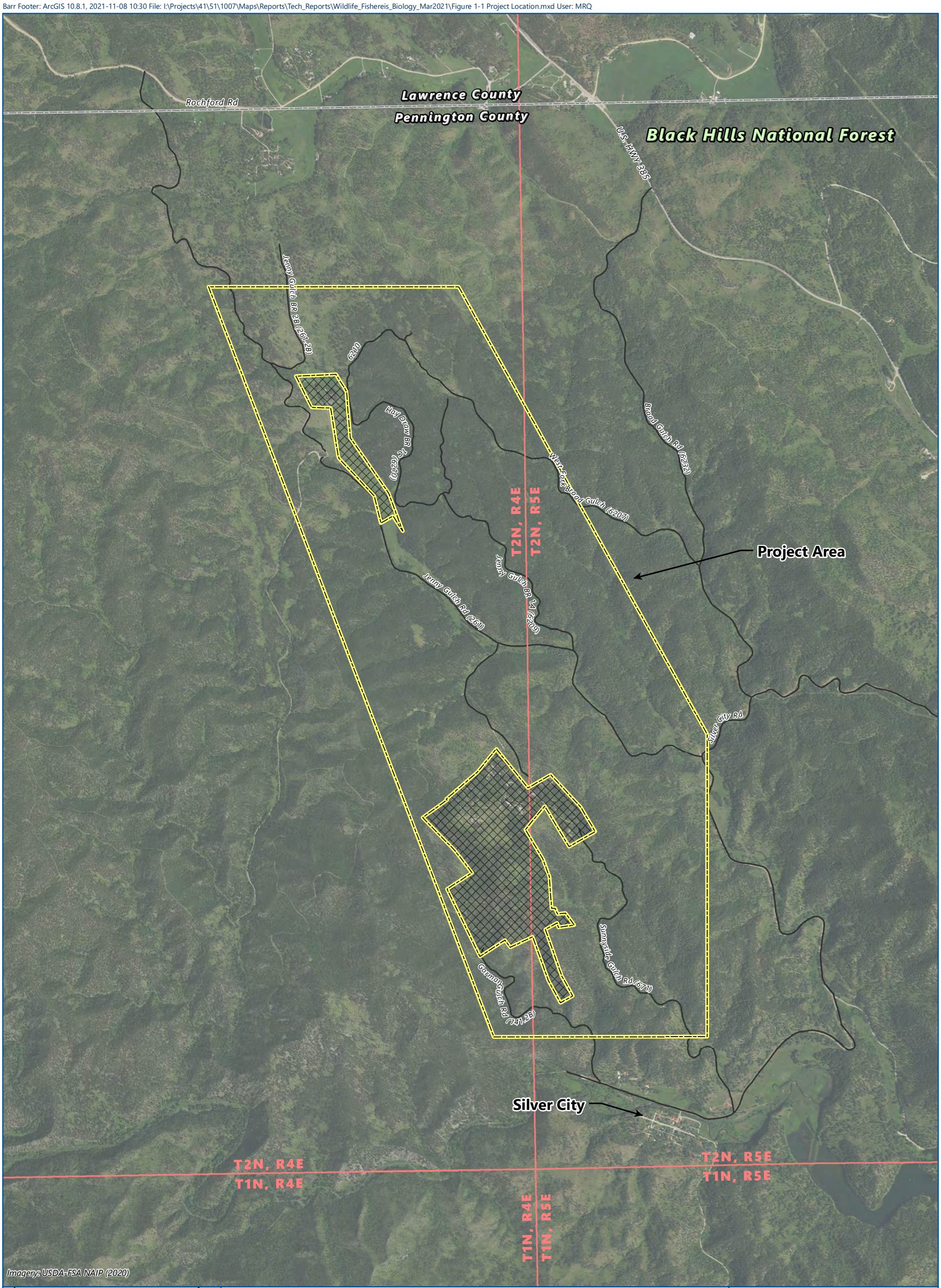
The Forest Service's purpose is to decide whether to approve F3's proposed PO and, if approved, what requirements are appropriate to minimize impacts on surface resources in accordance with 36 CFR 228, subpart A. After evaluating the proposed PO, the Forest Service determined that approving the proposed mining plan of operations would be a major Federal action subject to the National Environmental Policy Act as defined in 40 CFR 1508.1. Accordingly, the Forest Service prepared an Environmental Assessment, which this report is a part of.

The need for the Forest Service's action is to comply with regulations governing the use of surface resources for operations authorized by the United States mining laws on National Forest System lands under 36 CFR 228, subpart A. These regulations require that the Forest Service respond to parties who submit a proposed plan of operations for approval to conduct operations authorized by the United States mining laws on National Forest System lands for part or all of their planned actions including mining, mineral processing, and uses reasonably incident thereto. In accordance with 36 CFR 228.5, the submittal of F3's proposed PO requires the Forest Service to consider whether to approve the proposed mining plan of operations or to require changes or additions necessary for the plan to meet the purpose of the regulations for locatable mineral operations.

1.2 Project Area Location

The Project area is located north of Silver City and includes all or portions of Sections 19, 30, 31, T2N R5E and Sections 13, 14, 24, 25, T2N R4E, Black Hills Meridian, Pennington County, South Dakota (Figure 1-1).

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2021-11-08 10:30 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Wildlife_Fishereis_Biology_Mar2021\Figure 1-1 Project Location.mxd User: MRQ



Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Public Land Survey Township

County Boundary

Existing USFS Roads to be Utilized

N

0 2,000

Feet

BARR

PREOJCT LOCATION

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report

Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 1-1

2 Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A – No Action

The NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14) requires a study of the No Action Alternative to use as a basis for comparing the effects of the proposed action and other action alternatives. Under the No Action Alternative (Alternative A), the USFS would not approve F3's plan of operations (PO) to conduct exploration drilling activities. There would be no environmental effects associated with Alternative A. However, Alternative A does not meet the Project's purpose and need to allow F3 to access and explore for minerals on lands open to the public domain in accordance with the General Mining Act of 1872.

2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Alternative B is the proposed action as described in the PO submitted by F3. Alternative B includes diamond core drilling at up to 42 drill sites, access road maintenance (as needed), drill pad clearing (as needed), and reclamation activities (Figure 2-1). Alternative B would require an amendment to the Forest Plan to allow three drill pads in Management Area (MA) 8.2. The Forest Plan designates that no new mineral development (including exploratory drilling to inform future mineral development) is allowed and the majority of the MA around Pactola Lake has been withdrawn from mineral entry (reference (3)). The USFS would be required to prepare a Project specific amendment to the Forest Plan to authorize the drilling activities, despite the F3-proposed drilling locations coinciding with one of the areas that has not been withdrawn from mineral entry.

2.2.1 Drilling and Staging

Each drill site would have a maximum footprint of approximately 2,500 square feet (0.06 acres), where the drilling rig, rod tray, support vehicles, portable cutting tank, and water truck will be placed. Drill holes would range from 500 to 6,000 feet in depth dependent on the results of each hole. Although depths up to 6,000 feet would be authorized, very few holes are planned to extend to this depth; most holes would be drilled to a depth of approximately 1,000 feet. Exploration drilling involves drilling holes vertically and at an angle from the surface. That angle can vary between -90 degrees (vertical) and -45 degrees. Once the angle is set, the drill will remain at that angle until completion of the drill hole. Directional drilling that controls the direction of the boring during drilling (as commonly used in oil and gas development) or horizontal drilling methods will not be used. The number of holes drilled on each drill pad will depend on the findings in the field, with the average drill pad having one to two holes and some having up to four holes. Depending on the results of preceding drill holes, some of the drill sites may not end up being required and would ultimately not be constructed. Drilling operations would take place 24-hours a day divided between two 12-hour shifts. Two staging areas (0.25 acres each) would be used to store equipment and tools. Drill pads and staging areas would result in 3.0 acres of temporary surface disturbance. Drill pad locations were selected based on local geology, subsurface target concepts, and surface conditions that allow F3 to best test its scientific theories while minimizing surface disturbance.

The drilling process proposed by F3 would use water mixed with industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds or other natural and/or biodegradable additives to more efficiently and

safely drill and seal boreholes. No other chemicals or solvents would be used in drilling. Any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters. Water would be trucked from the municipal or industrial source to storage holding tanks either at a drill site and/or one of the staging areas. Approximately 5,000 to 10,000 gallons of water would be used per day per drill rig. During drilling activities, water would be circulated using a water pump with water lines transporting water from the storage tanks to the drill site. At the end of drilling operations, excess water would be disposed of at a municipal wastewater disposal location, in agreement with the municipality.

Drill cuttings and used water would be recovered and collected in tanks at the drill site. Settlement would be used to separate the cuttings, allowing the water to be reused in the drilling process. Upon completion of a drill hole, the cuttings would be either thin-spread and buried beneath the topsoil (which is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the western U.S.) or transported off-site to an approved disposal location. Spread drill cutting depth would be dependent on hole depth with most sites resulting in a spread drill cuttings depth of 0.25 inches; however, some sites (holes up to 6,000 feet deep) may result in up to approximately 1.50 inches of drill cuttings spread across the drill pad. Topsoil would be placed on on-site cuttings and reseeded/replanted to match surrounding vegetation. Burying cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Drill pads would be reclaimed upon completion of all drilling activities, as one reclamation effort at the end.

2.2.2 Site Access

Main access from the north would be from NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via county Highway 237 (Rochford Road). The primary access from the south would be from NFSR 671 (Sunnyside Gulch Road) or NFSR 261 (Jenny Gulch Road) via Silver City Road. Additional NFSRs that are anticipated to be used for access include NFSR 261, 720.2B, 671, 141.2B, and 261.2B. National Forest System Trails (NFST) 6207, 6209, and 6210 are also anticipated to be used for access, all of which allow motorized vehicle use (Figure 1-1). Approximately 5,280 feet (one mile) of existing local roadways noted above would be used to access Project features. In addition, approximately 4,700 linear feet (0.89 miles) of 8-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access route may be constructed for drill site access, resulting in less than 1 acre of additional temporary surface disturbance. These temporary overland trails would be obliterated and returned to natural conditions after Project completion. Existing access roads and overland trails would be improved only if needed and only to the extent necessary to gain access to the site.

2.2.3 Proposed Equipment

F3 proposes to use the following equipment to complete drilling and associated restoration of the Project:

- One to four diamond drill rigs
- Drill rod racks with drill pipe and casing pipe
- Six to eight four-wheel drive pickup trucks for access to drilling sites
- Four all-terrain vehicles for access to drilling sites
- Two snowmobiles for access to drilling sites (for winter use only)

- One water truck, as needed to fill water storage tanks
- One excavator
- One dozer
- One skid-steer
- One to three water storage tanks, up to 10,000 gallons in size
- Up to four water supply pumps
- Water line/hose, mud pump, and mixing tanks for grouting and/or cementing drill holes.

Drilling equipment (i.e., drill rigs, drill rod racks, drill pipe, casing pipe) would be used at each drilling site as this equipment is needed to perform the drilling. Other equipment, such as the excavator, dozer, and skid-steer would be used on an as-needed basis to facilitate access, maintenance, and reclamation. When not in use, this equipment would be stored at one of the staging areas.

2.2.4 Vegetation and Soil Removal

Tree clearing and other vegetation removal would be limited to only that which is needed to facilitate access. Any soils that may need to be removed for pad clearing would be stockpiled for later use in site reclamation.

2.2.5 Reclamation

Upon completion of drilling at each hole, the hole would be capped, sealed, and plugged per Administrative Rules of South Dakota 74:11:08.

Drill pads and staging areas would be reclaimed upon completion of drilling by re-grading the pads to pre-Project contours and reseeding with Black Hills reclamation seed mix, as noted in the PO. Safety signage would be removed from the area, and stockpiled soils would be either spread over the drill pad area, stacked in soil-free piles, or disposed off-site at an approved facility. Overland trails used for access to drill pads would be re-seeded and returned to pre-existing conditions under the direction of the USFS.

2.2.6 Monitoring and Implementation

F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the Project. F3 is required to submit a reclamation plan to the USFS prior to authorization for Project initiation in accordance with USFS Manual 2840. In addition, F3 is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the USFS for the Project, with the bond amount determined by the USFS. F3's PO would be administered by the USFS Minerals Specialist, and other governmental entities with permitting authority will be responsible for enforcing their permit conditions as they deem appropriate. Sites will be monitored for a minimum of three years after reclamation.

2.2.7 Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures

As part of their Plan of Operations, F3 intends to implement impact minimization measures into Project design, as summarized in Table 2-1. These measures have been developed in response to comments received during the Project scoping process.

Table 2-1 Summary of Applicant-Proposed Minimization Measures

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Access and Transportation	• Overland trails used for access would be regraded and reseeded as directed by USFS. • Any unexpected road damage would be repaired as soon as possible based on contractor availability. • Contractor equipment would not exceed local road weight restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. • Traffic to and from the drill sites would be limited to site set-up, driller shift changes, management oversight, sample pickup, and site restoration. • Additional safety signage (construction use, warning signs, drill signs, trucks entering signs, etc.) would be posted throughout the work area to communicate construction equipment use of the road.
Botanical Resources/ Reclamation	• Tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary. In areas where tree removal is unavoidable, the affected area would be reseeded/replanted as part of reclamation with Black Hills seed mix. • Disturbed areas would be reclaimed and reseeded according to USFS standards.
Fisheries and Wildlife	• Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15 – August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger. • Drill sites would not be located in limestone areas to avoid potential vertigo snail habitat disturbance. In addition, protection of the WIZ surrounding streams/seeps/springs would also provide protection for vertigo snails. • Drilling within 500-feet of a known bat roost location would occur outside the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31). Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger.

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	• Holding tanks would be used to store drilling water rather than sumps to minimize potential for sedimentation and infiltration. • All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • Materials used for the Project would be stored either at staging areas or at the drill sites; materials would not be stored along access roads or other locations. • Any soils that may need to be removed for clearing drill pads or staging areas would be stockpiled on-site for later use in site reclamation. • Upon completion of a drill hole, the drill cuttings and fines would be dispersed in the disturbed area. • Topsoil would be placed on cuttings and reseeded/replanted as necessary to match surrounding vegetation. • Drill pads, staging areas and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completion of all Project activities. • Drilling would primarily require the use of water. In addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. No other chemicals or solvents would be used in drilling. Rock core, water, and fine-grained rock drill cuttings generated by drilling would be stored in holding tanks. Water would be recycled back into the drilling process, and drill cuttings would be disposed as noted above.
Hydrology – Water Quality/Quantity	• The only fluids used for the Project are fuel (for vehicles/machinery), oil (for vehicles/machinery), water, and industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds or other natural and/or biodegradable additives. • All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • Water would not be extracted from local surface waters; any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source. • Upon completion of drilling at each hole, the hole would be capped, sealed, and plugged per Administrative Rules of South Dakota 74:11:08. Drill holes would be sealed within 24 to 48 hours of drilling completion prior to moving the drill rig. • Casing will be used, when necessary, to protect groundwater in unconsolidated, surficial geologic units. The need for casing is expected to be minimal as most drilling is proposed directly on bedrock with little to no soil or surficial geologic units.

Issue	Applicant-Proposed Impact Minimization Measures
Public Health and Safety	• Residences in close proximity to drilling activities would be notified prior to Project initiation. • An emergency response plan would be developed for the Project and would be provided to local first responders in advance of Project initiation. This plan would be developed in coordination with local first responders and would address a number of emergency situations (i.e., fire, injury, etc.). • All drilling sites and staging areas would be equipped with spill kits to immediately address any fuel or oil spill. All fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards. • All vehicles, drill rigs, and other on-site equipment would be inspected as part of daily safety checks and will be equipped with more than one fire extinguisher, which would also be inspected routinely. • A site security plan would be developed to maintain site safety and limit risk of public interference.

2.3 Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Alternative C was developed in response to issues identified during Project scoping. This alternative meets the Project's purpose and need in a way that implements siting factors (i.e., factors that influence where features are sited or positioned) and additional mitigation measures to further minimize Project effects. The additional measures or siting differences included in Alternative C are summarized below. Specifically, Alternative C has been developed to minimize effects by avoiding cultural resources, eliminating the need for a Forest Plan Amendment, as discussed below, and to minimize effects to the water influence zone (WIZ). In order to minimize effects, additional drilling pads would be needed to achieve a comparable level of data collection as explained below.

Alternative C proposes drilling 47 exploration drilling pads as shown in Figure 2 1; this number of drill pads in combination with the two staging areas would result in 3.3 acres of temporary surface disturbance. Alternative C relocates 5 drilling pads, one staging area, and associated access roads proposed in Alternative B to avoid effects to cultural resources; however, F3 has determined that additional drilling pads are needed to collect an equivalent level of information compared to Alternative B. Under Alternative C, approximately 5,700 feet (1.1 mile) of existing local roadways would be used to access Project features. In addition, up to approximately 9,925 linear feet (1.88 miles) of 12-foot wide temporary overland trails and/or temporary access route may be developed for drill site access, resulting in up to approximately 2.73 acres of additional temporary surface disturbance as compared to Alternative B. Alternative C would require a 12-foot wide access corridor to accommodate the more rugged terrain traversed compared to Alternative B.

Existing USFS administrative roads not open for public use (i.e., administrative roads), as defined in the USFS 2010 Travel Management Record of Decision, would be used to access sites to the extent practicable; in some cases, this may include travel through the WIZ on existing administrative roads. Locations accessed through the WIZ would be planned for winter construction to the extent practicable; however, should site conditions at the time of construction warrant these administrative roads unusable

(i.e., flooding in the WIZ or another reason), three drilling pads (SPC-045, SPC-046, and SPC-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ; this shift has been accounted for in the access road measurements provided above. The use of alternate drill pad and access road locations would require coordination with and authorization by USFS engineers and the District Ranger.

As mentioned above in Section 2.2, Alternative B includes three drilling sites in an area designated by the Forest Plan as MA 8.2, Developed Recreation Complexes. Alternative C relocates these three drilling sites from MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Project-specific Forest Plan amendment.

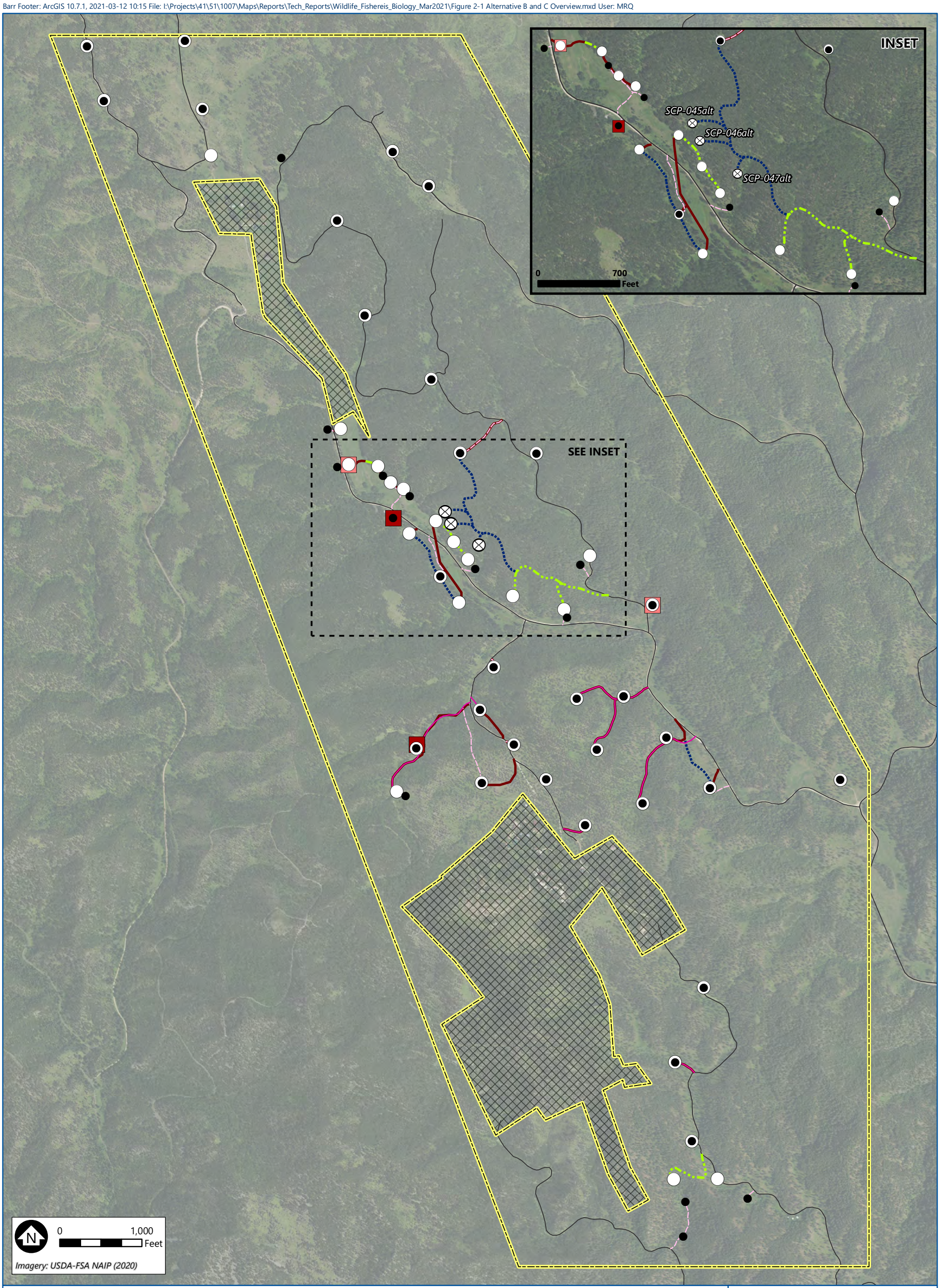
Alternative B includes three drilling sites immediately adjacent to USFS-identified WIZ. A WIZ is a designated zone adjacent to stream channels and other waterbodies for which focused efforts are made to maintain and improve water quality or other water and riparian dependent values such as habitat, recreation, and visual and aesthetic quality. In the interest of maintaining the integrity of established WIZ areas and minimizing water quality and recreation concerns, Alternative C relocates three drill sites outside of WIZ areas. To avoid the need for tree clearing and construction of new temporary site access, as mentioned above, it is possible that the WIZ may be crossed during frozen conditions to access certain drilling sites. If the WIZ is impassable without causing considerable damage to soils, wetlands, and other resources, three drilling pads immediately adjacent to the WIZ (SPC-45, SPC-46, and SPC-47) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ. This would be determined on a case by case basis and in coordination with the Forest Service hydrologist, engineers, PO administrator and District Ranger.

The impact minimization measures noted in Table 2-1 would be applied to both Alternative B and Alternative C; however, Alternative C would also include impact minimization measures beyond those noted in Table 2-1; these additional impact minimization measures are summarized in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Summary of Alternative C Additional Impact Minimization Measures

Issue	Additional Impact Minimization Measures
Botanical Resources/ Reclamation	• Each drill pad and temporary overland access route would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of use rather than upon completion of all drilling activities.
Cultural/Heritage Resources	• Relocates drilling pads and access roads to avoid potential cultural resources conflicts.
Public Health and Safety	• Drilling pads within 500 feet of a residence would limit drilling to one, 12-hour daytime shift (7:00am – 7:00pm) to mitigate nighttime noise potential. This applies to drill pads SCP-012 and SCP-020.
Hydrology – Water Quality/Water Supply	• Alternative C includes a provision that the WIZ may be crossed during frozen conditions to access certain sites; however, if seasonal conditions indicate the WIZ is impassable without causing considerable damage to soils, wetlands, and other resources, the three drilling pads immediately adjacent to the WIZ (SPC-045, SPC-046, and SPC-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ. The use of alternate drill pad and access road locations would require coordination with and authorization by USFS engineers and the District Ranger.
Recreation and Travel Management	• Alternative C relocates three drill pads from MA 8.2, which is managed for recreational opportunities and visual qualities adjacent to developed recreation sites and bodies of water. • Alternative C relocates three drill pads (SPC-45, SPC-46, and SPC-47) from WIZ areas in the interest of maintaining WIZ integrity and minimizing water quality and recreation concerns.

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.7.1, 2021-03-12 10:15 File: I:\Projects\41\51\1007\Maps\Reports\Tech_Reports\Wildlife_Fishereis_Biology_Mar2021\Figure 2-1 Alternative B and C Overview.mxd User: MRQ



Drill Pad (Alternative B)
Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Staging Area (Alternative B)
Staging Area (Alternative C)
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)
New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)
New Access Route
Alternate New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

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ALTERNATIVE B AND C OVERVIEW
Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project
Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report
Pennington County, SD
FIGURE 2-1

3 Existing Conditions

The Project is located within the BHNF, which consists of 1.2 million acres of forested hills and mountains in western South Dakota. Elevations range from 4,700 feet above mean sea level (amsl), at the southern part of the Project area, to 5,500 feet amsl near the northwestern part of the Project area.

The Black Hills region has a continental climate that experiences very hot summers and very cold winters. According to the Köppen Climate Classification, the Project area is within a warm-summer humid continual climate (reference (5)). The Black Hills tend to have a higher mean temperature and receive more precipitation annually than the surrounding Great Plains. Hill City, a town close to the Project area with accessible climate data, has an annual high temperature of 82° Fahrenheit (F) and an annual low of 12° (F), with an average of 21 inches of rainfall annually and 58 inches of snow annually (reference (6)).

The landscape within the Project area is dominated by forest, with some meadows also present. The predominant forest type is ponderosa pine, with ponderosa pine/quaking aspen and white spruce and quaking aspen forest also present. The meadow communities are typically found in the narrower drainage bottoms surrounded by forest, often with ponderosa pine encroaching. Meadows are generally composed of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Grasses are often introduced species.

Wildlife species inhabiting the Project area are those species that are well-habituated to ponderosa pine forest communities, such as small to medium sized mammals (e.g., squirrels, fox, and deer), large ungulates (e.g., bighorn sheep, elk, migratory birds, raptors), and several insect species. Fisheries species inhabiting the Project area include species that are habituated to small mountain streams, such as various minnow species. Trout (e.g., brown trout and rainbow trout) are stocked annually by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks.

3.1 Wildlife Data Sources

Several data sources were used in identifying sensitive wildlife and fisheries resources in the Project area and its vicinity. These data sources, which were obtained from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Barr Engineering Co. (Barr) field surveys, USFS field surveys, and communication with USFS personnel, assisted in the assessment of potential effects to federally listed species, USFS Region 2 sensitive species, SOLC, and MIS. Data sources include:

- USFWS Information Planning and Conservation (IPaC);
- Wildlife Areas to Protect (buffers around important habitat; USFS shapefile);
- NRM Wildlife Data Sets (USFS shapefiles):
    - Wildlife Observation Point/Wildlife Site Point;
    - Wildlife Observation Polygon/Wildlife Site Polygon; and
    - Wildlife Site Polygon;
- Special Management Areas (USFS shapefiles);

    - Bald Eagle Nesting Habitat Buffer;
    - Managed Goshawk Stands;
    - Big Game Winter Range;
    - Bighorn Sheep Range;
    - Marten Connectivity (areas where American marten will use as breeding habitat and corridors to facilitate movement);
    - Late Successional Landscape; and
    - Developed Recreation Management Area;

- Mine Atlas Points (USFS shapefile);
- Undocumented mine shafts/adits (Barr field survey; reference (7)) with associated USFS review of sites for bat habitat; and
- Wildlife Timing Restrictions (timing restrictions based on USFWS Raptor Guidance and Forest Plan Direction; USFS shapefile).

4 Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation of Federally Protected and Region 2 Sensitive Species

This section identifies the federally protected and Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species that have the potential to occur within or adjacent to the Project area and the potential effects on these species from the Project. This Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation is prepared in accordance with legal requirements set forth under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, and follows standards established in Forest Service manual direction (2672.42). The Regional Forester issued a revised sensitive species list for the Rocky Mountain Region (reference (1)).

4.1 Federally Protected Wildlife and Fish Species

The ESA of 1973 defines a federally endangered species as a species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a major portion of its range (reference (8)). A federally threatened species is defined as any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a major portion of its range. A species proposed for listing is a species for which there is sufficient information on its biological status and threats to propose it as endangered or threatened. Critical habitat is defined as the specific areas within the geographic area, occupied by the species at the time it was listed, that contain the physical or biological features that are essential to the conservation of endangered and threatened species and that may need special management or protection (reference (8)).

The USFWS IPaC System was queried in April 2021 to obtain a list of federally protected species that could potentially be present within the vicinity of the Project area. The IPaC query identified one federally endangered and two federally threatened species known to occur in Pennington County that have the potential to be present in the Project area; these include:

- Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), a threatened mammal;
- Whooping crane (*Grus americana*), an endangered bird; and
- Red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), a threatened bird.

The IPaC query did not identify any designated critical habitat within or near the Project area for any of the federally protected species.

4.1.1 Northern Long-Eared Bat

The northern long-eared bat is a medium-sized bat that hibernates in caves and mines in the winter, and in the summer roosts singly or in colonies under the bark or in cracks and crevices of trees. The northern long-eared bat is relatively widespread in the U.S.; however, it is listed as a federally threatened species because populations are declining due to a fungal pathogen that causes white-nose syndrome. Trees, crevices, and abandoned mines within the Project area may provide suitable habitat for the northern long-eared bat (reference (7)).

4.1.2 Whooping Crane

The whooping crane is the tallest bird in North America. In the U.S., this species is found throughout the Midwest from North Dakota south to Texas and west into Colorado (reference (9)). Whooping cranes migrate through South Dakota along a band running from the south central to the northcentral parts of the state. They use shallow, seasonally, and semi-permanently flooded palustrine (marshy) wetlands for roosting and various cropland and emergent wetlands for feeding. During migration, whooping cranes are often recorded in riverine habitats. Currently there are three wild populations of whooping cranes in the U.S., one of which is naturally reproducing. The major threats to the whooping crane include habitat degradation, low productivity associated with drought, and mortality from collisions with powerlines along lengthy migratory routes (reference (10)). Habitat suitable for whooping cranes is present in the Project area; however, whooping cranes have not been documented in the Black Hills National Forest.

4.1.3 Rufa Red Knot

The rufa red knot is a small to medium sized shorebird that migrates long distances between summer in the Canadian arctic and wintering grounds in the southern United States to South America (reference (11)). The long migration routes require regular stopover points, referred to as staging areas, for feeding. Rufa red knots return every year to these staging areas, among which are the North Atlantic seaboard horseshoe crab breeding grounds, where the birds feed on crab eggs. Commercial fisheries in these areas, however, have significantly reduced the production of horseshoe crab eggs, which has been a major factor in the decline of the species and has prevented the red rufa from being able to maintain viable population levels. There are no documented observations of rufa red knot in the Black Hills National Forest, nor does the Project area provide suitable stopover habitat for rufa red knot.

4.1.4 Bald Eagle

In addition to the federally protected species summarized above, bald eagles have been documented within the vicinity of the Project area. Although bald eagles were removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species in 2007, they are still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. These acts prohibit the “take” or disturbance of bald eagles. The biggest threats to bald eagles include environmental contamination and human disturbance (reference (12)).

The bald eagle is a large raptor that can be found throughout North America. Most bald eagles breed in Canada and the northern U.S. and move south in winter (reference (12)). They typically nest in large trees near bodies of water or large rivers. There is potential bald eagle nest habitat near Pactola Lake, approximately 0.25 mile south of the Project area; however, no nests have been documented during field surveys.

4.2 U.S. Forest Service Region 2 Sensitive Species

Within the USFS, Regional Foresters identify native plants and animals ("sensitive" species) that show evidence of decline and potential sensitivity to national forest and national grassland activities and management (reference (13)). The USFS provides special management attention to these species to

conserve them on the lands and watersheds they manage to avoid contributing to their continued decline and eventual need for listing under the federal ESA. Within the BHNF, there are 33 USFS Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species.

Table 4-1 summarizes the 33 BHNF Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species and whether there is potential for them or their habitat to be present within the Project area. As identified in Table 4-1, 17 of the 33 BHNF Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species are known to occur within or near the Project area or have suitable habitat present within or near the Project area.

Table 4-1 USFS Region 2 Sensitive Species that could occur within or adjacent to the Project Area

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Type	Suitable Habitat Characteristics[1]	Documented Distribution[1]	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species Potentially Present[2]	Suitable Habitat Present	Potential for Effect and Rationale
American marten (*Martes americana*)	Mammal	Late-successional spruce pine forests with complex near-ground structures including rock outcroppings, boulders, or tree snags.	Broadly distributed across the mountain ranges of the western U.S. It extends from the spruce-fir forests that dominate northern New Mexico to the northern forests in arctic Canada and Alaska.	G5/NA	Yes	Yes	Yes. Several breeding areas/corridors are present in the Project area (USFS Marten Connectivity shapefile).
Black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*)	Mammal	Short and mixed-grass prairie with soils conducive to burrowing.	Primarily a Great Plains species.	G4T2/S2	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*)	Mammal	Dry coniferous forests with ponderosa pine, white spruce and quacking aspen that have peeling bark and large snags for roosting habitat. Rock crevices, caves, abandoned mines, and buildings provide cover for roosting and hibernating bats. During the evenings, these species feed in open meadow habitats, standing water, and along riparian corridors.	Across the intermountain west and along the Pacific coast. This bat species is known to occur year-round within the Black Hills.	G4T2/S2	Yes	Yes	Yes. Based on field review suitable habitat is present. Bat roosts are present in the Project area and have a 500-foot buffer around them (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect).
Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)	Mammal	Forests with trees that provide peeling bark and large snags for roosting habitat. During the evenings, these species feed in open meadow habitats, standing water, and along riparian corridors.	Across North and South America. Known to occur in the Black Hills.	G3/S5	Yes	Yes	Yes. Based on field review suitable habitat is present. Bat roosts are present in the Project area and have a 500-foot buffer around them (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect).
Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis canadensis*)	Mammal	Areas of steep or gentle slopes, broken cliffs, rock outcroppings, and canyons along riverbeds and mesa tops. They can be found grazing in open meadow habitats or clear-cut areas of mixed deciduous and coniferous forests. Bighorn sheep are known to lamb in areas of very steep terrain and the ewes will return to the same lambing grounds year after year.	Western mountain ranges of North America, with some outliers located in the badlands of North Dakota and the Black Hills of South Dakota. Most populations undergo seasonal migrations, going from larger upland areas in the summer to more concentrated valleys during the winter.	G4/S4	Yes	Yes	Yes. A bighorn sheep summer use area is present in the southern part of Project area (USFS Bighorn Sheep Range shapefile). A lambing area is present in the southern edge of the Project area (USFS Wildlife Timing Restrictions shapefile).
Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)	Mammal	Open pine forests with trees that have peeling bark and large snags for roosting habitat. Rock crevices, caves, abandoned mines, and buildings provide cover for roosting and hibernating bats. During the evenings, these species feed over sagebrush dominated grasslands and along riparian corridors.	Found across western North America, and in two distinct populations across the central and eastern U.S. The western population's easternmost extent reaches the Black Hills and Wyoming. This species is known to occur year-round within the Black Hills.	G3G4/S2S3	Yes	Yes	Yes. Based on field review suitable habitat is present. Bat roosts are present in the Project area and have a 500-foot buffer around them (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect).
Swift fox (*Vulpes velox*)	Mammal	Shortgrass and mid-grass prairies, and sagebrush. They select low-growing vegetation, relatively flat terrain, friable soils and areas of high den availability and near roads.	From Wyoming south throughout eastern Colorado, western Kansas, the Oklahoma Panhandle, eastern New Mexico, and part of the extreme northern panhandle of Texas, with scattered, disjunct populations in Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska.	G3/S1	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Type	Suitable Habitat Characteristics[1]	Documented Distribution[1]	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species Potentially Present[2]	Suitable Habitat Present	Potential for Effect and Rationale
Black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)	Bird	Coniferous forests, especially in areas with standing dead trees such as burns, bogs, and windfalls. Nesting occurs in cavities of dead or live trees.	from western and central Alaska to northern Saskatchewan and central Labrador, south to southeastern British Columbia, central California, northwestern Wyoming, southwestern South Dakota, central Saskatchewan, northern Minnesota, southeastern Ontario, and northern New England.	G5/S3	Yes	Yes	Yes. A documented black-backed woodpecker nest is present along northern edge of Project area (NRM observation point shapefile).
Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)	Bird	Short/mixed grass prairie, usually associated with ground squirrels or prairie dogs.	Southern Canada into the western half of the U.S. and down to Central America.	G4/S3B	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*)	Bird	Open grasslands, shrub-steppe, croplands, desert.	Western parts of Canada and the U.S.	G4/S3B	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Flammulated owl (*Psiloscops flammeolus*)	Bird	Breeds in mature mountain forests of ponderosa pine, fir, and yellow pines, intermixed with aspen or oaks. During the nesting season they are attracted to recently burned forests where many natural cavities from old snags can be found.	Western mountainous states; they overwinter and spend a large portion on their migration period in Mexico and Central America.	G4/S1B	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)	Bird	Grasslands of intermediate height and are often associated with clumped vegetation interspersed with patches of bare ground.	Most of the U.S. east of the Rockies, southern U.S., and Central America.	G5/S4B	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Lewis's woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*)	Bird	Open ponderosa pine forests and fire maintained old growth forests. Nesting requires large snags commonly found in burned stands of forest. During the remainder of the nonbreeding season, they can be found in areas with large acorn and nut crops of deciduous forests.	Common across much of the intermountain west. The Black Hills is the easternmost distribution of the breeding range for the Lewis's woodpecker.	G4/S3B/S3N	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)	Bird	Open landscapes that have short vegetation, including pastureland with fenced section lines, mowed road ditches, agricultural fields, riparian areas, and open woodlands. They are most commonly found in areas where there are scattered thick and thorny shrubs, which provide nesting, hunting perches, and prey impalement locations.	Found across the U.S. and Mexico. Overwinter in Mexico or the southern U.S. The loggerhead shrike is a breeding resident of South Dakota.	G4/S3S4B	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus*)	Bird	Short and mixed-grass prairie habitat with flat to rolling topography. Found at lower elevations of the Black Hills.	Western Canada and western and southeastern U.S.	G5/S3B	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*)	Bird	Large, flat grasslands with sparse, short vegetation (shrub) and bare ground.	Breeding range is southeast Wyoming. No known occurrences in the Black Hills.	G3/SX	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Type	Suitable Habitat Characteristics[1]	Documented Distribution[1]	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species Potentially Present[2]	Suitable Habitat Present	Potential for Effect and Rationale
Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)	Bird	A variety of forest types and ages with various structural conditions for nesting sites and foraging. They typically favor nesting sites near running water and in areas of forest that are associated with open meadows, forest clearings, and logging trails.	Breeds in most boreal and temperate forests from north-central Alaska to Nova Scotia, Canada, and south into mixed deciduous montane forests of the U.S. and Mexico. Year-round resident of the Black Hills.	G5/S3B/S2N	Yes	Yes	Yes. Northern goshawk nests have been documented just north and west of the Project area (NRM observation point shapefile); 600-foot buffers are present around the nests, one of which overlaps a drill site location (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect). Nests also have a 0.5-mile timing restriction between April 1-August 15 (USFS Wildlife Timing Restrictions shapefile); several drill site locations are located in this timing restriction buffer.
Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)	Bird	Large grasslands with tall dense vegetation.	Throughout North America and Central America.	G5/S5B	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)	Bird	Generally found in coniferous or mixed coniferous forest, along forest edges and openings caused by disturbances.	Canada, the western U.S. (including Alaska), the northeastern U.S., and throughout Central and South America.	G4/SUB	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Northern leopard frog (*Lithobates pipiens*)	Amphibian	This species travels within riparian corridors and across wetlands. Can be found in irrigation ditches, permanent ponds, wetlands, and other water sources with dense vegetation.	Across North America ranging from Canada to Kentucky.	G5/S5	Yes	Yes	Yes. Species was documented approximately 0.25 miles south of the Project area (NRM wildlife observation polygon shapefile).
Black Hills redbelly snake (*Storeia occipitomaculata pahasapae*)	Reptile	Deciduous and mixed woodlands, in environments that are damp, moist and cool. Also found in open fields, bogs, or along the borders of swamps and wetlands.	In the South Dakota portion of the Black Hills, observations are mainly in the western foothills, limestone plateaus, and central areas of the hills with higher elevations.	G5T4Q/S3	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Finescale dace (*Chrosomus neogaeus*)	Fish	Cool spring-fed bogs, lakes and creeks, small, weedy, sluggish streams, and small lakes.	Canada, northcentral and northeastern U.S. In South Dakota, known only from Bearlodge and Northern Hills Ranger Districts.	G5/S1	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Lake chub (*Couesius plumbeus*)	Fish	Cool, gravel-bottomed pools and runs of streams, rocky lake margins.	Canada and the northern U.S.	G5/S1	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Mountain sucker (*Catostomus platyrhynchus*)	Fish	Clear, cold creeks and small to medium rivers with clear rubble, gravel or sand substrate.	Western U.S. and Canada.	G5/S3	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Northern redbelly dace (*Chrosomus eos*)	Fish	Cool spring-fed bogs, lakes and creeks.	Canada, northcentral and northeastern U.S.	G5/S2	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Plains minnow (*Hybognathus placitus*)	Fish	Inhabits shallow streams with fluctuating levels and sandy substrates.	Missouri, Arkansas, Red, Brazos, and Colorado River drainages, from Montana and North Dakota south to New Mexico and Texas; Mississippi River from mouth of Missouri River to mouth of Ohio River.	G4/S5	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Sturgeon chub (*Macrhybopsis gelida*)	Fish	Turbid waters of the Great Plains.	Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, middle Mississippi River and the Wolf Island area of the lower Mississippi River.	G3/S2	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Type	Suitable Habitat Characteristics[1]	Documented Distribution[1]	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species Potentially Present[2]	Suitable Habitat Present	Potential for Effect and Rationale
Cooper's rocky mountainsnail (*Oreohelix strigose cooperi*)	Invertebrate	Ponderosa pine forests, with a strong deciduous tree presence of boxelder and birch. Areas of calcareous soils, and dense litter layer provide both food and shelter.	Known populations and distribution in the Black Hills are confined to two creek systems within the northern and western sections of the Black Hills. The closest known populations that reside outside the Black Hills includes a population in the Bighorn Mountains within south central Montana and Wyoming.	G5T2T3Q/S2	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Arogos skipper (*Atrytone arogos*)	Invertebrate	Undisturbed prairie.	Great Plains, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and New Jersey.	G2/S2	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus plexippus*)	Invertebrate	A variety of habitats including meadows, edges of agricultural fields, road ditches, gardens, and anywhere flowering plants and milkweed is found.	Nearly all of North America, except along the Pacific Northwest coast and Alaska.	G4/SNA	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Ottoe skipper (*Hesperia ottoe*)	Invertebrate	Undisturbed, mixed-grass to tall-grass prairie with big bluestem.	Southern Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin, and from western Minnesota west to eastern Montana and south to Texas and Colorado, and southern Manitoba, Canada.	G3/S2	No	No	Not likely; the species has not been documented within or adjacent to the Project area and suitable habitat is not present.
Regal fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*)	Invertebrate	Tall-grass or mixed-grass prairie with violets.	Great Plains and Central U.S.	G3/S3	Yes	No	Yes. Although suitable habitat is not present in the Project area, individuals could be present. Field surveys documented individuals within 5 miles of Project area.
Western bumblebee (*Bombus occidentalis*)	Invertebrate	Habitat generalist but requires abundant floral diversity that produces high amounts of pollen.	Once widespread across the western U.S. and western Canada. Since 1998, populations have drastically declined in much of its former range. It is rare throughout much of its current range from the Great Basin to the Rocky Mountains and Alaska.	G4/SNR	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.

[1]Information obtained from NatureServe (https://explorer.natureserve.org/) and South Dakota Game Fish and Parks (https://gfp.sd.gov/conservation/). NA" refers to not applicable because not ranked in South Dakota.
[2]This information is based on USFS institutional knowledge, documented observations, or known distribution.

4.3 Potential Effects

The following section provides an assessment of the potential indirect, direct, and cumulative effects on federally protected and Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species resulting from implementation of the Project. The assessment evaluates potential effects from the no action alternative (Alternative A), the proposed action (Alternative B), and the modified proposed action (Alternative C). Alternative B and C were evaluated for general potential effects on wildlife and fish, and it was concluded that the general potential effects of these two alternatives are comparable. As such potential effects on federally protected and Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species from these two alternatives are discussed together.

Potential effects on federally protected and Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species would be minimized by F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Additionally, applicant-proposed impact minimization measures, as described in Table 2-1, would be implemented during all Project activities.

4.4 Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, the Project would not occur and would therefore not result in indirect, direct, or cumulative effects on federally protected species or Region 2 sensitive wildlife and fish species.

4.5 General Effects of Alternative B and C

Alternatives B and C have the potential to result in indirect effects on wildlife in general; potential effects on federally protected species and Region 2 sensitive species are discussed below in Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2, respectively. Short-term, indirect effects on wildlife could occur during vegetation clearing and drilling activities. These activities would result in increased noise and human activity. Many species, even those accustomed to human proximity, could temporarily abandon habitats within and near the Project area until the work is completed. These temporary effects are not expected to irreparably harm wildlife individuals or populations, and it is expected that once the Project is complete, wildlife would return to previous habitats within the Project area. Potential short-term, indirect effects on aquatic species could occur during Project activities as a result of sedimentation of aquatic habitat. However, these effects would be mitigated through implementation of Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2) and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3).

Alternatives B and C have the potential to result in direct effects on wildlife habitat in general; potential effects on habitat associated with federally protected species and Region 2 sensitive species are discussed below in Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2, respectively. Short-term, direct effects on wildlife habitat could result from vegetation/habitat removal associated with drill sites, staging areas, and temporary access trails. Vegetation and tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary to facilitate access to the site and drilling activities. As discussed in Section 2, Alternative B would have up to 3.8 acres of temporary disturbance and Alternative C would have up to 6.1 acres of temporary disturbance. Tree clearing that does occur could create small forest gaps, having the potential to benefit some wildlife species that rely on these forest openings. Disturbed areas would be graded to pre-Project

contours and seeded, as described in Section 2. Fish species habitat would not be directly affected by Project activities, as no activities are planned to occur within permanent waterbodies or watercourses.

Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the foreseeable future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. The effects of present and foreseeable future projects combined with the effects of Alternative B or Alternative C could potentially result in cumulative effects on wildlife and fish resources, including federally protected species and USFS Region 2 sensitive species. The foreseeable future projects that could potentially contribute to cumulative effects are listed below and are further described in the Environmental Assessment.

Foreseeable Future Projects

- South Dakota Network Fiberoptic Cable – 15 miles northwest of Project area
- New radio tower near Silver City Community Hall – 0.2 miles south of Project area
- Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures
- Timber sales located within the Project vicinity and approved to occur within the next 5 years
- Prescribed burns – eastern two-thirds of Project area
- Recreational event permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2), and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on general wildlife and fish resources. The potential for cumulative effects on federally protected species and Region 2 sensitive species is discussed below in Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2, respectively.

4.5.1 Potential Effects on Federally Protected Threatened and Endangered Species

As summarized in Section 0, the USFWS IPaC query identified one federally endangered and two federally threatened species known to occur in Pennington County and have the potential to be present in the Project area. Because there are no documented occurrences or suitable habitat present within the Project area for whooping crane or rufa red knot, no further analysis is necessary and it has been determined that the Project would have **no effect** on these species.

There is potential that northern long-eared bats could occur within the Project area. Trees, crevices, and abandoned mine shafts/adits and caves within the Project area may provide suitable habitat for northern long-eared bats (reference (7)). The USFS provided recorded locations of known abandoned mine shafts/adits for consideration in this assessment. In addition, Barr conducted field surveys to identify undocumented mine shafts/adits in the Project area (reference (7)), and the USFS conducted subsequent field surveys of these area to assess their quality for potential bat habitat. Based on the information provided by USFS and the findings of these surveys, it has been determined that there is potential for

minimal day/night bat roosting habitat, but that habitat is not of high enough quality to warrant site buffers or timing restrictions for Project activities beyond what is already in place under the Forest Plan direction (Section 6.2). All Project tree clearing would adhere to the USFWS guidelines. Under Alternatives B and C, there would be no direct effects on northern long-eared bat known hibernacula or maternity roost trees. Northern long-eared bats that are present within the Project area would likely continue to be well supported in adjacent habitat. Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2), and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on northern long-eared bats. The determination was made that the Project **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect** the northern long-eared bat.

There is a potential that bald eagles could pass through the Project area. Although potential bald eagle nest habitat is present, approximately 0.25 mile south of the Project area, no bald eagle nests have been documented in this area or within the Project area. Suitable habitat, adjacent to bodies of water or large rivers, is not present in the Project area. It is anticipated that human activity and associated noise would deter bald eagles from approaching drilling sites. Under Alternatives B and C, there would be no direct effects on bald eagle nesting habitat. Populations of bald eagles would likely continue to be well supported within the vicinity of the Project area and the BHNF. Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2), and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on bald eagles. The Project is not anticipated to measurably affect bald eagles.

4.5.2 Potential Effects on USFS Region 2 Sensitive Species

As summarized in Section 4.2, there are 33 Region 2 sensitive species in the BHNF, 16 of which are not likely to be present in the Project area (Table 4-1). Because there are no documented occurrences or suitable habitat present within the Project area for these 16 species, no further analysis is necessary and that the Project would have no impact on these species.

As summarized in Table 4-1, there are 17 USFS Region 2 sensitive species that have the potential to occur within or near the Project area. Alternatives B and C could result in short-term, indirect and direct effects on Region 2 sensitive species. Potential short-term, indirect effects on Region 2 sensitive species could occur during vegetation clearing and drilling activities. These activities would result in increased noise and human activity. Many species, even those accustomed to human proximity, could temporarily abandon habitats within and near the Project area until the work is completed. These temporary effects are not expected to irreparably harm individuals or populations, and it is expected that once the Project is complete, these species would return to previous habitats within the Project area.

Potential short-term, direct effects on Region 2 sensitive species could result from vegetation/habitat removal associated with drill sites, staging areas, and temporary access trails. The effects of tree removal/loss of habitat would be greater for the Region 2 sensitive species that inhabit forest

communities, such as the American martin and bat and bird species (see Table 4-1). However, vegetation and tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary to facilitate access to the site and drilling activities. The level of disturbance would be minimal, with up to 3.8 acres of temporary disturbance for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres of temporary disturbance for Alternative C. There is abundant similar forested habitat adjacent to areas that would be disturbed and across the Black Hills National Forest. Tree clearing that does occur could create small forest gaps, having the potential to benefit some Region 2 sensitive bird species that rely on these forest openings. Disturbed areas would be graded to pre-Project contours and seeded, as described in Section 2.

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2), and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects (identified in Section 4.5) to contribute to cumulative effects on Region 2 sensitive species.

For 17 Region 2 sensitive species, the determination was made that the Project **may adversely impact individuals but is not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Project area nor cause a trend toward federal listing** (Table 4-2). Potential effects on Region 2 sensitive species would be minimized by F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2) and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3).

Table 4-2 Potential Effects on USFS Region 2 Sensitive Species

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Alternative A	Alternative B[1]	Alternative C[1]	Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures
American marten (*Martes americana*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2. Clearing of any vegetation would not occur within 500 feet of a cave or abandoned mine that serves as a nursery or hibernacula per USFS standards. Drilling and associated tree clearing within 150-feet of a known bat maternity roost location would occur outside of the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31).[2]

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Alternative A	Alternative B[1]	Alternative C[1]	Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures
Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2. Clearing of any vegetation would not occur within 500 feet of a cave or abandoned mine that serves as a nursery or hibernacula per USFS standards. Drilling and associated tree clearing within 150-feet of a known bat maternity roost location would occur outside of the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31).[2]
Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis canadensis*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	If lambing is observed by USFS staff or the drilling contractor, drilling could be restricted in vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road between April 15-August 31 (per SDGFP request) to avoid disturbance during lambing season at USFS direction.[2]
Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2. Clearing of any vegetation would not occur within 500 feet of a cave or abandoned mine that serves as a nursery or hibernacula per USFS standards. Drilling and associated tree clearing within 150-feet of a known bat maternity roost location would occur outside of the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31).[2]
Black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Flammulated owl (*Psiloscops flammeolus*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Lewis's woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Northern leopard frog (*Lithobates pipiens*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Alternative A	Alternative B[1]	Alternative C[1]	Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures
Black Hills redbelly snake (*Storeia occipitomaculata pahasapae*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus plexippus*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Regal fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Western bumblebee (*Bombus occidentalis*)	No Impact	MAII	MAII	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.

[1]MAII – May adversely impact individuals but not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Project area nor cause a trend toward federal listing.

[2]Applicant-proposed minimization measure.

5 Wildlife and Fisheries Species of Local Concern and Management Indicator Species Technical Report

This section identifies the SOLC and MIS that have the potential to occur within or near the Project area and the potential effects on these species from the Project.

5.1 Species of Local Concern

SOLC are species of fish, wildlife, or plants that do not meet the federal criteria for sensitive status. These could include species with declining populations in a portion of Region 2, or those that are important components of diversity in a local area. To be eligible for designation as a SOLC, the species must be recognized through an established scientific process and must be known to occur on USFS lands within the BHNF (reference (4)). Table 5-1 summarizes the wildlife and fish SOLC and whether there is potential for them or their habitat to be present within the Project area. As identified in Table 5-1, 18 of the wildlife and fish SOLC are known to occur within or near the Project area or have suitable habitat within or near the Project area.

Table 5-1 Wildlife Species of Local Concern that could be Present within or adjacent to the Project Area

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Type	Suitable Habitat Characteristics[1]	Documented Distribution[1]	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species Potentially Present[2]	Suitable Habitat Present	Potential for Effect and Rationale
Long eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*)	Mammal	Coniferous forests that have trees with peeling bark and large snags for roosting habitat. Rock crevices, caves, abandoned mines, and buildings provide cover for roosting and hibernating bats. During the evenings, these species feed over sagebrush dominated grasslands and along riparian corridors.	Endemic to the western U.S., from southwest Canada, south through California and east extending into the western extent of the Great Plains. This species is regularly distributed across much of its range but is never abundant.	G5/S1	Yes	Yes	Yes. Based on field review suitable habitat is present. Bat roosts are present in the Project area and have a 500-foot buffer around them (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect).
Long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*)	Mammal	Forested mountain regions with trees that have peeling bark and large snags for roosting habitat. Rock crevices, caves, abandoned mines, and buildings provide excellent cover for roosting and hibernating bats. During the evenings, these species feed over sagebrush dominated grasslands and along riparian corridors.	Western North America, including Alaska and central Mexico.	G5/S5	Yes	Yes	Yes. Based on field review suitable habitat is present. Bat roosts are present in the Project area and have a 500-foot buffer around them (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect).
Western small footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)	Mammal	Open pine coniferous forests with trees that have peeling bark and large snags for roosting habitat. Rock crevices, caves, abandoned mines, and buildings provide excellent cover for roosting and hibernating bats. During the evenings, these species feed over sagebrush dominated grasslands and along riparian corridors.	Across Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado and Kansas and in Alberta and Saskatchewan Canada.	G5/S5	Yes	Yes	Yes. Based on field review suitable habitat is present. Bat roosts are present in the Project area and have a 500-foot buffer around them (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect).
Meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonicus campestris*)	Mammal	Riparian habitats along small streams and in meadows with dense, tall grass and forbs. They are occasionally found in upland grassy slopes that are near ponderosa pine forests. Within the northern Great Plains, they are commonly found at sites that border smaller streams and are restricted to riparian habitats.	Across the Great Plains, eastern U.S., and throughout Canada.	G5/S5	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*)	Mammal	Rugged terrain with cliffs, rock faces, ledges and talus slopes, typically in higher elevations of the BHNF.	Southeast Alaska to Washington, western Montana, central Idaho. Introduced to parts of South Dakota, Colorado, and Washington.	G5/SNA	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*)	Mammal	Dense ponderosa pine and mixed coniferous/deciduous forest; it roosts in cavities or builds nests. The squirrel is most often associated with cool moist habitat with abundant snags and large openings may inhibit gliding.	Across the Great Plains states, the northern Rocky Mountain states, the Pacific Northwest, New England states, and in portions of California, West Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. They are also abundant across Canada. Isolated populations are present in the Black Hills.	G5/S3	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
American dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*)	Bird	Cool moist habitat along rivers and streams that provide overhanging banks for nesting cover.	Mountainous regions of the western U.S.	G5/S2B	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Black-and-white warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)	Bird	Mature and second growth deciduous and mixed deciduous-coniferous forest with dense understory.	From the Rocky Mountains to the eastern U.S.	G5/S1B	Yes	Yes	No. Suitable habitat is not present in the Project area.
Broad-winged hawk (*Buteo platypterus*)	Bird	Mixed ponderosa pine and deciduous forests. Nest near openings in the forest or bodies of water.	From southern Canada, along the shores of the Great Lakes, and throughout much of the eastern U.S.	G5/S2B/SZN	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Type	Suitable Habitat Characteristics[1]	Documented Distribution[1]	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[1]	Species Potentially Present[2]	Suitable Habitat Present	Potential for Effect and Rationale
Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)	Bird	Variety of forest types and ages with various structural conditions for nesting sites and foraging. They are commonly found within cities and prefer parks, quiet neighborhoods, fields, and backyard feeders.	Across the U.S.; nonbreeding time in Mexico and along the Gulf of Mexico.	G5/S3B/SZN	Yes	Yes	Yes. There is a Cooper's hawk nest in the northwest part of the Project area and several nests north of the Project area (NRM Wildlife Observation point shapefile); 500-foot buffers are present around the nests (USFS Wildlife Areas to Protect). Nests also have a 0.25-mile time restriction between April 1-June 15 (USFS Wildlife Timing Restrictions shapefile).
Northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadicus*)	Bird	Dense coniferous or mixed forest for nesting habitat. Dense sapling-pole sized stands associated with riparian habitats are preferred for roosting. They can also be found in wooded swamps and tamarack bogs.	South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, southern Canada. The northern saw-whet owl is a year-round resident of the Black Hills.	G5/S1B/SZN	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Pygmy nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*)	Bird	Mixed coniferous and deciduous forests that have species such as lodgepole pine, oak, quaking aspen, maple, and Douglas-fir trees. This species is highly dependent on cavities within old trees for roosting and nesting.	Larger populations of pygmy nuthatches are typically found in Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico with a small population in the Black Hills. The pygmy nuthatch is a year-round resident of the Black Hills.	G5/S3B/SZN	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus)*	Bird	Variety of forest types and elevations for nesting sites and foraging. They typically favor habitat in areas of forest that are associated with open meadows, forest clearings, and logging trails.	Found year-round across the western mountainous region and throughout the Appalachian Mountains. The sharp-shinned hawk is a year-round resident of the Black Hills.	G5/S3B/S3N	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Atlantis fritillary (*Speyeria atlantis pahasapa*)	Invertebrate	Open meadows full of flowers among deciduous and coniferous forests. They are frequently found along streams or within moist meadows that provide ample amounts of flowers for foraging.	Endemic to the Black Hills.	G5T3/S3	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Tawny crescent (*Phycoides batesii*)	Invertebrate	Open meadows, riparian wet meadows, and woodlands that provide diverse floral nectar species.	Through much of central and western Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, central U.S. including, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.	G5/S2	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Callused vertigo (*Vertigo arthuri*)	Invertebrate	Forests dominated by white spruce and ponderosa pine, often with limestone soils.	Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota.	G2/S2	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area. Species documented in two different areas, each approximately 0.25 miles east of Project area (NRM wildlife observation shapefile).
Cockrell's striate disc (*Discus shemekii*)	Invertebrate	Montane forests with mixed coniferous canopies, often associated with limestone substrates.	Yukon Territory Canada, Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, South Dakota, Oregon, California, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico.	G5/S2	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Frigid ambersnail (*Catinella gelida*)	Invertebrate	Prefers moist to dry coniferous forest with a deep litter layer, deciduous tree/shrub understory, and limestone substrates.	South Dakota and Iowa.	G1Q/S1	No	No	No. Suitable habitat is not present in the Project area.
Mystery vertigo (*Vertigo paradoxa*)	Invertebrate	Moist shaded coniferous habitats mixed with hardwoods, exhibiting a deep litter layer and limestone substrates.	Moist shaded coniferous forest mixed with hardwoods, exhibiting a deep litter layer.	G4G5Q/S1	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.

[1]Information obtained from NatureServe (https://explorer.natureserve.org/) and South Dakota Game Fish and Parks (https://gfp.sd.gov/conservation/). NA" refers to not applicable because not ranked in South Dakota.
[2]This information is based on USFS institutional knowledge, documented observations, or known distribution.

5.2 Management Indicator Species

The USFS defines a MIS as a plant or animal species or habitat component selected in a planning process that are used to monitor the effects of planned management activities on populations of wildlife and fish, including those that are socially or economically important (reference (3)). The NFMA directs national forests to identify MIS. MIS are chosen as a representative of certain habitat conditions important to a variety of other species. By monitoring and assessing populations of MIS, managers can determine if management actions are affecting other species' populations.

According to the Forest Plan, the USFS identifies two mammals, six birds, and one fish as MIS for the BHNF. The purpose of this MIS evaluation is to identify the potential effects from the Project on MIS. MIS were reviewed to determine which are likely to be present or have suitable habitat within the Project area. Table 5-2 summarizes the wildlife and fish MIS and whether there is potential for them or their habitat to be present within the Project area. As identified in Table 5-2, eight of the wildlife and fish MIS are known to occur within or near the Project area or have suitable habitat within or near the Project area.

Table 5-2 Management Indicator Species that could occur with or adjacent to the Project area

Common Name (*Scientific Name*)	Type	Suitable Habitat Characteristics[2]	Documented Distribution[2]	Global (G) Conservation Rank/State (S) Conservation Rank[2]	Species Potentially Present[3]	Suitable Habitat Present	Potential for Effect and Rationale
American beaver (*Castor canadensis*)	Mammal	Permanent sources of water and riparian areas.	Across the U.S. and Canada.	G5/S5	Yes	Yes	Yes. Beaver colonies have been reported within and adjacent to the Project area (NRM observation point shapefile).
White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)	Mammal	Many types of habitat in mountains and lowlands, including various forests and woodlands, forest edges, shrublands, grasslands with shrubs, and residential areas.	Across the U.S. and Canada.	G5/S5	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)[1]	Bird	Coniferous forests, especially in areas with standing dead trees such as burns, bogs, and windfalls. Nesting occurs in cavities of dead or live trees.	From western and central Alaska to northern Saskatchewan and central Labrador, south to southeastern British Columbia, central California, northwestern Wyoming, southwestern South Dakota, central Saskatchewan, northern Minnesota, southeastern Ontario, and northern New England.	G5/S3	Yes	Yes	Yes. A black-backed woodpecker nest documented along northern edge of Project area (NRM observation point shapefile).
Brown creeper (*Certhia americana*)	Bird	Most often found in coniferous and mixed forests.	Throughout North America from Canada and Alaska to as far south as northern Nicaragua.	G5/S2B/S3N	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Golden-crowned kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*)	Bird	Coniferous forest and woodland (especially spruce), in migration and winter also deciduous woodland, scrub and brush.	Throughout North America.	G5/S4B/S4N	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)	Bird	Brushy, shrubby, and deep grassy areas along watercourses; forest edge, bogs, brushy clearings, thickets, hedgerows, gardens, brushy past.	Across southern Canada and the U.S.	G5/S5B	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)[1]	Bird	Grasslands of intermediate height and are often associated with clumped vegetation interspersed with patches of bare ground.	Most of the U.S. east of the Rockies, southern U.S., and Central America.	G5/S4B	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*)	Bird	Dense forest with some deciduous trees.	Central Alaska and most of forested Canada south to northern California, Idaho, Utah, South Dakota, Minnesota, Arkansas, Georgia, and Virginia; introduced and established in Iowa, Newfoundland, Nevada, and Michigan.	G5/S4B/S4N	Yes	Yes	Yes. Suitable habitat is present in the Project area.
Mountain sucker (*Catostomus platyrhynchus*)[1]	Fish	Clear, cold creeks and small to medium rivers with clear rubble, gravel or sand substrate.	Western U.S. and Canada.	G5/S3	No	No	No. Suitable habitat is not present in the Project area.

[1]Also Region 2 sensitive species.

[2]Information obtained from NatureServe (https://explorer.natureserve.org/) and South Dakota Game Fish and Parks (https://gfp.sd.gov/conservation/).

[3]This information is based on USFS institutional knowledge, documented observations, or known distribution.

5.3 Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, the Project would not occur and would therefore not result in indirect, direct, or cumulative effects on wildlife and fish SOLC or MIS.

5.4 General Effects of Alternative B and C

Alternatives B and C have the potential to result in indirect effects on wildlife in general; potential effects on SOLC and MIS are discussed in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2, respectively. Short-term, indirect effects on wildlife could occur during vegetation clearing and drilling activities. These activities would result in increased noise and human activity. Many species, even those accustomed to human proximity, could temporarily abandon habitats within and near the Project area until the work is completed. These temporary effects are not expected to irreparably harm wildlife individuals or populations and it is expected that once the Project is complete, wildlife would return to previous habitats within the Project area. However, these effects would be mitigated through implementation of Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2) and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3).

Alternatives B and C have the potential to result in direct effects on wildlife habitat in general; potential effects on habitat associated with SOLC and MIS are discussed in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2. Short-term, direct effects on wildlife habitat could result from vegetation/habitat removal associated with, drill sites, staging areas, and temporary access trails. Vegetation and tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary to facilitate access to the site and drilling activities. As discussed in Section 2, Alternative B would have up to 3.8 acres of temporary disturbance and Alternative C would have up to 6.1 acres of temporary disturbance. Tree clearing that does occur could create small forest gaps, having the potential to benefit some wildlife species that rely on these forest openings. Disturbed areas would be graded to pre-Project contours and seeded, as described in Section 2.

Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the foreseeable future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. The effects of present and foreseeable future projects combined with the effects of Alternative B and/or C could potentially result in cumulative effects on wildlife and fish species, including SOLC and MIS. The foreseeable future projects that could potentially contribute to cumulative effects are listed below and are further described in the Environmental Assessment.

Foreseeable Future Projects

- South Dakota Network Fiberoptic Cable – 15 miles northwest of Project area
- New radio tower near Silver City Community Hall – 0.2 miles south of Project area
- Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures
- Timber sales located within the Project vicinity and approved to occur within the next 5 years
- Prescribed burns – eastern two-thirds of Project area
- Recreational event permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2), and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on general wildlife and fish resources. The potential for cumulative effects on SOLC and MIS are discussed below in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2, respectively.

5.4.1 Potential Effects on Species of Local Concern

There are 19 wildlife and fish SOLC that occur in the BHNF, 18 of which have the potential to occur within the Project area (Table 5-1). Alternatives B and C could result in potential short-term, indirect and direct effects on SOLC. Potential short-term, indirect effects on SOLC could occur during vegetation clearing and drilling activities. These activities would result in increased noise and human activity. Many species, even those accustomed to human proximity, could temporarily abandon habitats within and near the Project area until the work is completed. These temporary effects are not expected to irreparably harm individuals or populations and it is expected that once the Project is complete, SOLC would return to previous habitats within the Project area.

Potential short-term, direct effects on SOLC could result from vegetation/habitat removal associated with, drill sites, staging areas, and temporary access trails. The effects of tree removal/loss of habitat would be greater for the SOLC that inhabit forest communities, such as the bat, bird, and invertebrate species (see Table 5-1). However, vegetation and tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary to facilitate access to the site and drilling activities. The level of disturbance would be minimal, with up to 3.8 acres of temporary disturbance for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres of temporary disturbance for Alternative C. There is abundant similar forested habitat adjacent to areas that would be disturbed and across the Black Hills National Forest. Tree clearing that does occur could create small forest gaps, having the potential to benefit some bird SOLC that rely on these forest openings. Disturbed areas would be graded to pre-Project contours and seeded, as described in Section 2.

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2), and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects (identified in Section 5.44.5) to contribute to cumulative effects on SOLC.

While habitat does exist in the Project area for 17 SOLC (Table 5-3), due to the small scale of the Project in relation to habitats available across the Black Hills National Forest, these SOLC are likely to persist because the Project is consistent with Forest Plan direction for SOLC habitats, and therefore Forest Plan Objective 221 (conserve or enhance habitat for Region 2 sensitive species or SOLC). Potential effects on SOLC would be minimized by F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2) and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3).

Table 5-3 Potential Effects on Species of Local Concern

Species Name	Alternative A	Alternative B[1]	Alternative C[1]	Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures
Long eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2. Clearing of any vegetation would not occur within 500 feet of a cave or abandoned mine that serves as a nursery or hibernacula per USFS standards. Drilling and associated tree clearing within 150-feet of a known bat maternity roost location would occur outside of the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31).[2]
Long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2. Clearing of any vegetation would not occur within 500 feet of a cave or abandoned mine that serves as a nursery or hibernacula per USFS standards. Drilling and associated tree clearing within 150-feet of a known bat maternity roost location would occur outside of the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31).[2]
Western small footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2. Clearing of any vegetation would not occur within 500 feet of a cave or abandoned mine that serves as a nursery or hibernacula per USFS standards. Drilling and associated tree clearing within 150-feet of a known bat maternity roost location would occur outside of the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31).[2]
Meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonicus campestris*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
American dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Broad-winged hawk (*Buteo platypterus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.

Species Name	Alternative A	Alternative B[1]	Alternative C[1]	Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures
Northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadicus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Pygmy nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Atlantis fritillary (*Speyeria atlantis pahasapa*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Tawny crescent (*Phycoides batesii*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Callused vertigo (*Vertigo arthuri*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Drill sites would not be located in limestone or riparian areas to avoid potential disturbance to snail habit.[2] Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Cockrell's striate disc (*Discus shemekii*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Drill sites would not be located in limestone areas to avoid potential disturbance to snail habit.[2] Relevant standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Mystery vertigo (*Vertigo paradoxa*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Drill sites would not be located in limestone areas to avoid potential disturbance to snail habit.[2] Relevant standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.

[1]Potential for limited effect but should not cause trend toward listing as Region 2 sensitive species.
[2]Applicant-proposed minimization measure.

5.4.2 Potential Effects on Management Indicator Species

There are nine wildlife and fish MIS that occur in the BHNF, eight of which have the potential to occur within the Project area (Table 5-2). Alternatives B and C could result in potential short-term, indirect and direct effects on MIS. Potential short-term, indirect effects on MIS could occur during vegetation clearing and drilling activities. These activities would result in increased noise and human activity. Many species, even those accustomed to human proximity, could temporarily abandon habitats within and near the Project area until the work is completed. These temporary effects are not expected to irreparably harm wildlife individuals or populations and it is expected that once the Project is complete, MIS would return to previous habitats within the Project area.

Potential short-term, direct effects on MIS could result from vegetation/habitat removal associated with, drill sites, staging areas, and temporary access trails. The effects of tree removal/loss of habitat would be greater for the MIS that inhabit forest communities, such as the bird species (see Table 5-2Table 5-1). However, vegetation and tree removal would be minimized by only removing what is absolutely necessary to facilitate access to the site and drilling activities. The level of disturbance would be minimal, with up to 3.8 acres of temporary disturbance for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres of temporary disturbance for Alternative C. There is abundant similar forested habitat adjacent to areas that would be disturbed and across the Black Hills National Forest. Tree clearing that does occur could create small forest gaps, having the potential to benefit some bird MIS that rely on these forest openings. Disturbed areas would be graded to pre-Project contours and seeded, as described in Section 2.

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2), and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects (identified in Section 5.44.5) to contribute to cumulative effects on MIS.

While habitat does exist in the Project area for eight MIS (Table 5-4), due to the small scale of the Project in relation to habitats available across the Black Hills National Forest, there would be limited effect on Black Hills National Forest-wide habitat trends for any of these eight MIS. Therefore, the Project would not influence achievement of Forest Plan Objective 228 (maintain or enhance habitat for management indicator species). Potential effects on MIS would be minimized by F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines (see Section 6.2) and applicable impact minimization measures (see Table 2-1 and Section 2.3).

Table 5-4 Potential Effects on Management Indicator Species

Species name	Alternative A	Alternative B[2]	Alternative C[2]	Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures
American beaver (*Castor canadensis*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)[1]	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Brown creeper (*Certhia americana*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Golden-crowned kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)[1]	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.
Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*)	No Impact	Potential limited effect	Potential limited effect	Relevant FP standards and guidelines in Section 6.2.

[1]Also Region 2 sensitive species
[2]Potential for limited effect but would maintain MIS populations.

6 Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction Related to Wildlife and Fisheries Resources

6.1 Other Applicable Laws and Regulations

Direction for USFS wildlife and fisheries resources is dictated by laws, regulations, and the Forest Plan. The following laws related to wildlife and fisheries resources are applicable to the Project:

- Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1531 et seq.)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USC 703 et seq.)
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 USC 668-668c)
- National Forest Management Act (16 USC 1600)
- National Environmental Policy Act (42 USC § 4321 et seq)

6.2 Forest Plan Direction

The BHNF Forest Plan identifies standards and guidelines to inform management related to various resources, including wildlife and fisheries resources. As summarized in the Forest Plan, a standard is defined as a limitation on management activities that is within the authority and ability of the agency to meet or enforce. Standards are used to determine if individual projects are in compliance with the Forest Plan. Deviation from the requirement requires a Forest Plan amendment. A guideline is a preferred or advisable course of action. Deviation from a guideline is permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.

Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the wildlife and fisheries resources considered applicable to the Project include those related to surface water runoff, stream channels, water quality, riparian areas, WIZ, and wetlands, species conservation, caves, endangered and threatened species, sensitive species, northern goshawk, sensitive species and contractual obligations, and general fish and wildlife direction. F3 will be required to comply with the applicable standards and guidelines, as described in further detail below, throughout the duration of the Project.

6.2.1 Surface Water Runoff

Standard 1113: Construct roads and other disturbed sites to minimize sediment discharge into streams, lakes and wetlands.

Standard 1115: When ground disturbing or vegetation management occur, use vegetative buffer strips or barriers to reduce sediment.

6.2.2 Stream Channels

Standard 1203: Design and construct all stream crossings and other instream structures to provide for passage of flow and sediment, withstand expected flood flows, and allow free movement of resident aquatic life.

6.2.3 Water Quality

Standard 1211: Place new sources of chemical and pathogenic pollutants where such pollutants will not reach surface or groundwater.

Standard 1212: Apply runoff controls to disconnect new pollutant sources from surface and groundwater.

6.2.4 General – Related to Riparian Areas, WIZ, and Wetlands

Standard 1301: In the WIZ next to perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, and wetlands, allow only those actions that maintain or improve long-term stream health and riparian ecosystem condition.

Standard 1302: Maintain long-term ground cover, soil structure, water budgets, and flow patterns in wetlands to sustain their ecological function, per 404 regulations.

6.2.5 General – Riparian Protection

Guideline 1506: Minimize disturbance to the riparian area by mineral activities. Initiate timely and effective rehabilitation of disturbed areas and restore riparian areas to a state of productivity comparable to that before disturbance.

a. Prohibit the depositing of material from drilling, processing or site preparation in natural drainages.
b. Locate the lower edge of disturbed or deposited soil banks outside of natural drainages and riparian areas.
c. Prohibit stockpiling of topsoil or any other disturbed soil in natural drainages or riparian areas.
d. Prohibit mineral processing (milling) activities within natural drainages or riparian areas.

Guideline 1507: Confine heavy equipment use in riparian areas to areas necessary for mineral extraction.

6.2.6 Transportation and Travel Management in Riparian Areas and Wetlands

Guideline 9107: Prohibit land vehicles from entering perennial streams where resource damage would occur except to cross at specified points.

Guideline 9108: Vehicular traffic, except for snowmobiles, will be restricted to roads and trails in riparian areas.

6.2.7 Endangered and Threatened Species

Standard 3101: To protect endangered and threatened species:

a. Organochlorine pesticides will not be used as chemical agents on the Black Hills National Forest (included as part of the standard, but not applicable to this Project).

b. Prohibit new disturbances not existing at the time of bald eagle nest initiation, that may detrimentally influence nest success within one mile of bald eagle nests during the nesting season

(February 1 through September 1). The distance may be reduced where forest characteristics or topography reduce the line-of-site distance from the nest, based on site-specific analysis.

c. Protect traditional communal bald eagle winter roost sites. Restrict activities that may disturb bald eagles within one mile of communal roosting areas from November 1 through April 1.

d. In stands being used by bald eagles on a transitory basis, avoid timber harvest activities when in use. Harvest may resume when birds have vacated the stands (included as part of the standard, but not applicable to this Project).

6.2.8 Sensitive Species

Standard 3102: Where caves are important nurseries or hibernacula for sensitive and local concern bat species protect the caves and maintain their microclimates when designing management activities (e.g., timber harvest, road construction, recreation facilities). Protect known bat day and night roosts.

Standard 3106: Riparian areas or wetlands where populations of sensitive species are located are to be avoided during ground disturbing activities. Use one or more of the following (or other mitigation measures) tied to the site-specific conditions for disturbances adjacent to known occurrences:

a. Avoid removing riparian or wetland vegetation; filling or dredging the riparian area or wetland; diverting stream flow from the current channel.

b. Prevent storm runoff from washing silt into the stream or wetland.

c. Reseed and/or replant cut and fill slopes with native seed and/or native plants promptly to control erosion and for prevention of noxious-weed infestations. Use appropriate measures to control erosion on disturbed areas that are steep, are highly erosive, and/or adjacent to the riparian area.

d. Timing, placement, and installation of temporary stream diversions shall allow passage of aquatic life and protect sensitive and species of local concern (included as part of the standard, but not applicable to this Project).

6.2.9 Northern Goshawk

Standard 3108: The following additional protective measures will apply relative to the northern goshawk for all projects involving the removal of trees in suitable habitat, except those done for the express purpose of enhancing goshawk habitat:

a. Identify nest areas around historically active nests. Nest areas shall consist of 180 acres best suited for nesting habitat within one-half mile of the nest and greater than 300 feet from buildings. Nest areas need not be contiguous but must occur in 30-acre units or larger. Nest areas shall include alternate nests if known. If these conditions cannot be met, then nest areas will include stands that are not currently suitable but that could be managed to meet nesting conditions over time. Vegetation management activities within nest areas shall be limited to those that maintain or

enhance the stand's value for goshawk (included as part of the standard, but not applicable to this Project).

b. If a nest area described above occurs within one-half mile of the project area and a protected area has not yet been identified for that nest, the project analysis will determine whether some of the protected acreage should occur within the project area.

Standard 3111: From April 1 through August 15, minimize additional human-caused noise and disruption beyond that occurring at the time of nest initiation (e.g., road traffic, timber harvests, construction activities) within one-half mile of all active goshawk nests up until the nest has failed or fledglings have dispersed.

6.2.10 Sensitive Species and Contractual Obligations

Standard 3115: A R2 sensitive species or species of local concern located after contract or permit issuance will be appropriately managed by active coordination between permittee, contractor or purchaser, Forest Service line officer, project administrator, and biologist and/or botanist. Solutions need to be based on the circumstances of each new discovery and must consider the species need, contractual obligations and costs, and mitigation measures available at the time of discovery.

Standard 3116: Avoid creating barriers (e.g., new open roads) between red-bellied snake hibernacula and wetlands.

6.2.11 General Wildlife and Fish Direction

Guideline 3202: Structures, such as fences and roads will be designed and built so that they do not create unnecessary or unreasonable barriers or hazards for wildlife and people.

Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests. Consider potential effects of disturbance, nesting phenology, human activities existing at onset of nest initiation, species, topography, other Region 2 sensitive species and plant species of local concern, forest cover, nest protection standards and recommendations used by state or federal agencies, and other appropriate factors when designing protection.

Standard 3207: Where caves or abandoned mines serve as nurseries or hibernacula for bats, vegetative changes within 500 feet of the opening are allowed only if needed to maintain bat habitat or if topography or other features protect the openings from disturbance.

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Appendix E

Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report

Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Prepared for
United States Forest Service

May 2022

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Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report

May 2022

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Abbreviations

BHNF	Black Hills National Forest
BMPs	best management practices
DANR	Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	executive order
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
MCL	maximum contaminant level
MRDS	Mineral Resources Data System
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
SDSMT	South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
SSURGO	Soil Survey Geographic Database
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
WIZ	water influence zones

1 Introduction

This technical report summarizes the soil, geology, and hydrology resources within the vicinity of the F3 Gold, LLC (F3) Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project in Pennington County, South Dakota (Project; Figure 1-1 in the Environmental Assessment (EA)), as well as potential effects resulting from Project alternatives. This technical report is intended to supplement the assessment of environmental effects related to soil, geology, and hydrology resources found in the EA.

The purpose and need of the Project is discussed in Section 1.2 of the EA. This technical report analyzes environmental effects for three alternatives: Alternative A (No Action), Alternative B (Proposed Action), and Alternative C (Modified Proposed Action). Each of these alternatives is described in detail in Section 2 of the EA. As part of their Plan of Operations, F3 intends to implement impact minimization measures into Project design; these measures, were developed in response to comments received during the Project scoping process. These applicant-proposed impact minimization measures are available in Table 2-1 of the EA.

2 Soils and Geology

2.1 Introduction

This section addresses the soils, geology, and geologic hazards in the Project area and vicinity and the potential effects on these resources as a result of the Project. Comments received during scoping resulted in the following issue relevant to the analysis:

- The Project could affect soil and geologic resources through site access and drilling activities.

2.1.1 Information Sources

There are several existing documents and data sources containing baseline information on soil and geologic resources in the Project area. The following documents and data sources were reviewed:

Soils:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) / Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey Geographic Database

Geology:

- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Mineral Resources Data System
- USGS Quaternary Fault and Fold Database of the United States
- USGS Earthquake Hazards Program Unified Hazard Tool
- USGS U.S. Landslide Inventory and Interactive Map
- USGS Latest Earthquakes
- USGS Karst in the United States Digital Map Compilation and Database
- USGS Geologic Maps (Scientific Investigations Map 2777 and Miscellaneous Investigations Series Map I-1910)

2.1.2 Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction Related to Soil

Direction for USFS soil management is dictated by laws, regulations, and the Forest Plan. The following laws and regulations govern USFS soil management (reference (1)):

- Bankhead-Jones Act of 1937
- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970 (16 U.S.C. 4321)

In addition to the laws and regulations mentioned above, the USFS has three tiers of policy pertaining to the management of soil resources, these include: the USFS National Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands (reference (2)), the USFS Region 2 Forest Service Handbook 2509.25 – Watershed Conservation Practices (WCP) Handbook (reference (3)), and the Forest Plan (reference (4)).

The USFS national BMP program (reference (2)) was developed to improve the management of water quality consistently with the Federal Clean Water Act and State water quality programs. The BMPs represent specific practices or actions used to reduce or control impacts to water bodies from nonpoint sources of pollution, most commonly by reducing the loading of pollutants from such sources into storm water and waterways. The USFS national BMPs related to Minerals Management Activities and Road Management Activities are applicable to the Project (reference (2))

The Region 2 WCP Handbook (reference (3)) provides direction for the management and protection of soil, water, and riparian resources during any use of national forests and grasslands. The handbook provides a series of management measures, similar to the Forest Plan standards and guidelines discussed below; these management measures are combined below with the applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines pertaining to soil resources.

2.1.2.1 Forest Plan Direction

The Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) Forest Plan identifies standards and guidelines to inform management related to various resources, including soils (reference (4)). As summarized in the Forest Plan, a standard is defined as a limitation on management activities that is within the authority and ability of the agency to meet or enforce. Standards are used to determine if individual projects are in compliance with the Forest Plan. Deviation from the requirement requires a Forest Plan amendment. A guideline is a preferred or advisable course of action. Deviation from a guideline is permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.

Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the soil resources considered applicable to the Project include those related to soil disturbance, rehabilitation and revegetation, and surface water runoff.

Soil Disturbance

The following Forest Plan standards related to soil disturbance are applicable to the Project:

- 1103. Manage land treatments to limit the sum of severely burned and detrimentally compacted, eroded, and displaced land to no more than 15 percent of any land unit. “Land treatments” are human actions that disturb vegetation, ground cover or soil. “Land unit” is a mapped land-type polygon or a mapped soil unit. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 13; reference (3).
- 1105. Limit roads and other disturbed sites to the minimum feasible number, width, and total length consistent with the purpose of specific operations, local topography, and climate. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 9; reference (3).
- 1106. Stabilize and maintain roads and other disturbed sites during and after construction to control erosion. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 11; reference (3).
- 1107. Where there is potential for toxic contamination of soil from ground disturbing activities (e.g., oil or gas drilling or mineral exploration), a contingency plan to prevent or rehabilitate soil contamination shall be developed.

The following Forest Plan guideline related to soil disturbance is applicable to the Project:

- 1104. Minimize soil compaction by reducing off-road vehicle passes, by skidding on snow, frozen or dry soil conditions, or by off-ground logging systems.

Rehabilitation and Revegetation

The following Forest Plan standards related to rehabilitation and revegetation are applicable to the Project:

- 1109. Reclaim roads and other disturbed sites when use ends, as needed, to prevent resource damage. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 12; reference (3).
- 1110. Initiate re-vegetation as soon as possible, not to exceed 6 months after termination of ground-disturbing activities.

The following Forest Plan guideline related to rehabilitation and revegetation is applicable to the Project:

- 1111. Stabilize, scarify, or recontour temporary roads, constructed skid trails, and landings prior to seeding.

Surface Water Runoff

The following Forest Plan standards related to surface water runoff are applicable to the Project:

- 1112. Manage land treatments to maintain enough organic ground cover in each land unit to prevent harmful increased runoff. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 2; reference (3).
- 1113. Construct roads and other disturbed sites to minimize sediment discharge into streams, lakes, and wetlands. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 10; reference (3).
- 1114. When construction of maintenance level 1 roads, temporary roads, skid trails and landings occur, install structures to divert runoff when needed.
- 1116. Manage land treatments to conserve site moisture and to protect long-term
- stream health from damage by increased runoff. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 1; reference (3).

The following Forest Plan guideline related to surface water runoff is applicable to the Project:

- 1115. When ground disturbing or vegetation management occurs, use vegetative buffer strips or barriers to reduce sediment.

2.1.3 Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction Related to Geology

Direction for USFS geologic management is dictated by laws, regulations, and the Forest Plan. The following laws and regulations govern USFS geologic management (reference (5)):

- NEPA of 1970 (16 U.S.C. 4321)
- Organic Administration Act of 1897 (16 U.S.C. section 473-478, 479-482, 551)

- Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 1876; 30 U.S.C. 21a)
- General Mining Act of 1872 (43 CFR 3832; FSM 2811.3)
- Multiple Surface Use Mining Act of 1955 (69 Stat. 367; PL-167)
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 35)
- 36 CFR 228, Subpart A – Locatable Minerals

2.1.3.1 Forest Plan Direction

Slope Stability

The following Forest Plan guidelines (reference (4)) related to slope stability are applicable to the Project:

- 1108. Reduce resource damage and investment loss in areas that have a mass movement potential.

Mineral and Energy Resources

The following Forest Plan standards related to mineral and energy resources are applicable to the Project:

- 1501. A Plan of Operations shall contain proposed reclamation objectives and practices to maintain water quality and soil stability during mining and exploration activities, including post mining and exploration, and any temporary shutdowns. Reclamation objectives should include the planned uses of the management area or reasons why these uses can no longer be achieved.
- 1502. Reclamation will be considered satisfactory when the disturbed area has been reclaimed in accordance with the operating plan.

2.1.4 Study Methodology

Based on the information sources gathered, review of public scoping comments, and using professional experience and judgment, this analysis:

- identifies the activities that could affect soils and geology, and
- discusses the likely effects of the three alternatives on geology and soils.

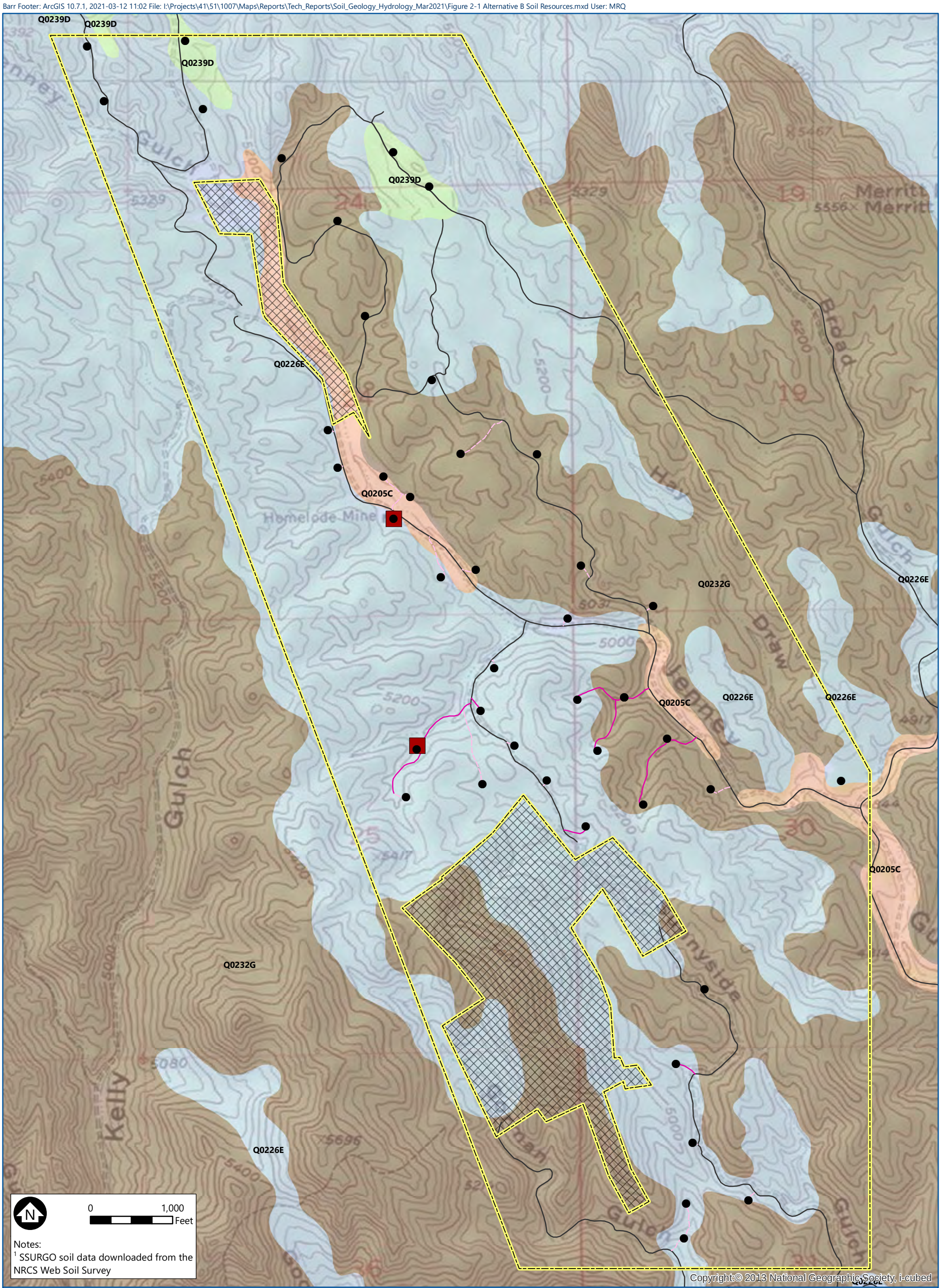
Project scoping indicated concerns related to potential effects on soil and geologic resources that could result from the Project. Potential effects are assessed by evaluating construction activities, drilling processes, materials used, and the well sealing plan, as well as reclamation methods.

2.2 Affected Environment

2.2.1 Soils

Soils in the Project area are relatively young and weakly developed, having formed from material weathered from underlying bedrock, alluvial and colluvial deposits, or various combinations of these materials. Soils are thin to absent on rock outcroppings; generally shallow on steep hills slopes; and relatively deep on the gentler hill slopes and in alluvial valleys.

The Project area contains four soil map units, as identified in Figure 2-1**,** Figure 2-2**,** and Table 2-1. The Pactola-Virkula-Rock outcrop complex and the Pactola-Pactola, shallow Rock outcrop complex soil map units represent approximately 97% of the soil resources in the Project area.



Drill Pad (Alternative B)

Staging Area (Alternative B)

Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)

New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

Soil Map Unit [1]

Q0226E — Pactola-Virkula-Rock outcrop complex, 10 to 40 percent slopes

Q0232G — Pactola-Pactola, shallow-Rock outcrop complex, 40 to 80 percent slopes

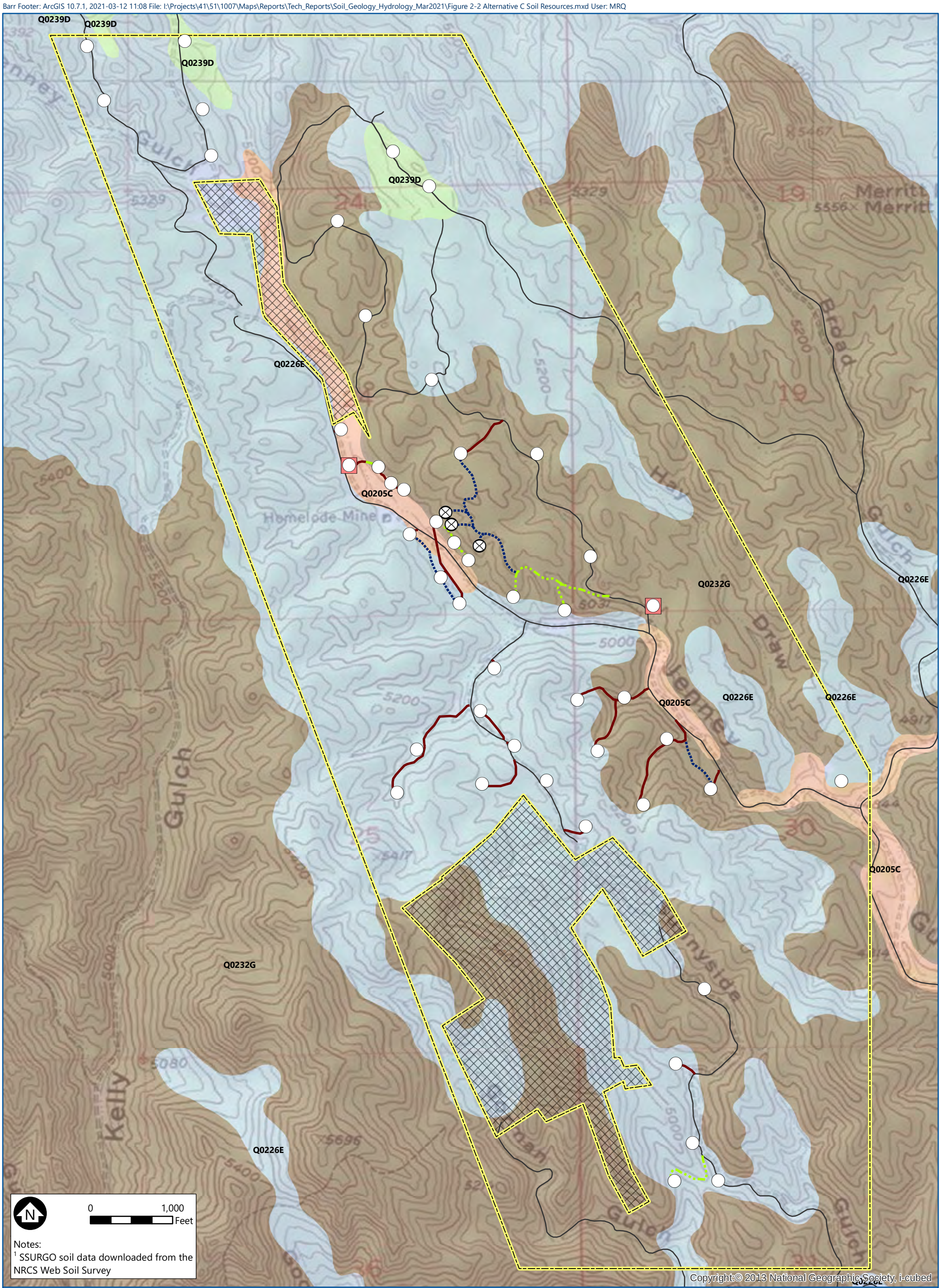
Q0239D — Virkula-Pactola complex, 2 to 15 percent slopes

Q0205C — Cordeston loam, high mica, 2 to 10 percent slopes, flooded

BARR

ALTERNATIVE B
SOIL RESOURCES
Jenny Gulch Gold
Exploration Drilling Project
Soil, Geology, and Hydrology
Technical Report
Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-1



Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Staging Area (Alternative C)

Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)

New Access Route

Alternate New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

Soil Map Unit [1]

Q0226E — Pactola-Virkula-Rock outcrop complex, 10 to 40 percent slopes

Q0232G — Pactola-Pactola, shallow-Rock outcrop complex, 40 to 80 percent slopes

Q0239D — Virkula-Pactola complex, 2 to 15 percent slopes

Q0205C — Cordeston loam, high mica, 2 to 10 percent slopes, flooded

BARR

ALTERNATIVE C
SOIL RESOURCES
Jenny Gulch Gold
Exploration Drilling Project
Soil, Geology, and Hydrology
Technical Report
Pennington County, SD

FIGURE 2-2

Table 2-1 Soil Map Units in Project Area

Soil Map Unit Symbol	Soil Map Unit Name	Compaction Potential (when soils are wet)[1]	Erosion Hazard[1]	Acres in Project Area	Percent of Project Area
Q0226E	Pactola-Virkula-Rock outcrop complex, 10 to 40 percent slopes	Severe/slight	Moderate	979.4	57%
Q0232G	Pactola-Pactola, shallow Rock outcrop complex, 40 to 80 percent slopes	Slight	Very severe	681.3	40%
Q0239D	Virkula-Pactola complex, 2 to 15 percent slopes	Severe/slight	Slight	28.6	2%
Q0205C	Cordeston loam, high mica, 2 to 10 percent slopes, flooded	Moderate	Slight	10.4	1%

Source: reference (6)
[1] Data refined using dominant soil map units by reference (7)

2.2.1.1 Soil Physical Characteristics

Physical soil characteristics include soil depth, pore space and bulk density. Changes in these can occur when ground-based equipment makes repeated passes over the soil. These activities compress or compact soils and, if soils are wet enough, can result in rutting and puddling of the soil resource. In general, clay and loam soils compact more than sandy soils. These changes to the physical soil characteristics decrease the pore space volume, which can lead to reduced water infiltration rates, slower soil drainage, impediment to root growth, and a reduction in plant-available water and nutrients.

Some soils have a greater likelihood for increased potential for soil compaction. The soil rutting hazard interpretation, as defined by reference (6) and further refined using dominant soil map units in reference (7) was used to assess soil compaction potential. The NRCS ratings are based on depth to a water table, rock fragments on or below the surface, the Unified classification of the soil, depth to a restrictive layer, and slope. The hazard is described as slight, moderate, or severe. A rating of "slight" indicates that the soil is subject to little or no rutting. "Moderate" indicates that rutting is likely. "Severe" indicates that ruts form readily (reference (6)). As shown in Table 2-1, the soil map units within the Project area range from slight to severe for their compaction potential.

2.2.1.2 Soil Erosion

Soil erosion is the movement of soil particles by water, wind, or ice. Soil erosion can occur when the surface soil is disturbed from construction activities that compact the soil or when the loose surface soil and its protective layer of organic material are changed or removed. Compaction, rutting, and puddling can affect infiltration to the point that there can be a reduction in the movement of water into the soil and water can be channeled and concentrated. As a result, water runoff (overland surface flow) is increased and carries soil particles with it. Generally, depending on a variety of site characteristics, potential for the greatest erosion is on steeper slopes (above 30%) and the potential decreases as the slope decreases.

Soils are rated based on their potential for soil erosion. The soil erosion hazard interpretation, as defined by reference (6) and further refined using dominant soil map units in reference (7) was used to assess the potential for soil erosion. The soil erosion hazard ratings in this interpretation indicate the hazard of soil loss from off-road and off-trail areas after disturbance activities that expose the soil surface. The ratings are based on slope and soil erosion factor K (susceptibility of soil to erosion and the amount and rate of runoff). The soil loss is caused by sheet or rill erosion in off-road or off-trail areas where 50% to 75% of the surface has been exposed by logging, grazing, mining, or other kinds of disturbance. The erosion hazard ratings are categorized as "slight," "moderate," "severe," or "very severe." A rating of "slight" indicates that erosion is unlikely under ordinary climatic conditions; "moderate" indicates that some erosion is likely and that erosion-control measures may be needed; "severe" indicates that erosion is very likely and that erosion-control measures, including revegetation of bare areas, are advised; and "very severe" indicates that significant erosion is expected, loss of soil productivity and off-site damage are likely, and erosion-control measures are costly and generally impractical. As shown on Table 2-1, the erosion hazard for the four soil map units identified in the Project area range from slight to very severe.

2.2.2 Geology

This section describes the regional geology and potential geologic hazards around the Project area.

2.2.2.1 Regional Geology

The regional geology of the BHNF is shown in Figure 2-3. The Black Hills area consists of a Precambrian crystalline core surrounded by dipping Phanerozoic sedimentary units (reference (8)). The core generally consists of steeply dipping metasedimentary and metaigneous schist with granitic intrusions. Surrounding the core are limestone, shale, and sandstone units, which originally were deposited over and now dip at lower angles away from the core. Igneous emplacement at depth, during the Laramide orogeny (approximately 50-60 million years ago), led to an uplift event. Following the uplift, the overlying sedimentary layers have eroded, partially exposing the more resistant crystalline core. The Project area is located within the core, and the local bedrock is mainly metagraywacke and metamorphosed black and tuffaceous shale.

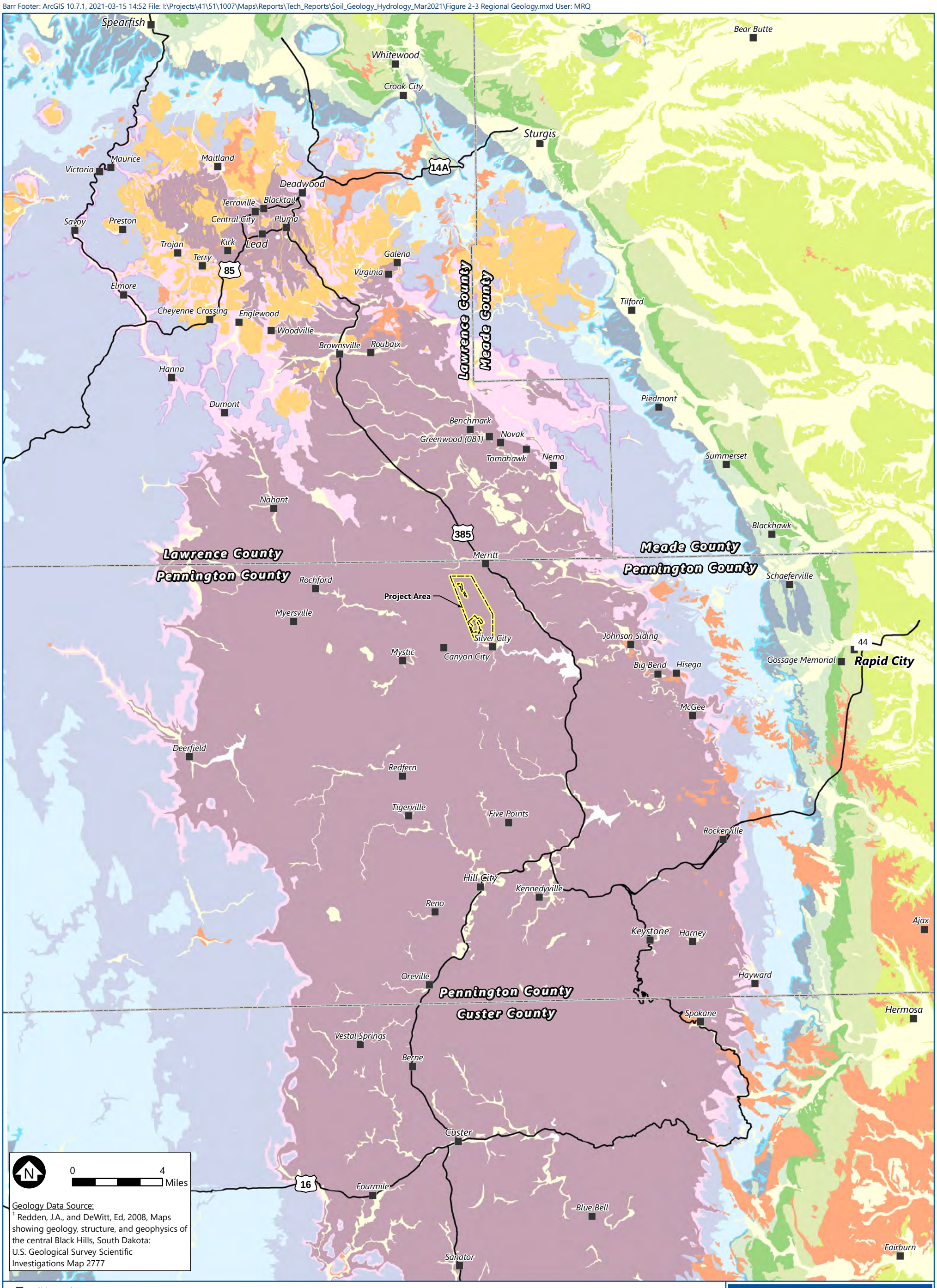


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FIGURE 2-3

2.2.2.2 Mineral Resources

The Project area is located within the historic Silver City Mining District (reference (9)). Features related to mining and prospecting are shown on Figure 2-4 and Figure 2-5. Mining in this district produced gold, silver, lead, antimony, and copper. Quartz veins and iron-rich chert, which contain gold associated with sulfide minerals, are located in the schist. Operations consisted of underground and combined surface-underground mines in schist and slate host rock in areas with enriched gold and mineral zones,. Ore and gangue minerals (referred to as mineralization) included minerals associated with metal leaching and acid mine drainage (e.g., pyrite, pyrrhotite).

2.2.2.3 Geologic Hazards

Seismicity

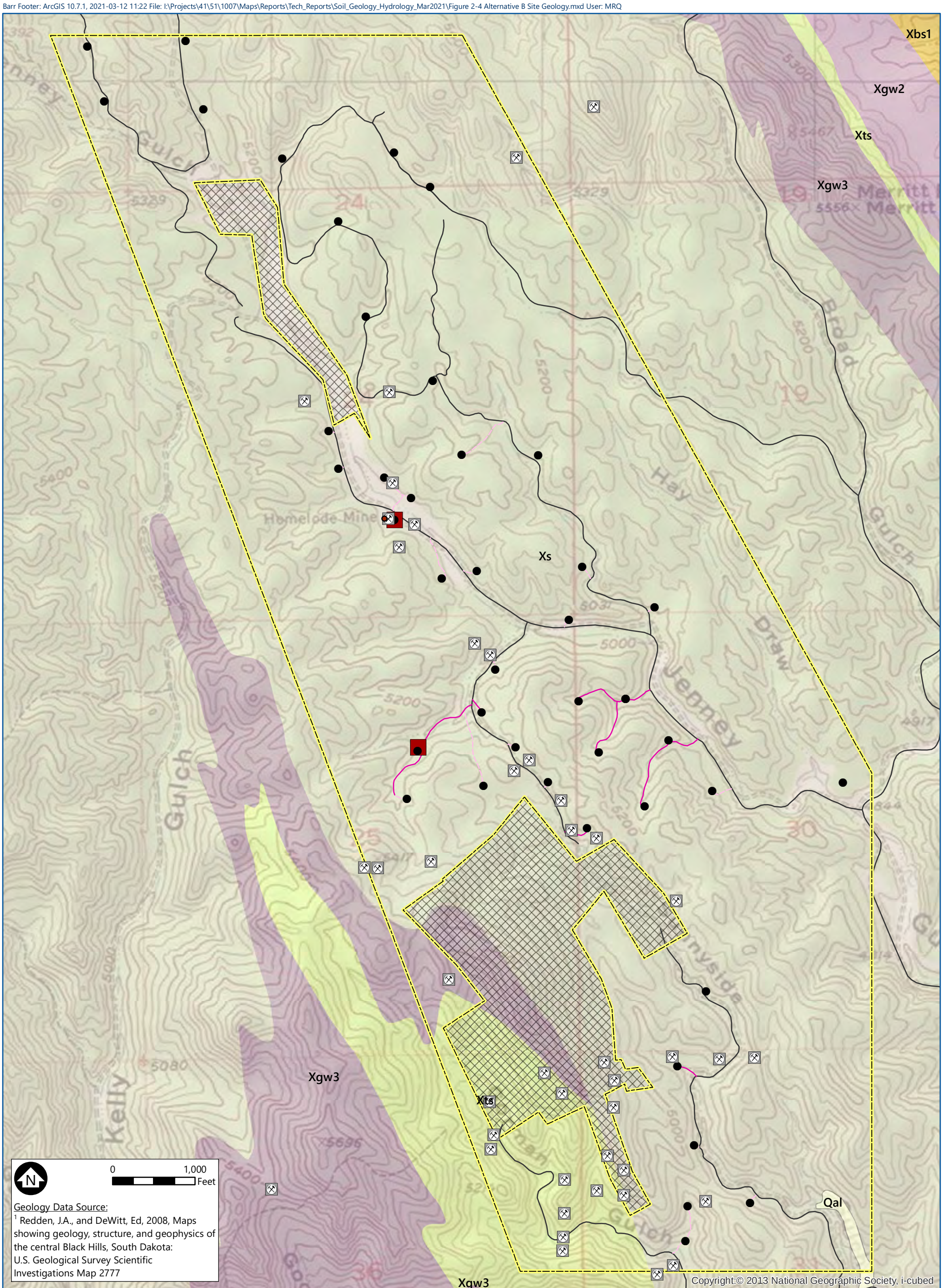
Earthquakes have occurred in the region, generally with magnitudes below 5 (reference (10)). The probable ground motion from any seismic event is low, with a 2% chance over 50 years of exceeding 0.14g (14% of the acceleration of gravity) for a short-period (0.2 second) wave and 0.04g (4% of the acceleration of gravity) for a long period (1 second) wave (reference (11)). Although extensive faulting from metamorphism and uplift is present in the crystalline core rock (reference (8)), Quaternary faults have not been documented (reference (12). As a result, faults are unlikely to lead to earthquakes or ground rupture.

Subsidence

Subsidence hazards could include karst and underground mining. Karst is not present in the Project area and therefore does not present a subsidence risk. Although there is substantial potential for karst and pseudo-karst conditions in the general region, it is primarily present in the Phanerozoic sedimentary rocks and is not present in the Precambrian core that includes the Project area (reference (13)). The Project area is located within the Silver City Mining District, where historic mines including underground workings are present (reference (9)) (Figure 2-4 and Figure 2-5).

Slope Failure

The Project area is not located near any mapped landslide deposits (reference (14)) and is located in a “low incidence” zone for landslides (reference (15)). As noted in Section 2.2.1, most soils in the Project area are highly susceptible to erosion, especially those on steep slopes. Surface and near-surface occurrences of lower-grade metamorphic rock types (slate, phyllite) that may fracture are noted in map unit descriptions (reference (8); reference (12)). Slope failures resulting from the erosion of soil and rocks are possible.



Drill Pad (Alternative B)
Staging Area (Alternative B)
Mining Features
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)
New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

Geologic Unit [1]
Qal - Alluvial deposits
Precambrian
Xbs1 - Metamorphosed black shale
Xs - Metamorphosed shale
Xgw2 - Metagraywacke unit 2
Xgw3 - Metagraywacke unit 3
Xts - Metamorphosed tuff and shale

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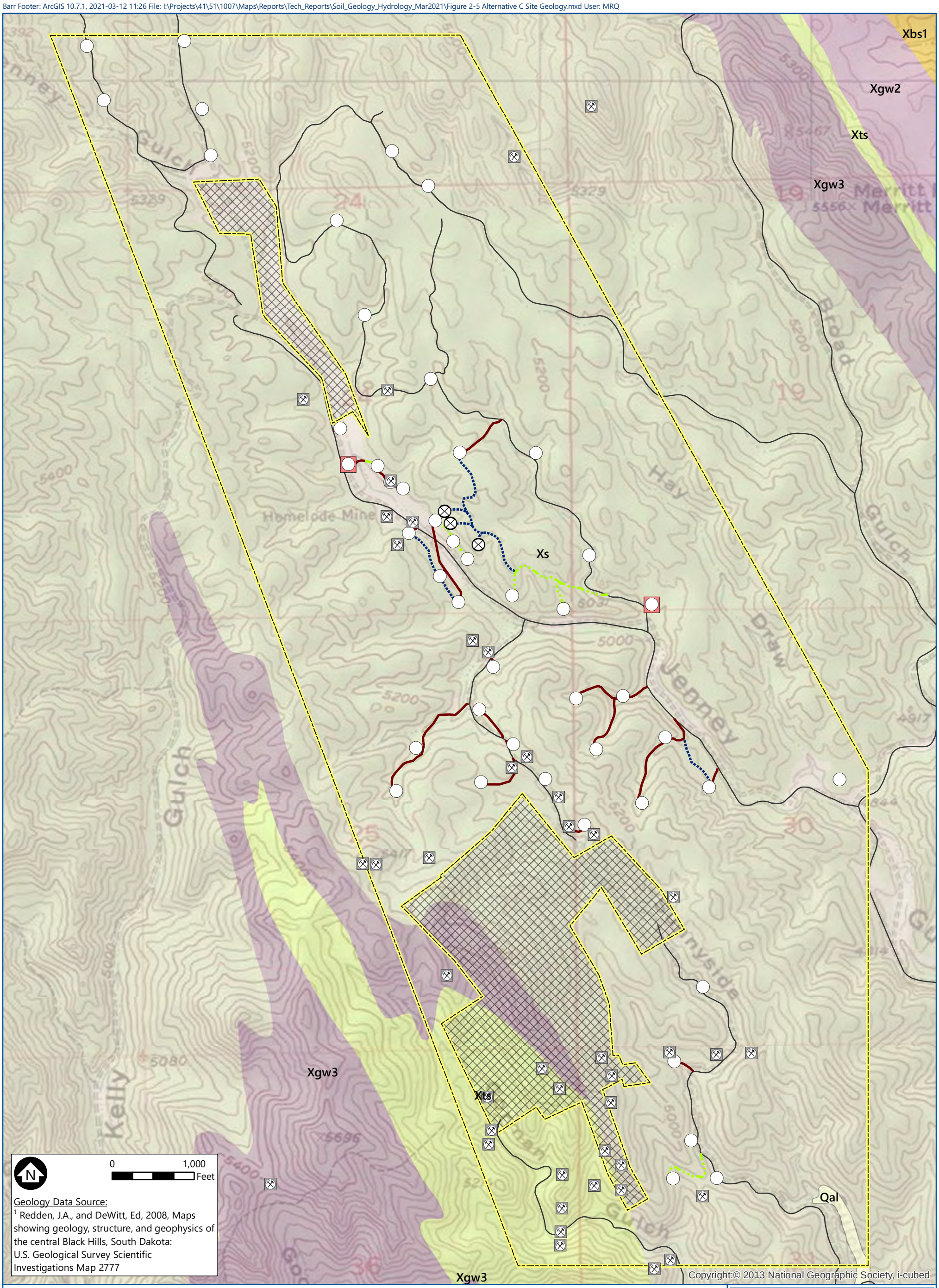
FIGURE 2-4



Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Staging Area (Alternative C)
Mining Features
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)
New Access Route
Alternate New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

Geologic Unit [1]
Qal - Alluvial deposits

Precambrian
Xbs1 - Metamorphosed black shale
Xs - Metamorphosed shale
Xgw2 - Metagraywacke unit 2
Xgw3 - Metagraywacke unit 3
Xts - Metamorphosed tuff and shale

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FIGURE 2-5

2.3 Environmental Consequences

The analysis of effects for soils and geology assumes that applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 2.1.3), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 2.1.3), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 2.1.3) would be implemented during all Project activities. This analysis discusses the expected disturbance resulting from the implementation of the no action alternative (Alternative A), the proposed action (Alternative B), and the modified proposed action (Alternative C).

2.3.1 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Alternative A (No Action Alternative) provides a baseline to evaluate the effects of the proposed action (Alternative B) and the modified proposed action (Alternative C) as described in Section 2 of the EA.

2.3.1.1 Soils

Alternative A would not result in direct or indirect effects to soil resources. Alternative A would not result in changes to soil physical properties, such as soil compaction, or soil erosion from any of the activities proposed for the Project.

2.3.1.2 Geology

Alternative A would not result in direct or indirect effects to geological resources from the Project. Alternative A would not result in changes to ground surface or stability from any of the Project activities.

2.3.2 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, the Project would occur as described in Section 2 of the EA.

2.3.2.1 Soils

Under Alternative B, potential short-term direct and indirect effects on soil resources could occur. Project activities associated with access, clearing, and drilling could affect soil resources. The equipment used for drilling and clearing have the potential to lead to soil compaction and erosion within drill pad locations, staging areas, and temporary overland trails. As noted above in Table 2-1, the soil map units identified in the Project area are ranked slight to severe for their compaction. As such, with the exception of the Pactola-Pactola, shallow rock outcrop complex, soils throughout the entire Project area have a significant potential for being compacted if activities occur when soils are wet. The Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 2.1.3), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 2.1.3), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 2.1.3) to address the potential for soil compaction.

The Pactola-Pactola, shallow Rock outcrop complex and the Pactola-Virkula-Rock outcrop complex, which collectively represent 97% of the Project area, have soil erosion hazard ratings of very severe and moderate, respectively (Table 2-1). These soil map units are also located on slopes of 40 to 80% and 10 to 40%, respectively. The Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 2.1.3), Region 2 WCPs (see

Section 2.1.3), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 2.1.3) to address soil erosion hazards.

Any soils that may need to be removed for clearing drill pads or staging areas would be stockpiled for later use in site reclamation. Upon completion of a drill hole, the drill cuttings and fines would be dispersed in the disturbed area. Topsoil would be placed on cuttings and reseeded/replanted as necessary to match surrounding vegetation. Drill pads, staging areas and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completion of all Project activities.

2.3.2.2 Geology

Under Alternative B, potential short-term direct and indirect effects on geologic resources could occur. Project activities associated with access, clearing, and drilling could affect geologic resources.

Extraction of rock through drilling may result in the removal of mineral resources. However, the amounts are anticipated to be negligible. The presence of sulfide minerals in the bedrock suggests that the rock is potentially acid-generating. To mitigate this risk, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock will be either thin-spread and buried beneath the topsoil (which is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the western U.S.) or transported off-site to an approved disposal location. Spread drill cutting depth would be dependent on hole depth with most sites resulting in a spread drill cuttings depth of 0.25 inches; however, some sites may result in up to approximately 1.50 inches of drill cuttings spread across the drill pad.

With a minimal risk of seismic disturbance to the Project, disruption of Project activities and the need for containment is unlikely. The Project does not include activities with potential to cause significant induced seismicity.

Due to the absence of karst in the Project area, there is no potential for subsidence due to karst features (e.g., due to water injected during drilling) in the Project area. The movement and operation of equipment could lead to failure of historic underground mine workings. Known mining-related features have been mapped and considered in Project planning (Figure 2-4); planned drill holes are not anticipated to intersect any known historical mine shafts, holes, adits, or workings. The historic underground mines have been small, and workings have been within crystalline rock. Therefore, there is a low risk of activity triggering ground subsidence into underground mine workings.

Steep slopes (>40%) and the presence of slate indicate a potential for erosion and/or slope failure, although the area is considered a “low-incidence” zone for landslides (reference (15)). The management of soil erosion, as described in Section 2.2.1.2, and applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 2.1.3), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 2.1.3), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 2.1.3) will be implemented to address slope hazards. Additional assessment may be completed as part of Project design.

2.3.3 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the Project would occur as described in Section 2 of the EA.

2.3.3.1 Soils

Under Alternative C, the potential effects to soil resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B with the following exception. Under Alternative C, each drill pad and temporary overland trail would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of use, rather than upon completion of all drilling activities. This change would further minimize the potential for erosion by stabilizing the soil immediately versus waiting until all drilling activities were completed.

2.3.3.2 Geology

Under Alternative C, the potential effects to geological resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

2.4 Cumulative Effects

The following section provides an assessment of the potential cumulative effects on soils and geologic resources resulting from implementation of the Project and the potential interaction with the effects on these resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects. Because the potential effects to soil and geologic resources are comparable for Alternative B and Alternative C, they are discussed together with regard for their potential for cumulative effects.

2.4.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the foreseeable future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. Present and foreseeable future activities may contribute to effects on soil and geologic resources. The effects of these present and foreseeable future projects combined with the effects of Alternative B and/or C could potentially result in cumulative effects on soil and geologic resources. The foreseeable future projects that could potentially contribute to cumulative effects are listed below and are further described in the Environmental Assessment.

- South Dakota Network Fiberoptic Cable – 15 miles northwest of Project area
- New radio tower near Silver City Community Hall – 0.2 miles south of Project area
- Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures
- Timber sales located within the Project vicinity and approved to occur within the next 5 years
- Prescribed burns – eastern two-thirds of Project area
- Recreational event permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses

2.4.2 Cumulative Effects to Soils and Geology

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), and implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 2.1.3), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 2.1.3), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 2.1.3), the Project is not likely to interact

with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on soil and geologic resources.

3 Hydrology

3.1 Introduction

This section addresses the surface and groundwater resources in the Project area and vicinity and the potential effects on these resources as a result of the Project. Comments received during scoping resulted in the following issues relevant to the analysis:

- The Project could affect surface water quality.
- The Project could affect groundwater quality through drilling activities.

3.1.1 Information Sources

There are several existing documents and data sources containing baseline information on surface water and groundwater in the Project area. The following documents and data sources were reviewed:

- Surface Water:
    - Sources of information used in the analysis include GIS information gathered from USFS field surveys that were conducted in September of 2019 and April, May, and November of 2020 and publicly available data:
        - USFS Streams
        - USFS Protected Streams
        - USFS Springs
        - USFS Wetlands
        - USFS Fens - Peatlands
        - USFS Water Impoundments_Dams
        - USFS Water Influence Zones
        - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Hazard Map
        - South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) Public Water Supply System (PWSS) data (regulated/unregulated well data from April 2021 and Zone A buffer data from 2016)
- Groundwater:
    - Sources of information used in the analysis include GIS information gathered from publicly available data:
        - South Dakota DANR Water Wells
    - Sources of information also include publicly available reports:
        - USGS Atlas of Water Resources in the Black Hills Area, South Dakota
        - USGS Ground-Water Resources in the Black Hills Area, South Dakota
        - South Dakota School of Mines and Technology Black Hills Aquifers

3.1.2 Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction

Direction for USFS hydrology/water resources management is dictated by laws, regulations, and the Forest Plan. The following executive orders (EO) and laws apply to hydrology and/or water resources:

- EO Order 11988 – Floodplain Management
- EO 11990 – Protection of Wetlands
- Clean Water Act (33 USC. 1251 et seq.)

In addition to the laws and regulations mentioned above, the USFS has three tiers of policy pertaining to the management of soil resources, these include: the USFS National Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands (reference (2)), the USFS Region 2 Forest Service Handbook 2509.25 – Watershed Conservation Practices (WCP) Handbook (reference (3)), and the Forest Plan (reference (4)). See Section 2.1.2 for background information on these USFS policies. Similar to soil resources (Section 2.1.2), the USFS national BMPs related to Minerals Management Activities and Road Management Activities (reference (2)) are applicable to minimizing the potential effects on water resources from the Project. The Region 2 WCP Handbook (reference (3)) management measures relevant to water resources are applicable to the Project; these management measures are identified below with the summary of applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines pertaining to water resources.

3.1.2.1 Forest Plan Direction

Forest Plan standards and guidelines for hydrology/water resources considered applicable to the Project include surface water runoff, stream channels, water quality, and general measures related to riparian areas, water influence zones (WIZ), and wetlands. In addition, Forest Plan guidelines for mineral and energy resources related to the general requirements for riparian protection are applicable.

Surface Water Runoff

The Forest Plan standards and guidelines related to surface water runoff that are applicable to the Project are summarized above in Section 2.1.2.

Stream Channels

The following Forest Plan standard related to stream channels are applicable to the Project:

- 1201. Conduct actions so that stream pattern, geometry, and habitats are maintained or improved toward robust stream health. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 5; reference (3).
- 1203. Design and construct all stream crossings and other instream structures to provide for passage of flow, sediment, and debris, withstand expected flood flows, and allow free movement of resident aquatic life. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 4; reference (3).

The following Forest Plan guidelines related to stream channels are applicable to the Project:

- 1204. Naturally occurring debris shall not be removed from stream channels unless it is a threat to life, property, important resource values, or otherwise covered by legal agreement.

- 1206. When stabilizing damaged streambanks, preferentially use methods that emphasize vegetative stabilization. Use native vegetation for streambank stabilization whenever possible.

Water Quality

The following Forest Plan standards related to water quality are applicable to the Project:

- 1211. Place new sources of chemical and pathogenic pollutants where such pollutants will not reach surface or groundwater. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 15; reference (3).
- 1212. Apply runoff controls to disconnect new pollutant sources from surface and groundwater. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 16; reference (3).
- 1213. Apply chemicals using methods which minimize risk of entry to surface and groundwater. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 17; reference (3).

The are no Forest Plan guidelines related to water quality that are applicable to the Project:

General – Related to Riparian Areas, WIZ, and Wetlands

The following Forest Plan standards related to riparian areas, WIZ, and wetlands are applicable to the Project:

- 1301. In the WIZ next to perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, and wetlands, allow only those actions that maintain or improve long-term stream health and riparian ecosystem condition. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 3; reference (3).
- 1302. Maintain long-term ground cover, soil structure, water budgets, and flow patterns in wetlands to sustain their ecological function, per 404 regulations. Also included as Regional WCP Handbook Management Measure 6; reference (3).

General – Related to Reclamation

The following Forest Plan standards related to reclamation are applicable to the Project:

- 1501. A Plan of Operations shall contain proposed reclamation objectives and practices to maintain water quality and soil stability during mining and exploration activities, including post mining and exploration, and any temporary shutdowns. Reclamation objectives should include the planned uses of the management area or reasons why these uses can no longer be achieved.
- 1502. Reclamation will be considered satisfactory when the disturbed area has been reclaimed in accordance with the operating plan.

General – Related to Riparian Protection

The following Forest Plan standard related to riparian protection is applicable to the Project:

- 1505. Utilize existing regulations and policies to minimize effects of mineral extractions in riparian areas. If reclamation is not done concurrently, reclamation of mined areas will begin immediately following mining activity. Reclamation will follow existing landform and vegetative characteristics as much as feasible, unless management objectives require otherwise.

The following Forest Plan guidelines related to riparian protection are applicable to the Project:

- 1506. Minimize disturbance to the riparian area by mineral activities. Initiate timely and effective rehabilitation of disturbed areas and restore riparian areas to a state of productivity comparable to that before disturbance.
- 1507. Confine heavy equipment use in riparian areas to areas necessary for mineral extraction.
- 1508. Require monitoring of mining mitigative measures in riparian areas to ensure that the measures are effective and in compliance with applicable water quality standards.

3.1.3 Study Methodology

Based on the information sources gathered, review of public scoping comments, and using professional experience and judgment, this analysis:

- identifies the activities that could affect surface water and groundwater, and
- discusses the likely effects of the three alternatives on surface water and groundwater.

Project scoping indicated concerns related to the potential for surface water and groundwater contamination that could result from the Project. Potential effects are assessed by evaluating the drilling processes, materials used, and the well sealing plan, as well as reclamation methods.

3.2 Affected Environment

3.2.1 Surface Water

The Project area is located within the Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek watershed (HUC12 101201100110), with the northeast corner (approximately 3 acres) of the Project area located within the Jim Creek – Boxelder Creek watershed (HUC12 101201110305). No physical Project activities are proposed in the Jim Creek–Boxelder Creek watershed, as such this watershed is not discussed in this report.

Stream networks throughout the Black Hills, including the Project area, are characterized by geology, climate, and constructed reservoirs that influence stream permanence, volume, temperature, etc. The Black Hills region traditionally has some of the best surface water quality in the state, due in a large part to a cooler climate, higher precipitation, and less erosive bedrock than the surrounding plains (reference (16)).

The Black Hills experience variation in precipitation from year to year which contributes to variation in stream flow. Approximately 50% of the annual precipitation occurs during May, June, and July, and almost 75% during the 5-month period between April and August, in the form of rain associated with high-intensity, short-duration thunderstorms (reference (17)). The smallest amounts of precipitation typically occur during the winter months, November through February, as snow. Most of the total annual snow fall occurs in the late spring months of March and April.

3.2.1.1 Watershed Condition Class

The USFS has developed a National Forest Watershed Condition Framework that classifies watershed condition based on a 12-indicator model that considered both aquatic and terrestrial physical and biological indicators (reference (18)). Specific indicators include: water quality, water quantity, aquatic

habitat, aquatic biota, riparian/wetland vegetation, roads and trails, soils, fire regime, forest cover, rangeland vegetation, terrestrial invasive species and forest health. Indicators are individually rated, then summed based on a weighting factor to give a rating of Class 1 (functioning properly), Class 2 (functioning at risk) or Class 3 (impaired function) to each HUC (Hydrologic Unit Code) 12 or 6th level watersheds. According to the National Forest Watershed Condition Framework, the Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek watershed falls under Class 2, which means it is "functioning at risk" and exhibits moderate geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition (reference (18)).

3.2.1.2 Municipal Watersheds and Public Water Supply Systems

The Rapid Creek watershed, which is located in the Project area and supplies water to Rapid City, is listed as a municipal watershed. According to the South Dakota DANR PWSS data, no regulated or unregulated wells are present within the Project area. The closest regulated well is located at Cousins Pub and Pizza, approximately 0.8 miles northeast of the Project area and the closest unregulated well is located at the Ponderosa Mountain Rustic Campground, approximately 4.4 miles southeast of the Project area. The entire Project area is located in a Zone B source water protection buffer. Zone B buffers include a 25-mile radius within a delineated watershed area extending from a PWSS intake (reference (19)). The very southern extent of the Project area is located in a Zone A source water protection buffer. Zone A buffers include the most sensitive area surrounding the PWSS intake (reference (19)).

3.2.1.3 Watercourses and Waterbodies

Approximately 22 miles of streams are present throughout the Project area, including perennial (3.7 miles), intermittent (3.2 miles), and ephemeral (15.1 miles) streams. All of the perennial streams and approximately 3.2 miles of the intermittent streams in the Project area are protected. Table 3-1**,** Figure 3-1, and Figure 3-2 identify the streams within the Project area.

Table 3-1 Summary of Streams in the Project Area

Stream Name	Stream Type	Protected Miles in Project Area	Total Miles in Project Area
Jenney Gulch	Perennial	2.3	2.3
Jenney Gulch	Intermittent	0.3	0.3
Hay Draw	Perennial	0.6	0.6
Hay Draw	Intermittent	0.4	0.4
Hay Draw	Ephemeral	0	0.4
Broad Gulch	Perennial	0.1	0.1
Gorman Gulch	Intermittent	0.8	0.8
Gorman Gulch	Ephemeral	0	0.1
Sunnyside Gulch	Intermittent	0.3	0.3
Sunnyside Gulch	Ephemeral	0	1.1
Unnamed	Perennial	0.7	0.7
Unnamed	Intermittent	1.4	1.4
Unnamed	Ephemeral	0	13.5

The land adjacent to protected perennial and intermittent streams is referred to as the WIZ. The Watershed Conservation Practices Handbook (reference (3)) defines the WIZ as 100 feet minimum from each bank of perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, and wetlands. Only actions that maintain or improve long-term stream health and riparian ecosystem conditions are allowed in the WIZ. As shown on Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2, designated WIZ areas are present adjacent to streams and wetlands throughout the Project area.

No natural lakes are present in the Project area; however, the Pactola Reservoir, the largest reservoir in the BHNF and a source of drinking water in downstream communities, is located approximately 0.5 miles southeast of the Project area.

3.2.1.4 Beneficial Uses and Impaired Waters

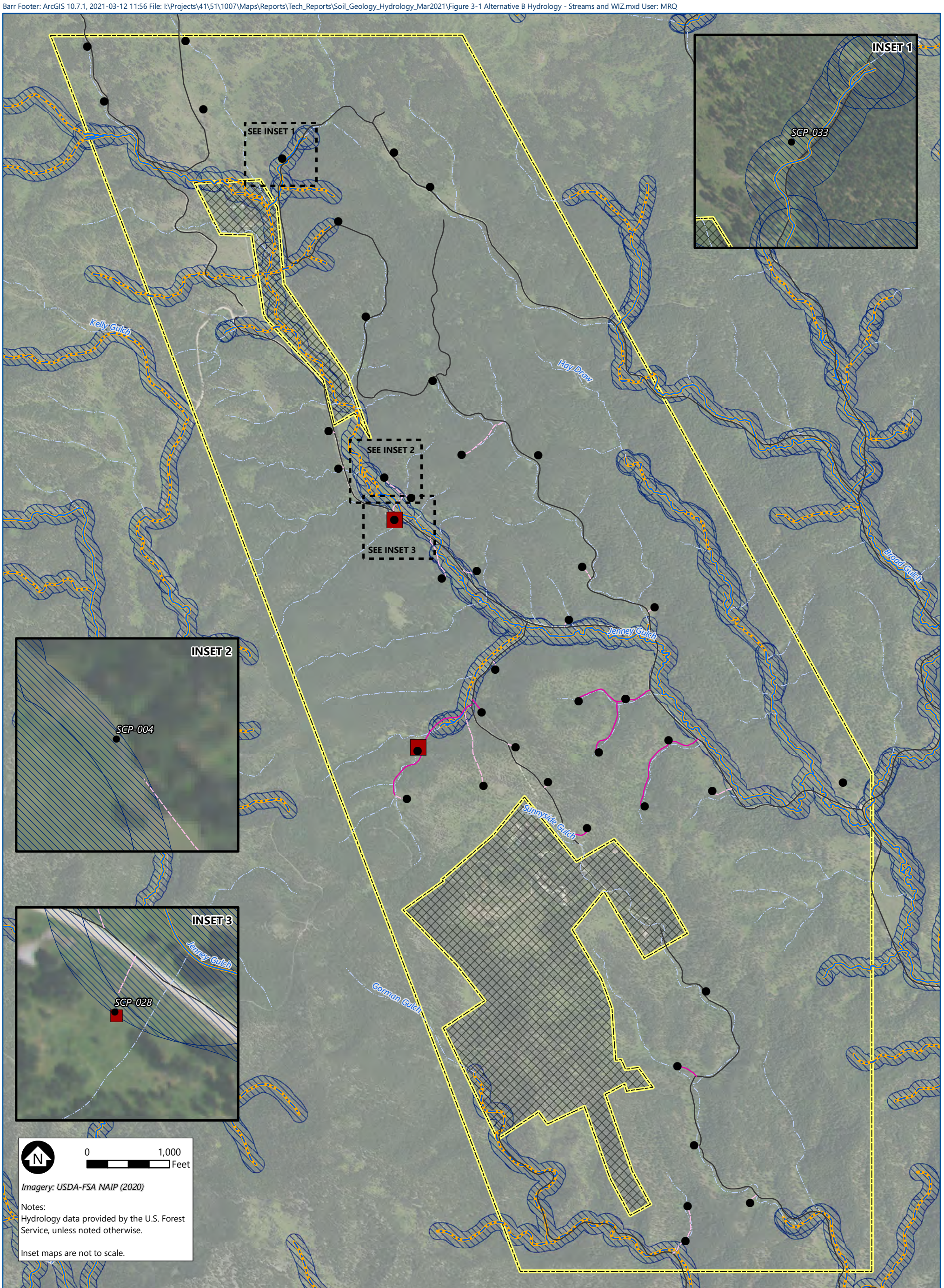
The Clean Water Act requires states to adopt water quality standards to protect the nation's waters. These standards define how much of a pollutant can be in surface and/or groundwater, while still allowing it to meet its designated uses, such as for drinking water, fisheries, swimming, irrigation, or industrial purposes. Within the Project area, the only stream that has assigned beneficial uses is Jenny Gulch, with the following beneficial uses: coldwater permanent fish life propagation waters; limited-contact recreation waters; fish and wildlife propagation, recreation, and stock watering waters; and irrigation waters (reference (20)), According to the South Dakota DANR 2020 Integrated Report for Surface Water Quality Assessment (reference (16)) and the South Dakota Surface Water Quality Webmap (reference (20)), no impaired streams or waterbodies are present within the Project area.

3.2.1.5 Water Yield

Water yield is a concern for communities in and around the Black Hills. The water provided by streams that flow from the Black Hills is an important resource utilized for drinking water supplies, irrigation, stock watering, fisheries, and recreation in the surrounding area.

As a result of evapotranspiration, forested landscapes, such as the Project area, can lower the quantity of water that reaches the ground surface. In the Black Hills, over 92% of the total annual precipitation is lost to evapotranspiration associated with the dense forests of the area (reference (17)). However, forests also help conserve moisture by providing shade and cooler temperatures which provide for less overall evaporation. The transpiration of moisture back to the atmosphere contributes to rain and snow development in the area. Thus, the annual water yield depends upon the density or coverage of the forest, the type of forest vegetation, as well as many other factors including climate, weather patterns, geology, slope, soils, stream channel conditions and riparian area conditions.

According to a USGS gage 06410500, which is located on Rapid Creek at Silver City, above the Pactola Reservoir and monitors a 293 square mile drainage area, mean daily flows between 1953 and 2021 ranged between 22 and 130 cubic feet per second (reference (21)). Flows are generally highest in the spring (May and June) and lowest during the winter months (November through February).



Drill Pad (Alternative B)
Staging Area (Alternative B)
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)
New Road
On Existing Trail

Hydology Data
Ephemeral Stream
Intermittent Stream
Perennial Stream
Protected Stream
Water Influence Zone (WIZ)

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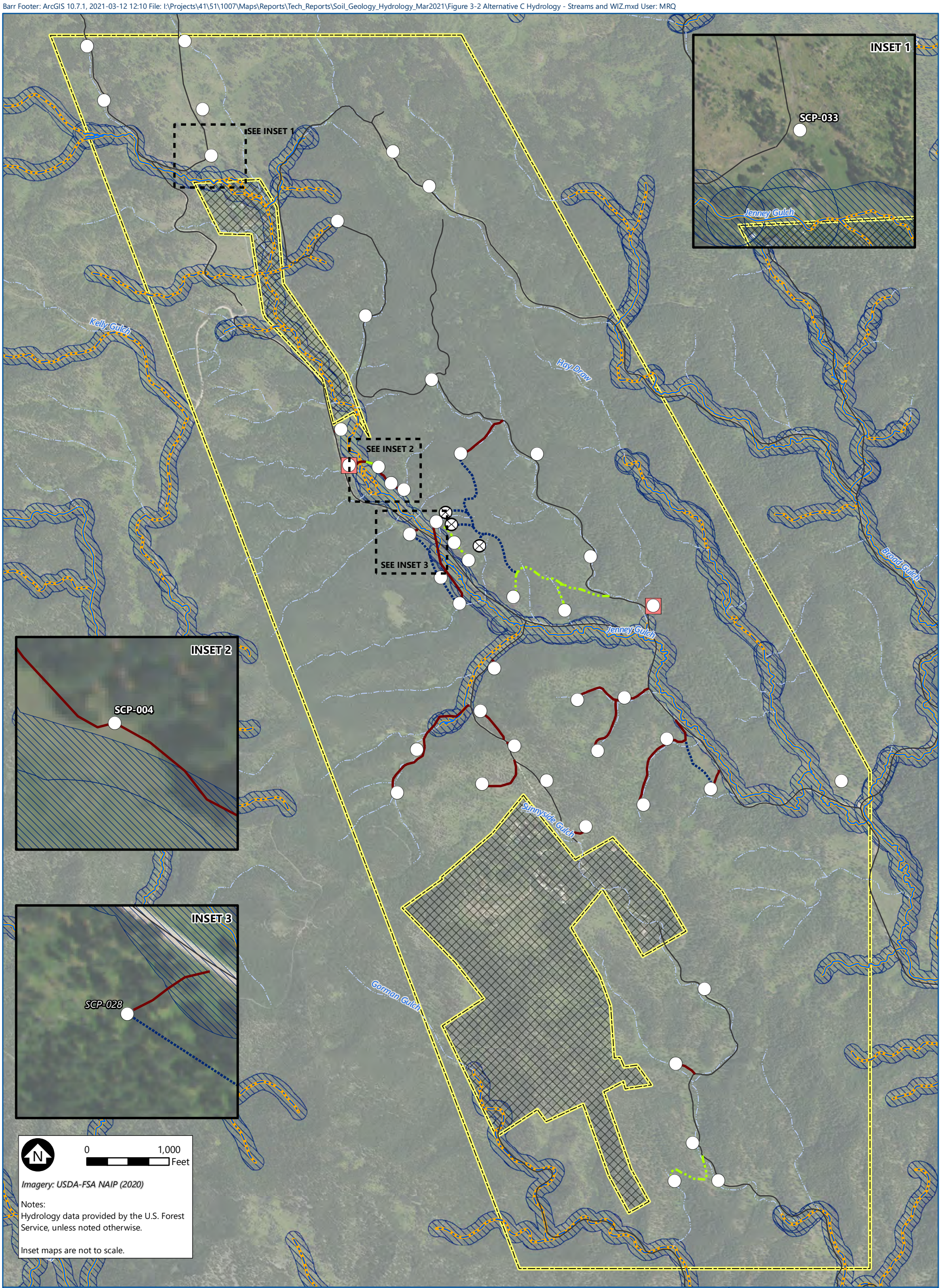
FIGURE 3-1



Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Staging Area (Alternative C)

Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)

New Access Route

Alternate New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

Hydology Data

Ephemeral Stream

Intermittent Stream

Perennial Stream

Protected Stream

Water Influence Zone (WIZ)

BARR

ALTERNATIVE C HYDROLOGY -STREAMS AND WIZ

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FIGURE 3-2

3.2.1.6 Floodplains, Riparian Areas, Wetlands, and Springs

Floodplains are natural inundation areas for floods that reduce flood stages and velocities. Floodplains store water, serve as natural sponges to moderate the release of high waters, and act as filters to trap sediment and pollutants. They are important because the loss of floodplain function can change the timing and peak of stream flows. According to the FEMA Flood Hazard map, the majority (1,493 acres) of the Project area is mapped Flood Zone X, area of minimal flood hazard, which occurs outside of the 500-year floodplain. The northern 244 acres is mapped as Flood Zone D, which indicates that the flood hazard has not been determined.

Riparian areas are those lands that interface between water and drier uplands. Riparian areas are some of the most ecologically diverse habitat types and provide bank stability, sediment filtering, streamside shading and nutrient input into streams and lakes. Riparian areas are generally present along perennial and intermittent streams, which are displayed on Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2.

Wetlands control runoff and water quality, recharge groundwater, and provide habitat. Actions that may alter their ground cover, soil structure, water budgets, drainage patterns, and long-term plant composition can impair functional values. Based on mapping by USFS personnel, there are approximately 13.2 acres of wetlands across the Project area, approximately 8.2 acres are classified as palustrine; the remaining wetlands (5.0 acres) are not classified (Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4).

Springs are groundwater-dependent ecosystems in which groundwater flows naturally from a rock or the soil onto the land surface or into a body of surface water. Springs are managed as a subset of wetlands due to their unique characteristics. Watershed Conservation Practices Handbook states "avoid any loss of rare wetland such as fens and springs" (reference (3)). Fens are a subset of wetlands, which are groundwater dependent and accumulate peat or muck. There are 28 springs and three fens within the Project area (Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4).

There are 16 impoundments within the Project area, including two ponds and a stock dam along the perennial portion of Jenny Gulch and several abandoned beaver dams throughout the Project area (Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4).

3.2.2 Groundwater

3.2.2.1 Aquifers

The major bedrock aquifers in the Black Hills and surrounding area are the Deadwood, Madison, Minnelusa, Minnekahta, and Inyan Kara. None of these aquifers occur within the Project area; the edge of the nearest (Deadwood) is approximately five miles west of the Project. The major aquifers are contained in the later sedimentary units that ring the crystalline core in which the Project area is located (reference (22)) (Figure 2-3). The major source of recharge to the sedimentary aquifers is precipitation. These sedimentary units once covered the crystalline core but have eroded away over millions of years, exposing the central part of the uplifted core. The crystalline core generally has low permeability and, beyond the central exposed section, forms the lower confining unit for the sedimentary aquifers. The crystalline core and sedimentary aquifers are not hydraulically connected (reference (22)). Localized, non-

continuous aquifers occur within weathered and fractured rocks in the crystalline core. The extent and distribution of these aquifers are difficult to determine without drilling. These aquifers are generally unconfined and are recharged from precipitation and infiltration, though most of the precipitation that falls is lost to evapotranspiration and runoff (overland and stream flow). Domestic water supply wells have been drilled into crystalline aquifer(s) in the Project area (Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4).

Additional localized aquifers are present in unconsolidated alluvial and colluvial deposits along streams and hillsides. The unconsolidated deposits are considered aquifers when saturated and are much smaller than other regional aquifers. Similar to the bedrock aquifers, precipitation is the major source of recharge to these aquifers. Some of these aquifers host springs that feed surface water features.

Springs in the Project area are within localized (discontinuous) aquifers present in unconsolidated alluvial and colluvial deposits along streams and hillsides. The unconsolidated deposits are considered aquifers when saturated and are much smaller than other regional aquifers. These aquifers are recharged by precipitation. Because they are present in small, discontinuous, unconsolidated (high porosity) surface aquifers overlying low-porosity crystalline rock, they are unlikely to be connected hydrologically to groundwater or other springs but are likely connected to nearby streams where they exist (reference (22)).

There are springs outside the Project area that provide a lot of the recharge for surface water bodies in the region, but they are located within the sedimentary aquifers that are not hydraulically connected to the crystalline core that underlies the project area (reference (22)).

3.2.2.2 Water Quality

The aquifers of the Black Hills crystalline core generally have low concentrations of dissolved solids (<500 mg/L) (reference (23). The pH values are lower than other regional aquifers due to the absence of significant carbonate minerals in the igneous and metamorphic rocks that comprise the crystalline core; however, calcium bicarbonate is generally the dominant water type. Concentrations of most groundwater constituents are generally within drinking water standards, though local exceedances have been documented, particularly for iron and manganese.

The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSMT) compiled data from over 250 wells in the crystalline core aquifers of Pennington County. Based on the data, they evaluated aquifer vulnerability (reference (24)) and areas of concern for groundwater constituents (reference (25)). Aquifer vulnerability is the potential or likelihood that any contaminant could reach the ground-water supply, based on the presence of on-site wastewater disposal systems and roads over the crystalline aquifer.

The SDSMT aquifer vulnerability data does not cover the northernmost portion of the Project area. Most of the assessed Project area is rated as low to medium risk due to wastewater disposal systems, but an area around the southern exclusion zone is rated as medium to high risk. The study rates trails and a 100-foot buffer on either side of the trail as low risk and dirt roads and a 100-foot buffer on either side of the road as low to medium risk.

The Project area is partially included in areas of concern for arsenic, iron, and total (but not fecal) coliform (reference (25)). Arsenic is regulated in drinking water with a maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 µg/L due to its effects on skin and the circulatory system and as a potential carcinogen. The arsenic in water samples is most likely from weathering of arsenopyrite (either natural or accelerated by historical mining activities), particularly within faulted and mineralized zones. Iron in drinking water is considered a nuisance due to its effects on taste and potential for staining and scaling, but it is not a health hazard and has a secondary (non-mandatory) MCL of 300 µg/L. High iron is widespread in groundwater in the Black Hills crystalline core, though there appears to be a relationship between high values and mineralized zones. Total coliform bacteria are naturally present in the environment and are not considered a health threat by themselves, but they indicate that other potentially harmful bacteria might be present. Total coliform tests are often used to assess drinking water treatment efficacy (reference (25)). Manganese has also been reported as being elevated in the crystalline core aquifers, including exceedances of the secondary MCL of 50 µg/L (reference (23)).

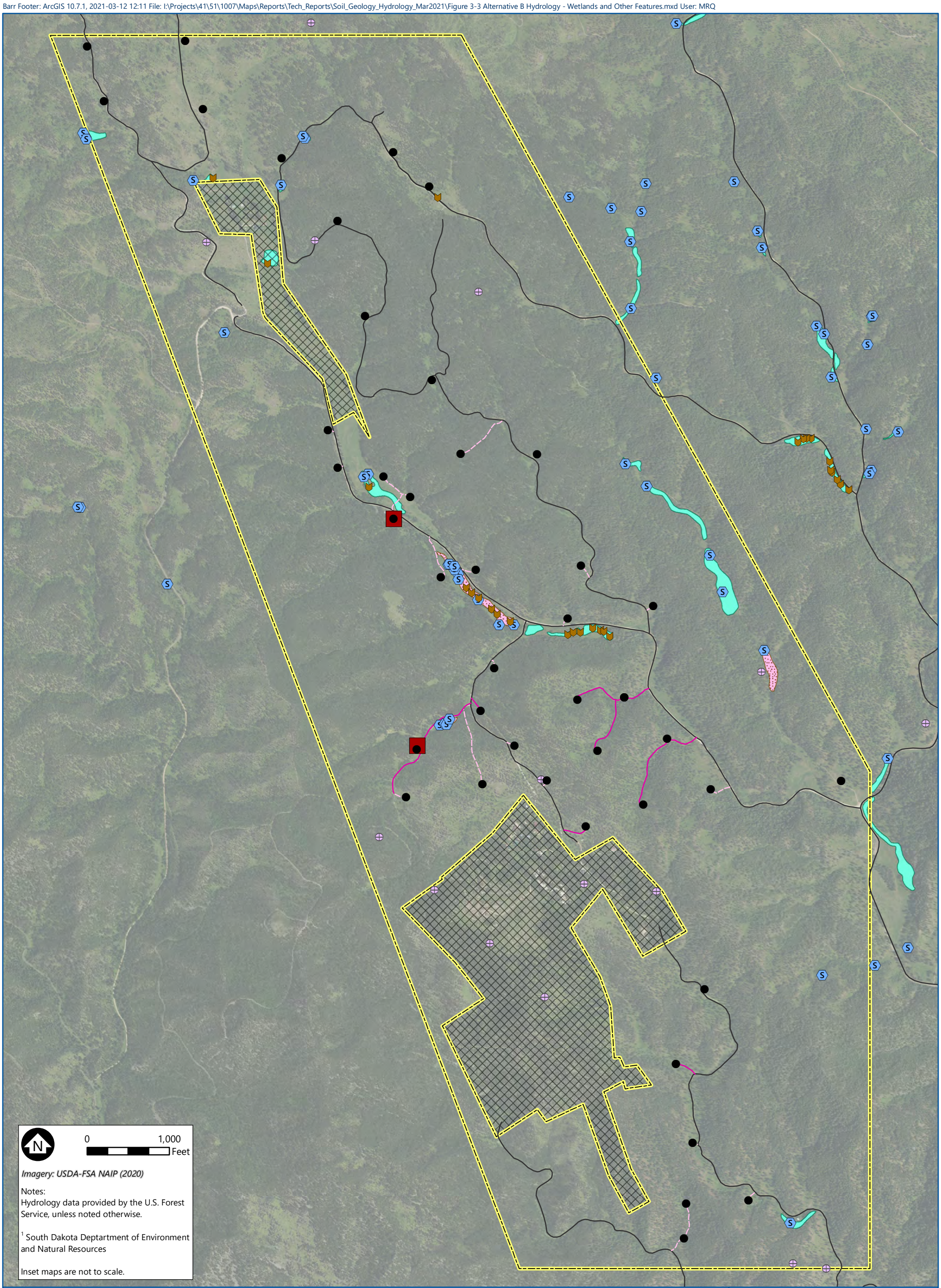
It is important to note that subsurface conditions in the crystalline aquifers are highly heterogeneous and that concentrations may vary even over relatively short distances. The SDSMT study notes that although high values occur more frequently in certain areas, not every well in an area will have elevated values, and the only way to know if a well has a problem is to test it (reference (25)).

Water quality within the smaller, localized unconsolidated aquifers can be influenced by the underlying geology, with concentrations generally increasing away from the crystalline core (i.e., towards sedimentary aquifers). Groundwater from these aquifers has relatively high dissolved solids, particularly calcium, bicarbonate, and sulfate. High iron and manganese have also been observed in alluvial wells in the region (reference (23)). In populated locations, alluvial aquifers can be contaminated by septic systems (reference (26).

3.2.2.3 Water Quantity

The crystalline core contains groundwater only within rock fractures (reference (22)). As a result, depths to water and production rates may vary widely, even over relatively short distances. The aquifers are not continuous, and the connectivity between wells can be difficult to characterize. The aquifers in the crystalline core are much less productive than the surrounding sedimentary aquifers. Recorded wells in the Project area generally range in depth from 80-140 feet below the surface, with reported static water levels of around 20-50 feet below the surface. Well test data report yields of approximately 10-60 gallons per minute (reference (19)).

Unconsolidated sedimentary aquifers are generally shallow but have appreciable primary porosity such that they contain abundant, accessible groundwater (reference (26); reference (27)). In locations where springs discharge from these aquifers or where these aquifers are otherwise feeding surface water, depth to water is low. No documented wells appear to exist in this unit within the Project area (reference (19)).



Drill Pad (Alternative B)
Staging Area (Alternative B)
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative B)
New Road
On Existing Trail

Hydrology Data
Domestic Water Well [1]
Water Impoundment

Spring
Peatlands
Wetlands

BARR

ALTERNATIVE B HYDROLOGY - WETLANDS AND OTHER FEATURES
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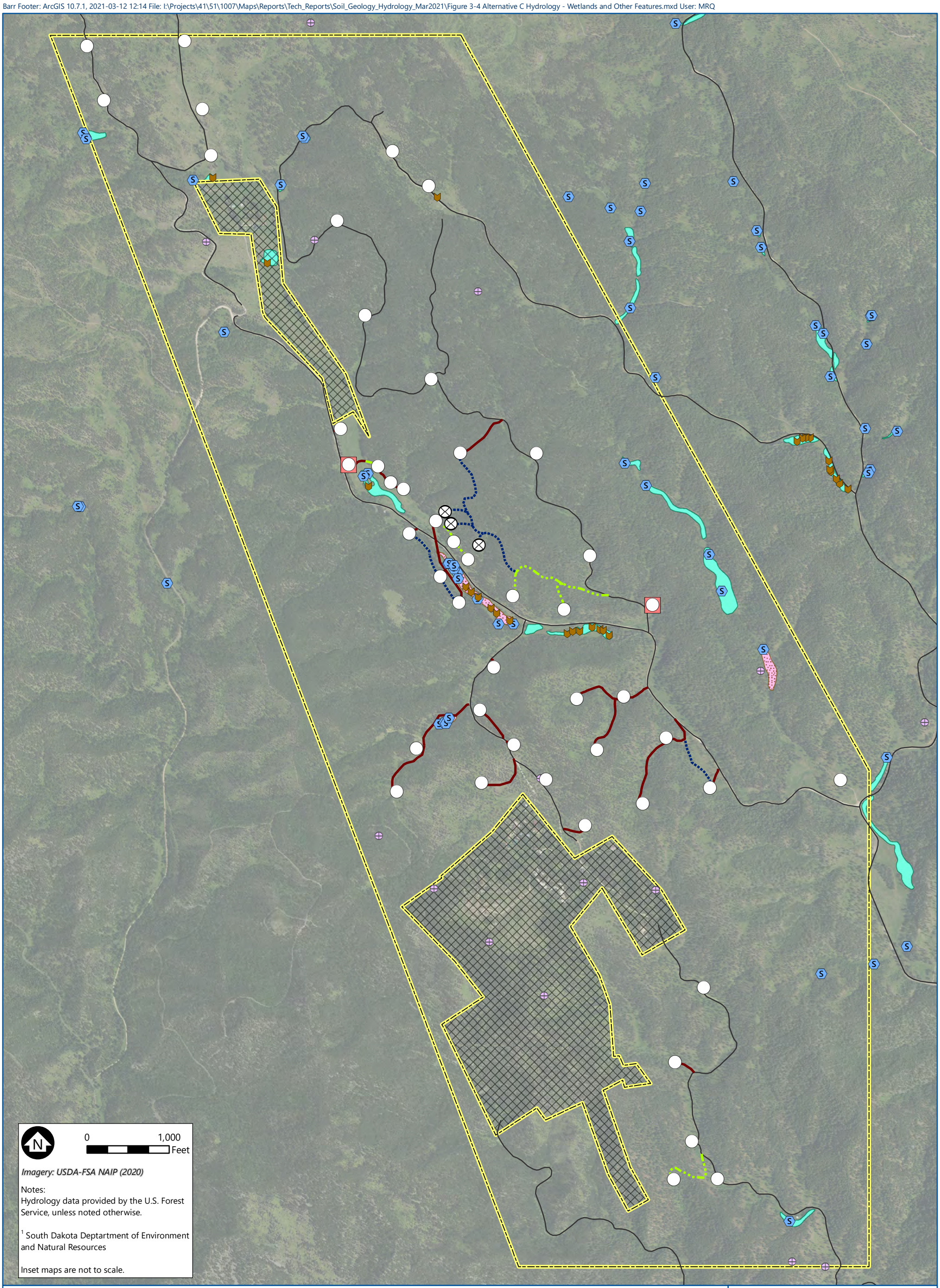
FIGURE 3-3



Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)
Staging Area (Alternative C)
Project Area
Project Exclusion Area/Private Property
Existing USFS Roads Used

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)
New Access Route
Alternate New Access Route
Overland/Trail Access Route

Hydrology Data
Domestic Water Well [1]

Water Impoundment
Spring
Peatlands
Wetlands

BARR

ALTERNATIVE C HYDROLOGY - WETLANDS AND OTHER FEATURES
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FIGURE 3-4

3.3 Environmental Consequences

The analysis of effects for hydrology (surface water and groundwater) assumes that applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 3.1.2), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 3.1.2), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 3.1.2) would be implemented during all Project activities. This analysis discusses the expected disturbance resulting from the implementation of the no action alternative (Alternative A), the proposed action (Alternative B), and the modified proposed action (Alternative C).

3.3.1 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Alternative A (No Action Alternative) provides a baseline to evaluate the effects of the proposed action (Alternative B) and the modified proposed action (Alternative C) as described in Section 2 of the EA.

3.3.1.1 Surface Water

Alternative A would not result in direct or indirect effects to surface water resources. Alternative A would not result in changes to streams, floodplains, riparian areas, wetland or springs.

3.3.1.2 Groundwater

Alternative A would not result in direct or indirect effects to groundwater resources from the Project. Alternative A would not result in changes to groundwater quantity or quality.

3.3.2 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, the Project would occur as described in Section 2 of the EA.

3.3.2.1 Surface Water

Under Alternative B, water supply needed for the Project would not be extracted from local surface waters; any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source and brought to the site via water trucks. Under Alternative B, three drilling sites (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) are located within designated WIZ areas (Figure 3-1); as such, there is a potential for direct effects on surface water resources associated with these WIZ areas. As discussed above, these WIZ areas are meant to buffer perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, and wetlands and only actions that maintain or improve long-term stream health and riparian ecosystem condition are permitted in WIZ areas. One drill site (SCP-018) is located in the edge of a Zone A source water protection buffer; as such, there is a potential for direct effects on source water associated with this buffer.

The remaining 38 drill sites and two staging areas are not located within perennial or intermittent streams, springs, wetlands, fens, impoundments, WIZ areas, FEMA mapped 100-year floodplain, or Zone A source water protection buffers (Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-3); as such, direct impacts to surface water resources are not anticipated from these Project activities.

Potential short-term indirect effects on surface water resources could occur from Project activities, including run-off and subsequent sedimentation of nearby surface waters. The new temporary overland

trails would cross a wetland, several WIZ areas, two protected perennial streams (Jenny Gulch and an unnamed stream), one protected intermittent stream (Gorman Gulch), and several ephemeral streams (Figure 3-1). Existing access roads would cross perennial and ephemeral streams, wetlands, and WIZ areas (Figure 3-1); however, new environmental effects associated with these existing access roads are not anticipated. As mentioned above, existing access roads and temporary overland trails would only be improved if needed to gain access to the site.

Project activities are not anticipated to affect watershed condition classes, water yield, or the assigned beneficial uses or impairment statuses of any streams in the Project area. As stated above, any water used for drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced directly from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters. In addition, at the end of drilling operations, excess water would be disposed of at a municipal wastewater disposal location, in agreement with the municipality.

The Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 3.1.2), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 3.1.2), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 3.1.2) to address the potential for effects on surface water. This could include installation of silt fencing to minimize sedimentation; storage of all fuels and oils associated with Project activities in appropriate containers/tanks and in a secondary containment to mitigate or minimize any spill hazards; and ensuring crossing of ephemeral streams occurs in a manner that maintains stream integrity. Ongoing visual inspection of water used during the drilling operations would be conducted to ensure proper capture and flow into the holding and settling tank circuit. Drill pads, staging areas and temporary overland trails would be reclaimed upon completion of all Project activities.

3.3.2.2 Groundwater

Under Alternative B, direct effects on groundwater resources are anticipated to be minor. The drilling would be completed under the supervision of a licensed driller. The downhole activity (drilling, drilling fluid, abandonment, etc.) is essentially the same as if a residential well were being constructed or abandoned. The only difference is that a core would be extracted from the hole for analysis. The exploratory drill holes would be cased through unconsolidated overburden for stability and to minimize mixing with any surface water.

Water would not be extracted from local groundwater; any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source and brought to the site via water trucks. To the extent possible, water will be recirculated and captured in holding tanks. The drilling water will initially meet any water quality standards applicable to its original source. However, it may be different in composition from any groundwater encountered within the Project area. Water sourced from the more productive sedimentary aquifers may result in limited dissolution and precipitation reactions, but these would be minor, localized, and short-term due to the limited quantity of drilling water. The introduction of oxygenated water into mineralized zones could lead to mobilization of acidity and/or metals, including arsenic, iron, and manganese, as occurs with drilling and installation of residential water wells. The reaction between the oxygen and sulfide minerals that leads to transport of the reacted materials by

groundwater can occur over short time scales (reference (28); (29); (30)). Subsequent reactions may limit the ability of the metals to travel long distances in the groundwater, although additional reactions can remobilize the metals, depending on aquifer conditions (reference (28); (31)). Given that the majority of the drilling will be completed in rock with no notable amounts of mineralization, the risk of these reactions causing a measurable impact to groundwater quality is very low. Without further changes in the amount of oxygen present, the aquifer will eventually restabilize (reference (28); (29)) There is no available documentation of this process resulting in aquifer contamination in the region.

Similarly, extracted mineralized cuttings could undergo these reactions and release acidity and/or metals to runoff or infiltration water. For cuttings to pose water quality concerns, the sulfides in the cuttings would need to be oxidized by air or water. As noted in Section 2.3.2.2, drill cuttings, a small percent of which may contain mineralized rock, will be buried on site (i.e., isolated from oxygen) or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. In addition, the bentonite clays and muds used in drilling (contained in the drill mud) helps to isolate potential mineralized rock from the environment and tends to absorb and immobilize metal ions that may be released. This further minimizes the risk of groundwater contamination.

Potential short-term indirect effects on groundwater resources could occur from Project activities, including changes in water levels in any fracture-flow aquifers and wells encountered during drilling. If there are enough exploration holes that happen to intersect enough of the right fracture(s), it could reduce the yield for other wells including domestic wells, though this risk is low due to the discontinuous nature of the aquifer (reference (27)), multiple fractures supplying wells, and low number of wells in close proximity to planned borehole locations. Given the deep extent of crystalline rock, it is unlikely that any high-yield aquifers would be encountered and mix with water in the existing fracture-flow aquifer.

During the borehole abandonment process, grout will be injected into the holes to seal them so that surface water cannot enter the aquifer. The injected grout does not expand far beyond the hole within the overburden. The effect of the grout in the overburden is very local; however, the injected grout can spread into the fractures of the aquifer if they intersect the borehole, although grout is unlikely to migrate more than a few feet from the borehole within the narrow width of the fractures.

The Project would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 3.1.2), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 3.1.2), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 3.1.2) to address the potential for groundwater impacts and will follow the guidelines set forth by the DANR that pertain to monitoring groundwater and wells; this could include storage of all fuels and oils associated with Project activities in appropriate containers/tanks and in a secondary containment to mitigate or minimize any spill hazards that may enter shallow aquifers, and monitoring water levels and quality. The Project will be required to follow South Dakota Rules Chapter 74-11-08, Capping, Sealing, and Plugging Exploration Test Holes. In addition, the USFS will require that plugging reports are submitted as part of the reclamation plan and borehole plugging will be subject to inspection by the State.

3.3.3 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Under Alternative C, the Project would occur as described in Section 2 of the EA.

3.3.3.1 Surface Water

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on surface water resources would be generally similar to those described for Alternative B with some exceptions. Alternative C would relocate the placement of three drill sites (SCP-004, SCP-028, and SCP-033) outside of WIZ areas (Figure 3-2), thereby removing the potential for direct effects to and maintaining the purpose and integrity of the WIZ. As discussed in Section 2.3 of the EA, existing USFS administrative roads would be used to access sites to the extent practicable; in some cases, this may include travel through the WIZ on these existing roads. Locations accessed through the WIZ would be planned for winter construction to the extent practicable; however, should site conditions at the time of construction warrant these administrative roads unusable (i.e., flooding in the WIZ or another reason), three drilling pads (SCP-045, SCP-046, and SCP-047) would be shifted to alternate locations to avoid traversing the WIZ. In addition, drill site SCP-018, which is located in the edge of a Zone A source water protection buffer under Alternative B, would not be used as a drill site location for Alternative C.

None of the drill sites or two staging areas under Alternative C are located within perennial or intermittent streams, springs, wetlands, fens, impoundments, WIZ areas, FEMA mapped 100-year floodplain, or Zone A source water protection buffers (Figure 3-2 and Figure 3-4); as such, direct impacts to surface water resources are not anticipated from these Project activities.

Potential short-term indirect effects on surface water resources could occur from Project activities, including run-off and subsequent sedimentation of nearby surface waters. The new temporary overland trails would cross several WIZ areas; these crossings primarily occur along the edges of the WIZ (Figure 3-2). One exception to this is the overland trail crossing of an intermittent and protected section of Jenny Gulch and the WIZ associated with it (Figure 3-2). The new temporary overland trails would also cross several ephemeral streams (Figure 3-2). Existing access roads would cross WIZ areas (as described above) and perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams (Figure 3-2); however, new environmental effects associated with these existing access roads are not anticipated. As mentioned above, existing access roads and temporary overland trails would only be improved if needed to gain access to the site.

Project activities are not anticipated to affect watershed condition classes, public water supply systems, water yield, or the assigned beneficial uses or impairment statuses of any streams in the Project area. As stated above, any water used for drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced directly from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters.

Alternative C would include implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 3.1.2), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 3.1.2), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 3.1.2) to address the potential for effects on surface water. In addition, under Alternative C each drill pad and temporary overland trail would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of use, rather than upon completion of all drilling activities, as is the case

under Alternative B. This change would stabilize the soil immediately and therefore further minimize the potential for runoff and subsequent sedimentation of nearby surface waters.

3.3.3.2 Groundwater

Under Alternative C, the potential effects on groundwater resources would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

3.4 Cumulative Effects

The following section provides an assessment of the potential cumulative effects on surface and groundwater resources resulting from implementation of the Project and the potential interaction with the effects on these resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects. Because the potential effects to soil and geologic resources are comparable for Alternative B and Alternative C, they are discussed together with regard for their potential for cumulative effects.

3.4.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the foreseeable future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. Present and foreseeable future activities may contribute to effects on surface and groundwater resources. The effects of these present and foreseeable future projects combined with the effects of Alternative B and/or C could potentially result in cumulative effects on surface and groundwater resources. The foreseeable future projects that could potentially contribute to cumulative effects are listed below and are further described in the Environmental Assessment.

- South Dakota Network Fiberoptic Cable – 15 miles northwest of Project area
- New cell tower near Silver City Community Hall – 0.2 miles south of Project area
- Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures
- Timber sales located within the Project vicinity and approved to occur within the next 5 years
- Prescribed burns – eastern two-thirds of Project area
- Recreational event permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses

3.4.2 Cumulative Effects to Surface Water and Groundwater

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), and implementation of applicable applicant-proposed minimization measures (see Table 2-1 in the EA), National BMPs (see Section 3.1.2), Region 2 WCPs (see Section 3.1.2), and Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines (see Section 3.1.2), the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on surface and groundwater resources.

4 Monitoring

F3 will be required to conduct monitoring activities per applicable USFS National BMPs, USFS Region 2 WCPs, Forest Plan direction standards and guidelines, and permit conditions.

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Appendix F

Public Health and Safety Technical Report

Public Health and Safety Technical Report

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Prepared for
United States Forest Service

May 2022

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Public Health and Safety Technical Report

May 2022

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Abbreviations

ATV	all-terrain vehicle
BHNF	Black Hills National Forest
dB(A)	decibel
SD DANR	South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
EA	Environmental Assessment
EMT	emergency medical treatment
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act

1 Introduction

This technical report summarizes the public health and safety resources within the vicinity of F3 Gold, LLC (F3) Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project in Pennington County, South Dakota (Project; Figure 1-1 of the Environmental Assessment (EA)) and the Project's potential effects on public health and safety. This technical report is intended to supplement the assessment of environmental effects related to public health and safety found in the accompanying EA.

The purpose and need of the Project is discussed in Section 1.2 of the EA. This technical report analyzes environmental effects for three alternatives: Alternative A (No Action), Alternative B (Proposed Action), and Alternative C (Modified Proposed Action). Each of these alternatives is described in detail in Section 2 of the EA.

2 Public Health and Safety

2.1 Introduction

This section addresses the public health and safety hazards in the Project area and its immediate surroundings, and the Project's potential impacts on public health and safety. The only issues relevant to the analysis, as identified by comments received during scoping, was concern about the Project generating noise and light pollution and the potential for hazardous waste spills and subsequent contamination.

2.1.1 Information Sources

There are several existing documents and data sources containing baseline information on public health and safety in the Project area. The following document and data sources were reviewed:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Hazardous Waste);
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Health, Noise Section;
- National Park Service (Science of Light); and
- South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SD DANR; Hazardous Waste).

2.1.2 Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Forest Plan Direction

Direction for U.S. Forest Service (USFS) public health and safety is dictated by laws, regulations, and the Forest Plan. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (16 U.S.C. 4321) governs USFS public health and safety.

2.1.2.1 Black Hills National Forest Plan Direction

The Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) Forest Plan identifies standards and guidelines to inform management related to various resources. As summarized in the Forest Plan, a standard is defined as a limitation on management activities within the authority and ability of the agency to meet or enforce. Standards are used to determine if individual projects are in compliance with the Forest Plan. Deviation from the requirement requires a Forest Plan amendment. A guideline is a preferred or advisable course of action. Deviation from a guideline is permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.

There are no Forest Plan standards or guidelines specific to public health and safety. However, the Forest Plan does contain objectives and standards related to air quality and contamination, which could also serve to maintain public health and safety, including:

- Objective 101. Maintain air quality standards in accordance with state implementation plans.
- Standard 1107. Where there is potential for toxic contamination of soil from ground disturbing activities (e.g., oil or gas drilling or mineral exploration), a contingency plan to prevent or rehabilitate soil contamination shall be developed.

In addition, F3 would be required to comply with a number of other programs as part of project permitting that have a correlation to public health and safety.

2.1.3 Study Methodology

Based on the information sources gathered, review of public scoping comments, and using professional experience and judgment, this analysis:

- Identifies the activities that could affect public health and safety; and
- Discusses the likely effects of the three alternatives on public health and safety.

Project scoping indicated concerns related to the potential for Project-related noise and light pollution and hazardous waste and subsequent contamination. Potential impacts are assessed by evaluating the nature and extent of noise and light from Project construction vehicles and infrastructure, as well as the nature and extent of materials used for the Project and potential for spills.

2.2 Affected Environment

2.2.1 Air Quality

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SD DANR) monitors air quality in South Dakota for compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The NAAQS include maximum allowable pollution levels for particulate matter (PM), ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, lead, and carbon monoxide. The closest air quality monitoring location is located in Black Hawk at Back Hawk Elementary. At this monitoring location PM, did not exceed the 24-hour standard in the past five-year review period. In addition, concentrations of ozone did not exceed the 8-hour daily maximum concentration in the five-year review period (reference (1)). Generally, air quality at this location is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses little or no risk to human health or safety.

2.2.2 Light Pollution

Light pollution is defined as excessive or obtrusive artificial light that interferes with and washes out the night sky (reference (2)). Light pollution can disrupt animals with nocturnal instincts, confuse species on migratory flights, and excessive light pollution for extended periods of time can lead to disruptions in human circadian rhythms (reference (2)). Glare and sky glow are the two main types of light pollution (reference (2)). Glare is the result of un-shielding lights that could cause a public health hazard. Glare in the eye can cause light contrast and may cause unsafe driving conditions if lighting is not properly shielded. Sky glow is the glow that can be seen when driving towards larger cities that blocks out the starry night sky.

Existing sources of light pollution in the Project area are residential lighting (both homes and outbuildings), as well as headlights from existing vehicular and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) traffic traveling through the Project area.

2.2.3 Noise

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sound. Noise is measured in units of decibel (dB(A)) on a logarithmic scale. Table 2-1 shows dB(A) values for some typical sources (reference (3); reference (4)). Sounds less than 60 dB(A) typically do not cause hearing damage or annoyance, while prolonged sounds

of 70 dB(A) or more typically begin to cause annoyance. Sounds in excess of 100 dB(A) can cause hearing loss within 15 minutes or less if proper hearing protection is not in place (reference (3)). Noise can be attenuated (i.e. lessened) by topography, vegetation, structures, and other landscape features. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development has established guidelines for noise standards that define acceptable and unacceptable noise levels for sustained environmental and community noise exposure (reference(5)):

- Noise levels below 65 dB(A) are acceptable
- Noise levels between 65 to 75 dB(A) are normally unacceptable
- Noise levels over 75 dB(A) are unacceptable

Table 2-1 Noise Levels from Common Sources

Average Sound Level (dB(A))	Common Indoor and Outdoor Sources
0	Threshold of hearing
10	Normal breathing
20	Ticking watch Quiet, rural nighttime
30	Soft whisper Quiet, rural nighttime
40	Refrigerator hum Quiet, urban or suburban nighttime
60	Normal conversation, air conditioner
70	Washing machine, dishwasher
75	Pickup Truck[1]
79	Drill rig truck[1]
81	Excavator[1]
80-85	Gas powered lawnmower or leaf blower
95	Motorcycle
100	Sporting events (hockey playoffs or football games)
110	Rock band at approximately 15 feet
120	Standing beside or near sirens
140-150	Firecrackers

[1] Federal Highway Administration Construction Noise Handbook, noise levels are measured 50 feet of the noise source (reference (6)).

Existing noise in the Project area is consistent with that of a rural setting and includes residential noise sources (lawn mowing, barking dogs, vehicular traffic, etc.). The Project area experiences regular noise from recreational ATV use on existing roadways and motorized vehicle trails, and there is also snowmobile noise during winter months. In addition, there are temporary increases in motorcycle-generated noise during the annual Sturgis motorcycle rally.

2.2.4 Hazardous Waste and Contamination

The Project is located in a rural setting that has historically been used for mining, though there are currently few residential or industrial uses. According to review of the SD DANR tanks and spills database (reference (7)), no hazardous waste sites, spills, or tank facilities are known to occur within the Project area. The SD DANR database is limited to reportable quantities for petroleum products greater than 25 gallons. Smaller spills/releases are often not reported and may have occurred within the Project area.

2.2.5 Other Public Health and Safety Considerations

The Project area is positioned in a rural setting with limited direct access to emergency services. The nearest hospital clinic and emergency medical facilities are located in Rapid City, approximately 15.5 miles from the Project area at its nearest point via the existing roadway network. The Project is located in the service area of the Silver City Volunteer Fire Department, which provides entirely volunteer-based fire suppression and emergency medical treatment (EMT) services. The department has wildland-, structure-, and EMT-certified firefighters on its roster and is located approximately 0.6 miles from the Project area at its nearest point via the existing roadway network. In addition, the BHNF Mystic Ranger District maintains a fire crew in its Rapid City location, which primarily responds to fires on forest system lands within the district.

2.3 Environmental Consequences

The analysis of effects for public health and safety assumes that applicant-proposed impact minimization measures would be implemented during all Project activities. This analysis discusses the expected disturbance resulting from the implementation of Alternative A, Alternative B, and Alternative C.

2.3.1 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative A – No Action

Alternative A provides a baseline to evaluate the effects of Alternative B and Alternative C as described in Section 2 of the EA.

Alternative A would not result in direct or indirect effects to public health and safety; because a Project would not be implemented, there would be no changes to the current public health and safety conditions in the Project area.

2.3.2 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative B – Proposed Action

Direct and indirect effects associated with Alternative B are described in the following subsections.

2.3.2.1 Air Quality

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct and indirect effects on air quality could occur. Use of construction equipment would generate carbon dioxide. Site access and earth work would also temporarily generate dust within the immediate project vicinity; however, dust could be minimized with water. It is not anticipated that the generated carbon dioxide and dust would reduce air quality standards

below the NAAQS. These effects would be limited to the immediate construction area and only last for the duration of construction activities.

2.3.2.2 Light Pollution

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct and indirect effects from light pollution could occur. Additionally, nighttime drilling activities may generate short-term, localized light pollution from drilling equipment that may be visible within and adjacent to the Project area. Light pollution from drilling could temporarily affect residences or recreationists that are within close proximity of the drill pads, causing temporary irritation to residents or causing recreationists to use other areas of the BHNF. These short-term light pollution impacts would be minimized by the steep terrain and forested areas surrounding drill pads. Overall, light impacts are anticipated to be localized, short-term, and are not expected to be significant. Residences in close proximity to Project activities would be notified prior to initiation.

2.3.2.3 Noise

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized (i.e. not sustained) direct and indirect effects from noise could occur. Short-term, localized noise from heavy equipment and increased vehicle traffic is expected to occur in the Project area during the day and night. Noise, associated with drilling, could temporarily affect residences or recreationists that are close to the drill pads, causing temporary irritation to residents or causing recreationists to use other areas of the BHNF. Noise may also be either lessened or exacerbated depending on wind direction. Based on the equipment F3 proposes to use, noise levels within 400 feet of the drilling equipment are anticipated to be 38.2 dB(A), approximately the equivalent noise levels experienced in suburban areas at night or a refrigerator hum and align with current ambient noise levels. Overall, noise impacts are anticipated to be localized, short-term, and are not expected to be significant. Once drilling is complete at a specific location, noise would once again match ambient conditions. Although all residences are more than 500 feet from Alternative B drilling locations, residences in closer proximity to Project activities would be notified prior to initiation.

2.3.2.4 Hazardous Waste and Contamination

Under Alternative B, potential short-term, localized direct and indirect effects related to hazardous waste and contamination could occur through inadvertent spills or leaks of fuel or oils from access/site prep, drilling equipment, and/or lighting equipment. Project drilling would use water; no chemical-based solutions or fluids would be used. As such, drilling activities would not directly generate hazardous waste. Fluid leaks and spills from construction equipment would be promptly cleaned up, and any contaminated soil would be removed and disposed of off-site. As part of standard USFS permit conditions, F3 would be required to report all spills and leaks to the USFS and would also be required to comply with SD DANR spill reporting requirements, as well as all associated cleanup of spills and leaks. In addition, F3 may be required to prepare a spill prevention, control, and countermeasure plan as dictated by the size of any storage tanks that may be used on-site and in accordance with applicable regulations and permit conditions. F3 may also coordinate with USFS regarding any additional spill control measures requested by the agency as part of project review and approval.

2.3.2.5 Other Potential Public Health and Safety Concerns

As with any project involving machinery, the potential for fire ignition exists if vehicles are left idling for an extended period of time in areas of taller vegetation. This potential would be mitigated by confining construction equipment to the drill pad and/or staging area.

An emergency response plan would be developed for the Project and would be provided to local first responders in advance of Project initiation. This plan would address a multitude of emergency situations (fire, injury, etc.) and would be developed in conjunction with local first responders. In addition to routine inspections, thorough safety checks would be completed daily on vehicles, drill rigs, and other equipment. Each vehicle would be equipped with at least one fire extinguisher and all equipment would contain a shovel for fire suppression. A site security plan would be developed to maintain site safety and limit risk of public interference.

2.3.3 Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative C – Modified Proposed Action

Direct and indirect effects associated with Alternative C are described in the following subsections.

2.3.3.1 Air Quality

Under Alternative C, the potential effects to Air Quality would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

2.3.3.2 Light Pollution

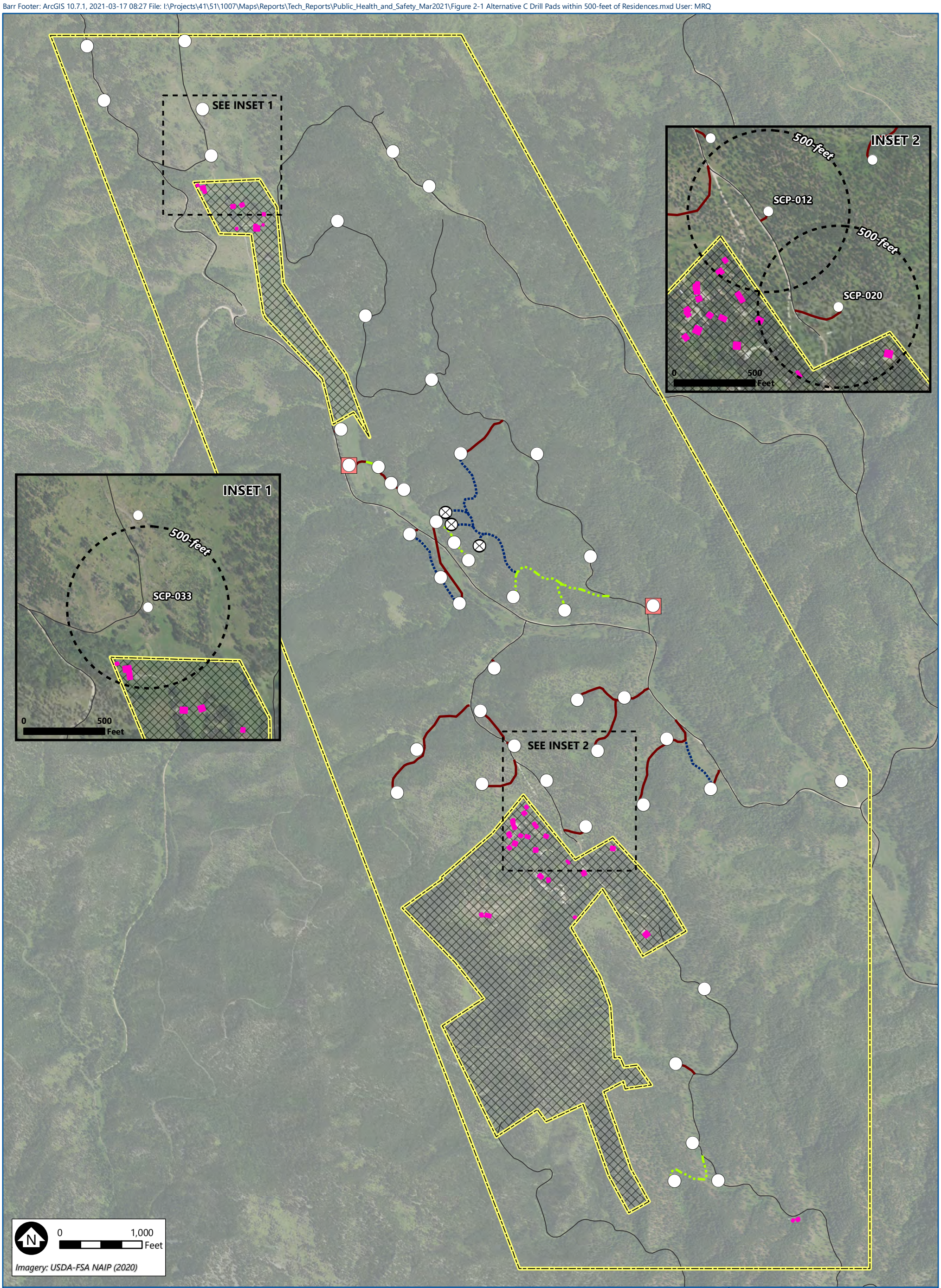
Under Alternative C, the potential effects of light pollution would be the same as those described for Alternative B except drilling would be limited to one, 12-hour daytime shift (7:00am to 7:00pm) for drill pads within 500 feet of a residence to mitigate potential nighttime light pollution via use of floodlights and other equipment lighting. This applies to drill pads SCP-12, SCP-020, and SCP-033, shown in Figure 2-1.

2.3.3.3 Noise

Under Alternative C, the potential effects of noise would be the same as those described for Alternative B, except drilling would limited to one, 12-hour daytime shift (7:00am – 7:00pm) for drill pads within 500 feet of a residence to mitigate potential nighttime equipment and drilling noise. This applies to drill pads SCP-12, SCP-020, and SCP-033, shown in Figure 2-1.

2.3.3.4 Hazardous Waste and Contamination

Under Alternative C, the potential effects to hazardous waste and subsequent contamination would be the same as those described for Alternative B.



Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Alternate Drill Pad (Alternative C)

Staging Area (Alternative C)

500-foot Radius

Building Footprint

Project Area

Project Exclusion Area/Private Property

Existing USFS Roads to be Utilized

Proposed Access Routes (Alternative C)

New Access Route

Alternate New Access Route

Overland/Trail Access Route

BARR

ALTERNATIVE C DRILL PADS WITHIN 500-FEET OF RESIDENCES

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FIGURE 2-1

2.3.3.5 Other Potential Public Health and Safety Concerns

Under Alternative C, the potential for additional public health and safety concerns would be the same as those described for Alternative B.

2.4 Cumulative Effects

The following section provides an assessment of the potential cumulative effects on public health and safety from implementation of the Project and the potential interaction with the effects on these resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects. Because the potential effects to public health and safety are comparable for Alternative B and Alternative C, they are discussed together with regard for their potential for cumulative effects.

2.4.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Various activities have occurred in the past, are presently occurring, or are planned to occur in the foreseeable future within or near the Project area. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. Present and foreseeable future activities may contribute to effects on public health and safety. The effects of these present and foreseeable future projects combined with the effects of Alternative B and/or C could potentially result in cumulative effects on public health and safety. The foreseeable future projects that could potentially contribute to cumulative effects are listed below and are further described in the Environmental Assessment.

- South Dakota Network Fiberoptic Cable – 15 miles northwest of Project area
- New radio tower near Silver City Community Hall – 0.2 miles south of Project area
- Upper Jenny, Kelly, and Lower Jenny grazing allotment pastures
- Timber sales located within the Project vicinity and approved to occur within the next 5 years
- Prescribed burns – eastern two-thirds of Project area
- Recreational event permits for intermittent recreational outfitter and guide uses

2.4.2 Cumulative Effects to Public Health and Safety

Due to the temporary nature of the Project, minimal disturbance area (up to 3.8 acres for Alternative B and up to 6.1 acres for Alternative C), and F3's adherence to Forest Plan standards and guidelines, the Project is not likely to interact with other present and foreseeable future projects to contribute to cumulative effects on public health and safety.

3 References

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Appendix G

Public Involvement Plan

Public Involvement Plan

Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project

Prepared for
United States Forest Service

July 2022

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Public Involvement Plan

July 2022

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Abbreviations

EA	Environmental Assessment
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Project	Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
USFS	United States Forest Service

1 Introduction

This document serves as the public involvement plan for the Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project (Project) proposed by F3 Gold LLC. This plan was drafted by Barr Engineering Co. (Prime Consultant for the Project) in coordination with the United States Forest Service (USFS). This plan is subject to future edits and adaptations as the Project progresses. The Project will be conducted under the 36 CFR Part 218 objection process.

The Project involves exploratory drilling at up to 47 locations (depending on selected alternative) north of Silver City, Pennington County, South Dakota in Sections 19, 30, 31, T2N R5E and Sections 13, 14, 24, 25, T2N R4E. The USFS determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) must be prepared to determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement is required or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is possible.

Public participation and interagency coordination are integral elements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and are intended to promote open communication between USFS, federal and state regulatory agencies, local governments, American Indian tribes, potential stakeholder organizations, and the public. Information gathered during the public involvement processes outlined within this plan supported development of the EA.

The objectives for involving the public in the NEPA process include:

- clarifying public involvement methods,
- refining issues,
- selecting an interdisciplinary team,
- establishing analysis criteria, and
- exploring possible alternatives and their probable environmental effects.

2 Stakeholders

Individuals and organizations with an interest in the Project were encouraged to participate in the public involvement process to express concerns and identify issues related to the Project.

A list of interested parties, or "stakeholders" is maintained within the Project mailing list (Section 3.1). Stakeholders were identified by the USFS, the Project proposer, via review of stakeholder lists from projects in similar geographies, or were self-identified or assumed (e.g., non-governmental organizations or nearby landowners with an assumed interested in the Project). Stakeholders also include governmental organizations such as adjacent other federal, state, and local agencies with overlapping permitting authority or information pertaining to local resource conditions.

3 Public and Agency Outreach Plan

The following strategies were used to reach stakeholders and interested parties:

- Mailings
- Public scoping comment period
- Public information scoping meeting
- Interagency scoping meeting
- Tribal government to government consultation
- Media engagement
- USFS Project website

Additional details regarding each strategy are provided in the following subsections.

3.1 Mailings

A stakeholder and adjacent landowner list, including mailing addresses for each person or entity identified, is maintained for the Project. This stakeholder list was used to distribute the Project scoping letter and statement.

The scoping letter and statement is the only mailing that was distributed to all identified stakeholders. The scoping statement was mailed within two weeks prior to the public information meeting (Section 3.3). The scoping statement included instructions on how to submit comments related to the Project, as well as the date, time, and location of the public information meeting.

A notification of availability of the Draft EA will be distributed to all parties who submitted a scoping comment, as well as Tribal and government partners from the Project scoping mailing list.

Although Project documents are available on the USFS website (https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428), hard copy documents or CDs/DVDs of the Draft EA and Final EA/FONSI and the Decision Document will be distributed to parties that have specifically requested copies in this format.

3.2 Public Scoping Comment Period

Written comments were formally received by the USFS during a 30-day public scoping period. This public scoping period began on January 6, 2020 with the mailing of the scoping statement. Comments were accepted via mail (8221 Mount Rushmore Rd., Rapid City, SD 57702), email (Comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-mystic@usda.gov), "F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project" as the subject or by facsimile (605-343-7134). Comments were requested within 30-days of the date of the public scoping mailing; however all comments received after this date were also accepted by the USFS. Comments submitted, including names and addresses of commenters, are public information.

A total of 339 scoping comment letters were submitted. One comment letter consisted of a form letter that was submitted by 196 people. Comments were reviewed and cataloged based on resource issues.

Issues identified in the comment letters were used to help inform the development of the EA. Responses to scoping comments were developed and are included as an appendix to the EA.

3.3 Public Information Meeting

A public information meeting was held January 16, 2020 from 5:00pm to 7:00pm at the USFS Mystic Ranger District Office to provide information on the Project and to serve as a means of allowing the public to bring forward Project questions or comments. Barr and USFS staff members attended this meeting in person and were available to answer questions throughout the meeting. The public information meeting was an open-house format for the majority of meeting with a short, planned presentation toward the middle of the meeting.

The following materials were prepared to help facilitate the meeting and to provide means of documenting public comments received during the meeting:

- Sign-in sheet,
- Project map(s),
- Project overview presentation slides,
- A scoping statement handout,
- Comment form for those wishing to provide written comment during the meeting, and
- A log for Barr or USFS staff to note comments received during discussions.

Meeting notes and written comments were provided to USFS after the meeting. A total of 101 people attended the meeting.

3.4 Interagency Scoping Meeting

The USFS extended an invitation to potentially interested federal, state, county, city, and tribal agencies to participate in an interagency scoping meeting on January 16, 2020 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. MST at the USFS Mystic Ranger District Office. The purpose of the meeting was to review the Project, discuss data needs, and solicit input regarding possible issues and concerns. A total of 20 people attended the meeting, including representatives from the following entities: USFS, Oglala Lakota Nation, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks, South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources – Mining and Minerals Program, Pennington County, City of Rapid City, and Barr Engineering Co.

Following this meeting, a report was generated documenting participants and agencies represented, along with a summary of the meeting discussions.

3.5 Tribal Government to Government Consultation

The USFS solicited government to government consultation interest in a mailing distributed to 16 Tribal entities on January 6, 2020, including the following tribes; Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux

Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe.

Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021.

On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. The National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Cultural Resources Inventory was provided to Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) as identified per 36 CFR 800.3, to provide comment on the Agency's (USFS) determination of the proposed undertaking's effect to cultural resources on July 2, 2021.

A communication was distributed to Tribal entities that commented on the Draft EA on November 8, 2021, acknowledging receipt of their written comments and notifying them that the USFS Tribal Relations Specialist would be reaching out to schedule formal government to government consultation.

USFS distributed an additional mailing to Tribal entities on December 1, 2021, inviting the recipients to engage in formal government to government consultation. Consultation efforts resumed in early 2022. Government to government consultation was held with the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe on January 27, 2022, the Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe on January 28, 2022, and with the Three Affiliated Tribes (MHA Nation) on February 22, 2022 and April 11, 2022. In addition, pre-consultation meetings occurred with the Yankton Sioux Tribe on February 2 and February 23, 2022.

3.6 Additional Meetings

The USFS participated in the following additional stakeholder outreach meetings:

- Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base - March 11, 2020
- National Forest Advisory Board – April 15, 2020

3.7 Media Engagement

A press release was prepared announcing the public scoping in the local newspaper(s). Media engagement at a large scale did not occur for this Project. The USFS will publish the Decision Notice in the newspaper of record. No other USFS-lead media engagement is planned.

3.8 USFS Project Website

The USFS has established a Project website on which relevant Project documents are posted. The Project website is publicly available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.

3.9 Draft EA Public Review and Comment Period

A legal notice was published on September 22, 2021, in the Rapid City Journal, newspaper of record, announcing availability of and an opportunity to comment on the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Draft EA. In addition, all parties who submitted a scoping comment or requested to be added to the Project mailing list received a postcard notifying them of the availability of the Draft EA and opportunity to comment on it. In situations where a mailing address was not provided, an email notification was sent.

All Project materials were made available on the Black Hills National Forest website at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Draft EA was made available for a 30-day agency and public review period. During this time, comments on the Draft EA were accepted via US Mail (8221 Mount Rushmore Rd, Rapid City, SD 57702), via email (Comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-mystic@usda.gov) with "F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project" as the subject, hand-delivered, or by facsimile (605-343-7134). Comments were requested within 30 days of the date of the legal notice. Comments submitted, including names and addresses of commenters, are public information.

Approximately 416 comment letters, including 6 form letters, were received; however, 20 of these comment letters were received after the 30-day comment period. All comments that were received were reviewed and cataloged based on resource issue and USFS provided responses to each comment. However, comments received after the 30-day comment period will not have standing to file an objection per the 36 CFR 218 regulations.

3.10 Final EA and Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact

A legal notice was published on July 8, 2022, in the Rapid City Journal, newspaper of record, announcing availability of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Final EA and Draft Decision Notice (DN)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). All parties who submitted a scoping comment or Draft EA comment, or otherwise requested to be added to the Project mailing list, received a postcard notifying them of the availability of the Final EA and Draft DN/FONSI. In situations where a mailing address was not provided, an email notification was sent.

All Project materials will be made available on the Black Hills National Forest website at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. This Project is subject to the 36 CFR 218 objection process. To file an objection, a specific written comment must have been submitted during the specified scoping and/or Draft EA public comment periods. The Final EA and Draft DN/FONSI will be made available for the 45-day objection period, starting from the date of the legal notice (July 8, 2022). Electronic objections must be submitted to the Objection Reviewing Officer online at https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public//CommentInput?Project=57428, with "Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project Objection" in the subject line. Objections may also be submitted via US Mail, private carrier, or hand delivered to: Black Hills National Forest Supervisor's Office, Attn: Objection Reviewing Officer at 1019 North 5th St., Custer, SD 57730; or by facsimile (605) 673-9350. Objections are due 45 days following the publication of the legal notice in the Rapid City Journal on July 8, 2022. Submitted objections are public information.

Appendix H

Scoping Comments and Responses

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Dudley	McLinn		1	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This is an area we all use for our recreation and a big part of why we all enjoy living in the area of the Black Hills. I can think of no idea worse than this.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation.
	Dudley	McLinn		1	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Water Quality/Water Supply	There is no doubt in my mind that this would result in a considerable change in the appearance of the area and may also affect water quality.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Dudley	McLinn		1	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Count us among those who are opposed to this project.	Comment noted.
	Jenna	Carlson Dietmeier		2	1	Regulatory Process	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	SHPO recommends that the Black Hills National Forest follow the Section 106 process, as delineated in 36 C.F.R. part 800, to take into account the effects of the undertaking on historic properties.	This project will comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
	Don	Kelley		3	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a long-term Black Hills resident, I have been concerned by the repeated miscalculations of environmental detriment associated with local mining operations. I find it inexcusable that government leaders have allowed our state to become host to Superfund sites as a result of such mining ventures. Even exploration permits should be viewed with utmost skepticism in view of past events.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Patricia	Braun		4	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	No mining exploration! Water is precious and MUST be protected! The Black Hills are precious and do not need this destruction.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Patricia	Braun		4	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	You all know, once contaminated, the land and water are never restored…no matter how the 'clean up' is done!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Michelle	O'Toole		5	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Please, please, please stop this nonsense now! We need clean water! We can't take ANY chances with our water!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Michelle	O'Toole		5	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	No to mining above Pactola!	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	John	Gomez		6	1	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	The Scoping Letter indicates that road 141.2B will be used to access drill holes. This Forest Service Road is in bad shape due to seasonal rains. Moving large equipment over this road may create some additional damage to the road. I would encourage the Forest Service or the contractors doing this project to improve FSR 141.2B before or after they do the drilling work.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Patricia	Kratochvil		7	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	We do not want to have Rapid Creek or Pactola compromised for gold mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals	received via Gary Haag (USFS)	8	1	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Fisheries & Wildlife	Stan Michals from SD GF&P called me. Their main concern is Bighorn sheep lambing; which occurs at the southern end of the proposed project area. They want to see no activity in this area from April 15th to August 1st.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals	received via Gary Haag (USFS)	8	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	They also want traffic into the proposed area to come off the Rochford Road.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Phil	Schlief		9	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not want the added traffic and noise of drilling operations and we all know that if gold is found that F3 Gold LLC or some other business will want to mine that gold.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation and noise.
	Phil	Schlief		9	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Gold mines have historically polluted water in the surrounding areas as evidenced by the Northern Hills sites and even exploratory drilling has great potential for polluting ground water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Phil	Schlief		9	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do what you can to prevent this from happening to our National Forest.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl, Madison, Avonlea, Emet, Maleah, and Enoch; Rachel and Jeff Pollreisz, Ava	10	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are very opposed to the gold mining exploration proposed west of Silver City by a Minnesota exploration firm.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl,	10	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	The trails for West Nugget would need be widened.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl,	10	3	Other	Hydrology	What happens to the flat rock falls just west of the Empress Gulch road?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to hydrology.
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl,	10	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	What happens to everyone downstream should mining pollution leak into the ground water and/or Rapid Creek?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl, Madison, Avonlea,	10	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	I can't imagine what mining pollution would do to water quality and Pactola, the many homes along the creek, the Rapid Creek fishery, Rapid Creek in Rapid City, or the irrigation and agricultural needs of farmers east of the hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl, Madison, Avonlea, Emet, Maleah, and Enoch; Rachel and Jeff Pollreisz, Ava	10	6	Mitigation/Design Criteria		What are the requirements for cleanup and reclamation for both the exploration phase and for potential mining operations?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects. The Forest Service will approve both spill prevention plan and a reclamation plan as a part of the final Plan of Operations. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl,	10	7	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	Will the state and federal government fulfill its long term responsibilities to thoroughly and properly monitor water quality and hold the exploration company to account?	F3 will be required to follow South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources guidelines for groundwater and wells.
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl,	10	8	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	We also have concerns about a forest fire started by exploration activities in the rugged and heavily forested area.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section has been incorporated into the EA.
	Jan	Sohl	Llyod Sohl; Jonathan and Chanel Sohl,	10	9	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are not necessarily opposed to exploration and mining. HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT THE LOCATION FOR THIS!	Comment noted.
	Vicki	Schlief		11	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It's ridiculous to let companies come in and destroy our land, land that belongs to all of us.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Vicki	Schlief		11	2	Incorporate	Recreation & Travel Management	With Tourism is a huge part of our state and by letting them drill which will destroy beauty of this area and noise and extra traffic will definitely take away from people enjoying the beauty and quiet.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Vicki	Schlief		11	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The people of this state are not benefiting from this at all.	Comment noted
	Vicki	Schlief		11	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Vegetation & Timber Resources	They will come in and destroy the forest and I can bet that they will not put it back the way it was!	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to vegetation and timber resources. The Forest Service will approve a reclamation plan as a part of the final Plan of Operations. The Forest Service will monitor the implementation of the reclamamation plan and will not release the bond until the agency's reclamation requirements have been met.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Vicki	Schlief		11	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	They say they won't be taking water from Rapid Creek - who's going to monitor that and make sure they don't?	F3 has made its Plan of Operationss available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Plan of Operationss addresses water source and is incorporated into the EA. The Forest Service and the South Dakota Department of Environment & Natural Resources are required to adminster and monitor all permits related to this project.
	Vicki	Schlief		11	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Also, what about contamination of our water - our water source for us and all the people in Rapid - are we willing to take that chance?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Vicki	Schlief		11	7	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I say NO to this drilling!!!!!	Comment noted
	Pat	Fahey		12	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	If any gold or other minable minerals are discovered, how will they be mined - Underground or surface?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Pat	Fahey		12	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	If mining operations are undertaken, here will the tons of trailing's removed in the process be placed/deposited?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Pat	Fahey		12	3	Regulatory Process	Unsure	It states the Maximum footprint of each drill sites is 2500 Sq/ft (50 feet by 50 feet). How will this be enforced to ensure it is not exceeded?	The Forest Service is responsible for the administration and monitoring of the final Plan of Operations.
	Pat	Fahey		12	4	Outside of Scope	Unsure	The letter states that all noted drill sites may not be required. What if F3 thinks they need additional drill sites in any particular location than what is noted on the enclosed map?	If F3 wishes to drill additional locations not approved in the Plan of Operations, they would need to apply for a modification to their Plan of Operations or submit a new Plan of Operations.
	Pat	Fahey		12	5	Other	General Environmental Concern	It states "No mining, milling, or processing is proposed as part of this project." What are they drilling for then?	The proposed project consists of exploratory drilling to evaluate the Jenny Gulch area for its gold bearing potential.
	Pat	Fahey		12	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	It also states that "no water would be sourced from Rapid Creek or other local **SURFACE** water." What about sub-surface waters that feed all the residences in the area? What "approved municipal or industrial source" are they referring to?	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Plan of Operations addresses water source and is incorporated into the EA.
	Pat	Fahey		12	7	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	They are proposing to use some trails that are currently restricted to 62" or less. Will they be required to comply with this restriction? If not, are they going to be allowed to widen these trails to accommodate their oversized vehicles?	The EA will analyze the temporary widening of these trails to meet the transportation needs for project activities. The reclamation plan would address returing these trails to their original state after project activiites have been completed.
	Pat	Fahey		12	8	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	They further state, "In addition approximately 4700 linear feet of 8-foot-wide temporary overland trails may be constructed...". Where will these trails be allowed? What does "APPROXIMATELY" indicate or allow? They also claim these trails will be "obliterated and returned to natural conditions after project completion". When is the completion date? How to you return land to its natural condition after removing large well-established trees and clearing the land for a road?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. Obliteration and reclamation of temporary roads will be addressed in the reclamation plan approved by the Forest Service.
	Pat	Fahey		12	9	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The proposed area is a high traffic and use area for wildlife. How will the increased volume of traffic and disturbance of the wildlife be managed?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Pat	Fahey		12	10	Other	Access & Transportation	Many of the residences are located to the immediate north of the proposed area to be mined. Our road district has to pay the Forest Service an annual fee for an easement of a very minor distance, approximately 100 feet that we constructed and maintain, to cross NFS property. Will F3 Gold be required to do the same for the miles of roads and trails they will be using?	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions prior to initiation of project activities.
	Pat	Fahey		12	11	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Will F3 Gold be required to repair any and all damage or wear to roads and trails they will be using?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. The Forest Service will approve a reclamation plan as a part of the final Plan of Operations. The Plan of Operations will have a condition that discusses F3's responsibility for maintenance of National Forest System Roads.
	Pat	Fahey		12	12	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	If the aquifer that feeds all the properties to the north is disrupted or contaminated as a result of the drilling or future mining, who will be responsible for that?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest Service has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Michael	Robinson		13	1	Other	General Environmental Concern	A number of these drilling sites are quite close to my residence and would cause excess water runoff, excessive dust, and effect hiking and biking trails (Sunnyside and Gorman Gulches).	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Michael	Robinson		13	2	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	I am concerned about the safety of my family with the increased traffic on these Forest service trails.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section has been incorporated into the EA.
	Michael	Robinson		13	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am also very concerned about the potential effect on my property value should more permanent mining sites be developed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Michael	Robinson		13	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Further exploration would in my opinion destroy the aesthetics of our community.	Comment noted.
	Mary Jane	Belz		14	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am completely against this drilling project!	Comment noted.
	Patrick	Breen		15	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The public lands feeding this water source should not be allowed for exploration, and under current laws the incentive for exploration can, and must, be removed.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Patrick	Breen		15	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	It is not enough to only have an environmental assessment study.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Patrick	Breen		15	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I expect you to use all of your influences to move/push aggressively forward with a full environmental impact study and make sure we / you protect our valuable resources/water from mining in the Pactola watershed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Darcey	Baker		16	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Drill baby drill!	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Eilbeck		17	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am strongly opposed to any exploratory drilling and most definitely any mining whatsoever!	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Eilbeck		17	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	To risk damaging the beauty and environment (see waarf mine!) and most certainly the water quality, especially the watershed/headwaters of Pactola Reservoir for the sake of gold (money) is not worth the risk in <u>any</u> shape or form.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Eilbeck		17	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am now and forever will be opposed to exploratory drilling and any mining now or in the future.	Comment noted.
	Helen	Tjader		18	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My comment is that the risk to drinking and other water resource uses is too great for any gold mine so that even drilling for exploratory purposes should be rejected outright for the safety of our children, our communities, our recreation & tourism resources, agricultural interests, and our economy.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Helen	Tjader		18	2	Outside of Scope		The company must release its plan of operations for public review.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Helen	Tjader		18	3	Other	General Environmental Concern	The public should be presented hydrological transport models, prevention and emergency measures for spills in the drill/exploratory phase, evidence of hazard mitigation bonds & amounts, assessment of road conditions, especially new roads, plans for protection of cultural resources, & restoration/capping of drill site areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. In addition, F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Helen	Tjader		18	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Pactola Reservoir is an 800 acre, 5300 acre-feet water resource that can not be replaced. Tax payers have a critical interest in its water security. Studies have shown 74% of operating gold mines polluted surface and/or groundwater, including drinking water. Often taxpayers are left with legacy of water pollution & cleanup costs.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Jolie	McCoy		19	1	Other Outside of Scope	Fisheries & Wildlife Access & Transportation Mining	I am greatly concerned about the safety of the habitat for native birds and animals which would be disturbed by the traffic, machinery, and pollution involved with the exploratory drilling and subsequent mining.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jolie	McCoy		19	2	Other	Access & Transportation	Having watched the major increase in traffic of trucks on Highway 16 following a mining operation, I question the amount and effect of increased traffic on the Silver City Rd and the back roads in the drilling area which are winding and rough.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Jolie	McCoy		19	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I would like to see an environmental impact study.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Jolie	McCoy		19	4	Outside of Scope	Water Quality/Water Supply	Looking at previous mining & drilling operations in South Dakota historically, companies have consistently polluted ground water and underground water in sensitive areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Larry	Olson	Susan Olson	20	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As property owners in Silver City and Rapid City, we are very concerned about the F3 Gold drilling project.	Comment noted.
	Larry	Olson	Susan Olson	20	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	At significant risk a significant risk are our potable water supplies in Sunnyside, Silver City, and downstream to Pactola. Many private water wells stand to be compromised.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Larry	Olson	Susan Olson	20	3	Other	General Environmental Concern	Also of concern will be noise, dust pollution and the removal of trees and tearing up the Black Hills for "overland trails".	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Larry	Olson	Susan Olson	20	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	We're told that the drill holes will be plugged and capped. How can a hole several thousand feet deep be effectively plugged? These drill holes will introduce new avenues for pollutants to enter our water supplies.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. F3 will be required to follow South Dakota Rules Chapter 74:11:08, Capping, Sealing, and Plugging Exploration Test Holes. (Source: 34 SDR 323, effective July 2, 2008. General Authority: SDCL 45-6C-29, 45-6D-34. Law Implemented: SDCL 45-6C-29, 45-6D-34). In addition, the Forest Service will require that plugging reports are submitted as part of the reclamation plan and borehole plugging will be subject to inspection by the State.
	Larry	Olson	Susan Olson	20	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We implore you to hold F3 Gold to the highest standards possible as well as hold them legally responsible for any subsequent problems as a result of this operation.	Comment noted.
	Shawn	Wood	Brenda Wood	21	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Shawn & Brenda Wood are adamantly opposed to this project.	Comment noted.
	Shawn	Wood	Brenda Wood	21	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We do not desire land or wildlife disruption near our residence.	Comment noted.
	Shawn	Wood	Brenda Wood	21	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We feel that the USFS should not allow this exploration drilling project as we value the nature that surrounds us & the peacefulness that we are so grateful for that we have enjoyed for generations.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Keith	Bartels	Glynn Bartles	22	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	As homeowners in Silver City, we are adamantly opposed to <u>any</u> and <u>all</u> mining activity in the National Forest near Silver City or frankly at any other location in the Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Keith	Bartels	Glynn Bartles	22	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	No drilling! No mining!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jeannie	Bush	Robert Bush	23	1	Other	Unsure	We are requesting date of drills by our home. We will have our well water tested prior to this date, in addition to its water level	F3 will be required to follow South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources guidelines for groundwater and wells.
	Jeannie	Bush	Robert Bush	23	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	We are concerned that this activity will disrupt the elk herd in our area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Jeannie	Bush	Robert Bush	23	3	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	We are concerned for the noise of all the activity	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Jeannie	Bush	Robert Bush	23	4	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	What is the plan if company bankrupts before reclamation takes place?	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Jeannie	Bush	Robert Bush	23	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This activity is NOT in the best interest of the BHNF and the elk.	Comment noted.
	Roy	McLaws		24	1	Other	Unsure	When will it start? How long do you project it to take? What if the drilling has a positive report, then what is the next step/steps?	The project can be implemented upon signature of the Decision Notice. F3 has proposed that operations will be completed in one year or less. If F3 eventually proposes mining on their claim, they will have to submit a new Plan of Operations to the Forest Service, and that new plan would be subject to the National Envirnmental Policy Act and all other laws and permitting requirements.
	Roy	McLaws		24	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Can I still walk or bike those roads without feeling like I'm a stranger or unwelcome?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation.
	Roy	McLaws		24	3	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Unsure	Once the drilling is done, will the land be reclaimed one at a time upon drill completion or all at once at the end of the project?	A reclamation plan will be required as part of the Final Plan of Operations.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Tribe is also opposed to any activity in the Black Hills that would infringe on our rights under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and other Federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA") and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA").	Comment noted.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	The Tribe requests formal government-to-government consultation with the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture concerning the proposed mineral exploration and development in the Black Hills National Forest. The Tribe asserts that such consultation is required by Executive Order No. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	3	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed mineral exploration would interfere with our use of our sacred Pe' Sla lands in the Black Hills.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	4	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	These and other activities could create substantial and unreasonable noise and disturbance for surrounding lands, including Pe' Sla. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation between the Forest Service and the Tribe.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe also has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration would cause irreparable harm to archaeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites and areas present in and around the proposed Project area. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and full compliance with Federal Law, including Section 106 of NHPA.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. Section 106 coordination and concurrence is included as part of the NEPA process.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	6	Regulatory Process Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement) General Environmental Concern	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration may cause environmental harms to the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills, including surface lands, subsurface structures, water, threatened and endangered species, and other natural resources. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and detailed environment analysis under NEPA, including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS").	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	7	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Tribe is opposed to any exploration or development of minerals in the Black Hills that would harm our sacred Paha Sapa, including our sacred Pe' Sla, and our traditional cultural and religious use of those lands.	Comment noted.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	8	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are opposed to any exploration or development of minerals in the Black Hills that would harm archaeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites in the Black Hills or that would harm the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Harold Frazier	25	9	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe hereby requests formal government-to-government consultation with the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture concerning the proposed F3 Gold, LLC Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project in the Black Hills National Forest. Such consultation is required by Executive Order N. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Jordan	Erickson		26					This comment was removed due to threatening nature.
	Steven	Smith		27	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I have worked with people who at one time worked at Homestake Mine in Lead and all hated that job, mining is not good for the land or people.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Tribe is also opposed to any activity in the Black Hills that would infringe on our rights under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and other Federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA") and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA").	Comment noted.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Tribe requests formal government-to-government consultation with the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture concerning the proposed mineral exploration and development in the Black Hills National Forest. The Tribe asserts that such consultation is required by Executive Order No. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	3	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed mineral exploration would interfere with our use of our sacred Pe' Sla lands in the Black Hills.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	4	Incorporate Regulatory Process	Public Health and Safety Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	These and other activities could create substantial and unreasonable noise and disturbance for surrounding lands, including Pe' Sla. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation between the Forest Service and the Tribe.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe also has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration would cause irreparable harm to archaeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites and areas present in and around the proposed Project area. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and full compliance with Federal Law, including Section 106 of NHPA.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. Section 106 coordination and concurrence is included as part of the NEPA process. The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	6	Other Regulatory Process	General Environmental Concern EA vs EIS Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration may cause environmental harms to the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills, including surface lands, subsurface structures, water, threatened and endangered species, and other natural resources. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and detailed environment analysis under NEPA, including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS").	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document. The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	7	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Tribe is opposed to any exploration or development of minerals in the Black Hills that would harm our sacred Paha Sapa, including our sacred Pe' Sla, and our traditional cultural and religious use of those lands.	Comment noted.
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	8	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are opposed to any exploration or development of minerals in the Black Hills that would harm archaeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites in the Black Hills or that would harm the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Steven	Gunn	Oglala Sioux Tribe Julian R. Bear Runner	28	9	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Oglala Sioux Tribe hereby requests formal government-to-government consultation with the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture concerning the proposed F3 Gold, LLC Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project in the Black Hills National Forest. Such consultation is required by Executive Order N. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	David	Swank		29	1	Other	Access & Transportation	As a frequent recreational user of the public land that comprises the Pactola Reservoir area, I am opposed to the exploratory drilling project both for environmental reasons as well as for possible disruptions to an already narrow and hard-to-maintain section of road that could be disrupted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	David	Swank		29	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The activity associated with this project could be highly disruptive to the wildlife and could have long-term implications for the habitat.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	David	Swank		29	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Additionally, my home draws it's water from Rapid Creek. If there is even a remote possibility of any type of contamination that could impact my family, I am adamantly opposed to the drilling project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Ben	Simonds		30	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration leads to mining. Gold mining has a long history of polluting Black Hills water.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jerry	Wilson		31	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in opposition to gold exploration in sensitive areas of the Black Hills, specifically the proposed exploration in the Rapid Creek watershed.	Comment noted.
	Jerry	Wilson		31	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This water resource is far too necessary and far too vital to future life and the future of the Black Hills to risk polluting by mining or exploration.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jerry	Wilson		31	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As the retired managing editor of *South Dakota Magazine,* and as a long-time resident of South Dakota who frequently recreates in the Black Hills, I implore you to block the latest effort to exploit our most precious resources for the private gain of out-of-state investors.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Harold	OneFeather		32	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There has not been any mention of the preventing aquifer contamination through catastrophic exploratory well casing failure, causing cross-aquifer contamination, threatening downstream drinking water contamination and causing undue health issues that are not covered under this project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Harold	OneFeather		32	2	Outside of Scope		The Black Hills are stolen land, illegally taken by corrupt government thievery as is the current case. No more fait accompli…this is our land, all the Lakota own it.	As, an agency the Forest Service is responsible for administration and management of all Federally owned lands within the national forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, in accordance with the statutory direction provided by the Congress of the United States. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or even address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire for the return of the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of this project.
	Harold	OneFeather		32	3	Outside of Scope		The Black Hills must be returned to the Great Sioux Nation.	As, an agency the Forest Service is responsible for administration and management of all Federally owned lands within the national forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, in accordance with the statutory direction provided by the Congress of the United States. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or even address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire for the return of the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of this project.
	Harold	OneFeather		32	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	There are rock carving and petroglyphs that will be threatening and destroyed by exploratory activities.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Harold	OneFeather		32	5	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	There must be qualified NAGPRA/Historic Preservation and ARPA Lakota experts on scene through the duration of the project, any inadvertent discoveries of human remains and objects of cultural heritage must be protected.	The Forest Service is consulting with Tribal governements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Harold	OneFeather		32	6	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Exploration company must come to all the South Dakota Reservations to discuss these invasions and thefts from our land, while tribal governments are essentially federal agencies, they do not have treaty rights authority to make any decisions regarding the Black Hills, too many this thieving model was followed and impoverishing the Lakota in the midst of such wealth that diminishes our Lakota spirituality.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Harold	OneFeather		32	7	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I hereby oppose granting any exploratory drilling as it always causes issues that the mining companies will just abandoned to the State and Federal governments to mitigate and recover from such contamination.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Eirik	Heikes		33	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Consider this my fervent letter of opposition to proposed exploration at Jenny Gulth.	Comment noted.
	Eirik	Heikes		33	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	There are many reasons for opposing exploration; as follows and negative; 1. Impact to watershed. 2. Impact to groundwater. 3. Impact to fishing. 4. Impact to recreation and tourism.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Eirik	Heikes		33	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	I believe this could impact endangered species as well; such as long eared bat.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife. This project will comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.
	Audrey	Jacobs		34	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly urge all parts of the government, including the US Forest Service, to end this scoping project before it starts.	Comment noted.
	Audrey	Jacobs		34	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation should always be the basis, before all other steps, of these processes and I understand that it did not happen early enough in this case.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Audrey	Jacobs		34	3	Other Outside of Scope	Water Quality/Water Supply Mining	I am anxious that this review process may not take into account the risk to drinking water that a mining operation would have merely because this stage is about exploration.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Audrey	Jacobs		34	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	The impacts of mining must be factored into this stage. Plus, the economic benefits to a local populace never outweigh the economic/environmental harms in mining operations.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Audrey	Jacobs		34	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	I stand opposed to every stage of this mining operation because of its inherent injustice, negative environmental and drinking water outcomes, and uselessness as an unsustainable economic driver.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tom	Kellar		35	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	During time spent in the area I have observed bald eagles and osprey on numerous occasions. I am concerned about the impact the exploratory drilling will have on their habitat, especially for nesting.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife. This project will comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.
	Tom	Kellar		35	2	Other	Access & Transportation Water Quality/Water Supply	I have attended gatherings at the Silver City Community Center, a unique and historic structure that sits on the edge of the proposed drilling sites. I am concerned that the increased traffic will impact the Silver City community from using this facility and the adverse impact the drilling may have on the well at this facility, as well as other wells in the area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Tom	Kellar		35	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	I am concerned that the increased traffic, road building and construction of the drilling pads will adversely effect the ability of people to enjoy the recreational opportunities here.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Tom	Kellar		35	4	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Additionally, increased traffic to haul equipment, work crews and water for drilling may have an adverse effect on tourist traffic in the area which is vital to the economy.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Tom	Kellar		35	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Recreation & Travel Management	My greatest concern is the adverse impact drainage from the drilling sites could have on water quality in the Pactola Reservoir, which is a valuable resource for recreation as well as drinking water for downstream communities such as Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Tom	Kellar		35	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am concerned that mining operations in the Black Hills and South Dakota have a dismal record of providing adequate funding to restore the environment to its original state and to remediate any damage caused by their operations	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Martin	Jacobs		36	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation should always be the basis, before all other steps, of these processes and I understand that it did not happen early enough in this case.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Martin	Jacobs		36	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Though on the face of it, this is an exploratory phase, the impacts of mining must be factored into this now. The economic benefits to a local populace never outweigh the economic/environmental harms in mining operations.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Martin	Jacobs		36	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	I support all who stand opposed to this and any and all stages of any possible mining operations because of its inherent injustice, negative environmental and drinking water outcomes, and uselessness as an unsustainable economic driver.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Julia	Emerson		37	1	Other	Access & Transportation Recreation & Travel Management	The proposed exploratory drilling project would increase traffic and noise, disrupting the use of this recreational area for everyone.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Julia	Emerson		37	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The potential harm to the water quality of Pactola Lake and Rapid Creek is not worth the risk.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Craig	Oyler		38	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This can't happen! There is no amount of gold that can justify the risk of harming the most pristine lake in the Black Hills.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Buddy	Seiner		39	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	For all that is good, F3 Gold Jenny Gulth Exploration Drilling Project can not, should not happen.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Mary	Lucas		40	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a stakeholder in this area I am strongly opposed to any exploration drilling!	Comment noted.
	Mary	Lucas		40	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There is high potential for disruption, damage, &/or contamination of our well.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Mary	Lucas		40	3	Other	Access & Transportation	In addition, there is high potential for the additional activity on a section of road that is narrow, steep, and expensive to maintain. The impact of transporting equipment as well as shift change and other staffing activities will cause increased traffic on these roads.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Mary	Lucas		40	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	There is also pair of nesting osprey in Silver City. These are a threatened species.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Rose	Coopr		41	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	We don’t want the beauty/ and value desecrated or the mining history of water pollution repeated.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Scott	Diagostine		42	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to this drilling proposal.	Comment noted.
	Virgil	Hansen		43	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The risk of serious degradation of the mountains and stream are not worth it.	Comment noted.
	Virgil	Hansen		43	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do not approve this project.	Comment noted.
	Myrna	Brennick		44	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	With these facts in mind I must convey to you my serious objections to any exploratory drilling projects you are considering in Pennington County.	Comment noted.

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	Myrna	Brennick		44	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	The road that leads to my cabin (north from Silver City road from the Silver City Community center) is one of the possible routes to be taken to access the drill sites. It is a dirt road, at present in poor repair and nowhere near in any shape to admit heavy machinery.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Christine	Sandvik		45	1	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	I wonder how are you valuing our water for the retainer that the company will have to put down in case of an accident	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be. The EA evaluates potential project related effects to water quaility/water supply.
	Jace	DeCory		46	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am adamantly opposed to any further disturbance in this special area of our sacred Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Jace	DeCory		46	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As a Lakota grandmother and retired educator, I am very concerned with protecting the waters of our region/state.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Elizabeth	Zieglmeier		47	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not support the F3 drilling activities in Jenny Gultch.	Comment noted.
	Phil	Schlief		48	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am still opposed to any Exploratory drilling or mining near Silver City.	Comment noted.
	Phil	Schlief		48	2	Regulatory Process		I have concerns about how the EA process works. F3 Gold pays for the EA and hires another Minneapolis company to do the EA. I understand the Forest Service is the middle man here, but this really is the fox guarding the hen house.	Third party NEPA is allowed under 40 CFR 1506.5. The Forest Service and F3 also have a signed MOU (19-MU-11020300-028) that addresses law, regulation, policy adherance for third party NEPA for this project.
	Phil	Schlief		48	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	As a family that uses the trails in the area for hiking, ATVing, hunting and Rapid Creek and Pactola for fish and swimming. I have concerns about the effects of drilling on all these activities.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Phil	Schlief		48	4	Other	Access & Transportation	Our narrow and winding roads are already dangerous adding truck traffic to them will make it worse.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Phil	Schlief		48	5	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Your Open house meeting did not allow public comment in a group setting, I can understand why the Forest Service did it that way to keep it from becoming negative, however it does not allow the stakeholders to hear what other people have as concerns and the answers to those concerns.	Comment noted.
	Phil	Schlief		48	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am also very concerned about my drinking water, I talked to no one that indicated there was no chance of my well becoming polluted or the water disappearing as holes are drilled through different layers of our aquifers.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Phil	Schlief		48	7	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Please stop this now, at the very least require an Environmental Impact Statement and not the Environmental Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Mary	Davis		49	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I vote NO	Comment noted.
	Mary	Davis		49	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	From experience I have seen the torn up mess they leave around the hills, and if they actually find gold the way they tear up the land, cutting away the forests, displacing wildlife & contaminating the creeks.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	John	Dale		50	1	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	Please proceed with extreme caution, elevate standards for mining safety, understand the environmental impacts of exploration, and create an indemnity plan in the event of a mining disaster that will cover the costs of any accidents of neglect even of the mining firms declare bankruptcy (some kind of a Trust will do nicely).	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Pamela	Sutto		51	1	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	I am concerned how the noise and otherwise polluting and disruptive effects the drilling could have on this area.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Pamela	Sutto		51	2	Other	Access & Transportation	I am also concerned about my ability to visit the area on my yearly track in the summer.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Pamela	Sutto		51	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Ultimately, I believe the area would be better left undisturbed, and I do not want to see the project approved.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Larry	Johnson		52	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Whether by equipment failure, by human error or greedy misconduct, Pactola Lake and the water supply in Rapid City could become unusable.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Larry	Johnson		52	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please vote "no".	Comment noted.
	Jake	Miller		53	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	This is unbelievable that anyone would think that a mine by pactola is smart this feeds into rapid creek which is a reliable fresh water source.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Janene	Trammell-Polk		54	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife Recreation & Travel Management	Water/well systems in Pennington County are could be affected as well as our wildlife, recreation at various areas, including but not limited to Pactola Lake, Jenny Gulch, Streams, creeks, and animals which enjoy the areas with their owners.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Janene	Trammell-Polk		54	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm against any exploration and especially in this area.	Comment noted.
	Carol	Hayse		55	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	At the VERY LEAST, and EIS should have been required.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Drea	Miller		56	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the proposed exploratory drilling in the Jenny Gulch, Broad Gulch, and Sunnyside region directly adjacent to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Drea	Miller		56	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full EIS for this watershed should be instituted rather than the short EA process being proposed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Drea	Miller		56	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	No amount of gold or natural resources is worth risking the life and health of our community. I strongly urge you to put a stop to the proposed drilling.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Kathy	Durrum		57	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just a short Environmental Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Kathy	Durrum		57	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration leads to mining, and the environmental review process should cover all potential impacts of the project.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Kathy	Durrum		57	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	We need healthy economic development and value our current tourism and agriculture, which would be negatively impacted by this project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.

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	Kathy	Durrum		57	4	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Recreation activities could be impacted	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Kathy	Durrum		57	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The area along Highway 385 and Pactola Lake is one of our most scenic areas, and gold exploration would not fit with this use.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Kathy	Durrum		57	6	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	People live in the immediate area where drilling could happen, and 24-hour noise and traffic would destroy their use of their property.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Amy	Hook		58	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I wanted to reach out and let you know I am strongly opposed to this project.	Comment noted.
	Amy	Hook		58	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	One of the best things about our area is the beautiful hills and our clean water. This project jeopardizes both.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Vickie	Hauge		59	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please don't think this won't have an impact on the water that people need to live here. The amount of water needed in the mining industries is immense. Where does the water go when it has gone through the processes?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rebecca	Howe		60	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The runoff from this area influences the water quality for Lake Pactola and Rapid Creek.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Rebecca	Howe		60	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This needs to be stopped before the inevitable destruction begins.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Rebecca	Howe		60	3	Other	General Environmental Concern	Water contamination, habitat destruction, and a decline in tourism are legitimate concerns that need to be taken into account.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Jean	Davis		61	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	As a citizen with strong ties to the Central Black Hills Area I insist that a full environmental impact study be completed before any road building or surface preparation on the drill sites is started.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Jean	Davis		61	2	Regulatory Process	General Environmental Concern	This environmental impact study must cover the following areas and show how each will be impacted: climate and air quality fisheries and wildlife botanical resources rangeland/non-native invasive species vegetation and timber resources cultural resources geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, soils hydrology access and transportation recreation/travel management socioeconomics	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Jean	Davis		61	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The risk of contamination of the Pactola reservoir and Rapid Creek drainage area is considerable.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jean	Davis		61	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please deny this exploration project.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Megan	Spring		62	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am completely against drilling in Pactola Lake, especially Jenny Gultch.	Comment noted.
	Megan	Spring		62	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The exploration drilling will only bring destruction and despair to those who live in this area and uses taxpayer money in areas that we do not approve of.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Megan	Spring		62	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	LISTEN TO THE CITIZENS FOR ONCE AND DO NOT DRILL IN JENNY GULTCH OR ANY OTHER AREA THAT IS ADORED BY THE PEOPLE.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Cindy	Skillman		63	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my disapproval of the F3 Gold Exploration proposal.	Comment noted.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	This project will subject us to nuisance noise and traffic from machinery and workers, devalue our property by compromising our water supply and agitate our poultry and cattle. It will be even more of a nuisance and danger to free range cattle on USFS land and is certain to disturb and interfere with wildlife.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	It will degrade the recreational value and attraction of our public trail systems currently greatly enjoyed by locals and tourists alike.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	4	Other	Socioeconomics	It will devastate property values and bring about outright confiscation of the private residences of those who do not hold mineral rights to their homes and properties.	Comment noted.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	5	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	There is also fire danger to consider. In recent years we have had an over-abundance of water, but such is not typical of our climate. Many fires have been started by the mere spark of a rock against a piece of metal equipment, but that does not even take into consideration the careless match dropped by a worker enjoying a cigarette on his break. This constant drilling is a credible threat. No matter how careful the operators, accidents do happen and the consequences of such accidents can be impossible to mitigate.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section has been incorporated into the EA.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I disagree for two reasons: first, the drilling will join deep strata not currently in communication with one another, potentially allowing toxic metals to leach into water supplies not currently affected by those metals. One such hole in an unfortunately chosen location could destroy the safety of many residential wells or even compromise perennial or seasonal water supplies including springs developed by ranchers for the hydration of their free range cattle.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	Second, the drilling of risky exploratory holes presupposes the possibility of mining operations in the future.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	8	Regulatory Process		It is my understanding that F3 Gold was allowed to retain and pay for the services of an engineering firm to assess the risks to the environment of their proposed drilling. This looks dicey to me, and I'm not alone in my perceptions.	Third party NEPA is allowed under 40 CFR 1506.5. The Forest Service and F3 also have a signed MOU (19-MU-11020300-028) that addresses law, regulation, policy adherance for third party NEPA for this project.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	9	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	F3 Gold must submit to a full environmental impact study, not only of the initial exploration, but also of the impact of any proposed mining operations that may results from their hoped-for gold deposits.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Cindy	Skillman		63	10	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In conclusion, I feel that there are no positives and many, many negatives to the approval of this risky project. Please reconsider and deny the proposed drilling permits.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Greg	Yahne		64	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am very concerned about the impact of mining of our sacred Black Hills. Exploration is being discussed, and after any successful exploration, mining will follow.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Greg	Yahne		64	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am tired of mining messes left behind by those who come and extract our resources and I am VERY concerned about the quality of our water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.

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	Greg	Yahne		64	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I also want local tribes to have EARLY input to the process.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Greg	Yahne		64	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I SAY "NO" TO GOLD EXPLORATION AND MINING IN THE RAPID CREEK WATERSHED.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Ryan		65	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow the drilling to test for gold.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Kevin	Ryan		65	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This could have a direct effect on drinking water and could affect the aquafers that supply precious water to Rapid City and the area in general.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Kevin	Ryan		65	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	It could lead to full scale mining operations in the area and adversely effect wildlife and the well established fisheries.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Kevin	Ryan		65	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	And the run off from the drilling itself will pollute.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Megan	Holman		66	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	As a resident of Rapid City who benefits from the local watershed and occasionally accesses Pactola Reservoir directly, I am deeply concerned by issuing an exploratory permit for gold. It is unclear why we would issue a permit to drill holes, however small and quiet the process, when it is sensible to assume that the purpose is to initiate gold mining at some point.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Megan	Holman		66	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It is within the best interests of our country and state to preserve and protect our water source, protect recreational use for the economic benefits of tourism, and act cooperatively with tribal request to not drill.	Comment noted.
	Megan	Holman		66	3	Regulatory Process	General Environmental Concern	I am aware the process of reviewing potential impact and issue of a report is still needed and I urge your agency to conduct a thorough and complete review accounting for the history of superfund sites, tribal discord, impact on watershed, impact on recreation and tourism, integrity and environmental responsibility of F3, and general lack of local support for this project.	Comment noted.
	Terry	Skillman		67	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to oppose ANY drilling or mining activity by F3 Gold in the Jenny Gulch/Silver City area.	Comment noted.
	Terry	Skillman		67	2	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety Socioeconomics	I am concerned about the environmental impact and how this might affect my quality of life and property value.	F3's proposal is for exploratory drilling. Design criteria will be developed as part of the EA to help mitigate and reduce associated impacts.
	Terry	Skillman		67	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am very concerned that any drilling could impact negatively my water well situation as my well is very near some of the proposed drill sites. I am also concerned for the Pactola area watershed that may be affected by this proposed drilling.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Terry	Skillman		67	4	Other Incorporate	Access & Transportation Public Health and Safety	I am concerned about the increased traffic and noise due to equipment movement and operation in the area near my home.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation. Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.

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	Terry	Skillman		67	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	An outright denial of any permit to drill would be appropriate in my opinion.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Terry	Skillman		67	6	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Short of that, the Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement before any approval of test drilling core samples or any mining activity. An Environmental Assessment alone is not adequate.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Terry	Skillman		67	7	Regulatory Process		The environmental review process should cover all of the potential impacts of this proposed drilling.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.
	Wendy	Skovo		68	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I would like to add my voice to the many who are against the mining exploration near Pactola and Castle Creek, and really anywhere on the planet.	Comment noted.
	Wendy	Skovo		68	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Put the brakes on these proposed projects now! It's not worth the risk	Comment noted.
	Mark	Warren		69	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a concerned local resident, and a big fan of the BHNF, I'm submitting this comment in opposition to the proposed exploratory drilling by F3 Mining in the Jenny Gulch region in the Mystic Ranger District in the Black Hills National Forest.	Comment noted.
	Danielle	Downey		70	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a resident of Rapid City, born and raised here, I strongly oppose this proposed resource exploration by F3 without first evaluating fully the potential impact on the natural resources at stake.	Comment noted.
	Danielle	Downey		70	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	No risk of contamination or degradation should be allowed.	Comment noted.
	Whitney	Larish		71	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We do not support drilling in this area.	Comment noted.
	Whitney	Larish		71	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We do not support the Jenny Gultch Exploration Drilling project!	Comment noted.
	Abbey	Ulrich		72	1	Other	General Environmental Concern	Drilling would effect our land, water, and resources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Abbey	Ulrich		72	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This is a cherished area and it is disgusting to see it being thought of for gold. Stay away from it!	Comment noted.
	Christian	Aldaz		73	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We do not want our land drilled or water contaminated. We do not support this.	Comment noted.
	Annie	Christensen		74	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Water Quality/Water Supply	Drilling would not only take away the beauty of the Black Hills but it will also disturb the natural habitat for animals & it could end up polluting our drinking water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Susan	Tenney		75	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	By invasively exploring Jenny Gulch, drillers would be violating and tainting an area full of beauty enjoyed by locals and tourists. The Black Hills has a very unique culture that should not be destroyed. Not to mention the detriment it could cause to those in the area; people and animals alike.	Comment noted.
	Maggie	Burgoin		76	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not support this drilling project.	Comment noted.
	Maggie	Burgoin		76	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please listen to the people and say NO to exploratory drilling and mining.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Cory	Tomovick		77	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Such a mine would pollute the clean drinking water for Rapid City.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Cory	Tomovick		77	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Stop all gold exploration and gold mining in the Central Black Hills. The F3 Jenny Gultch Exploration Drilling Project must be stopped now.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Leanne	Olson		78	1	Other	General Environmental Concern	I would like to learn more about the scope of their drilling, environmental impacts, and how it could potentially affect me down stream as well as my hiking.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. Additional project documents, including the EA, will be posted to this site once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Leanne	Olson		78	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My dogs drink out of the streams and I worry about the tailings tainting the water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Leanne	Olson		78	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As an additional concern, my barnyard is right on the creek and during times of drought, I use Rapid Creek for a water source for my horse and two goats. Lead that is in Rapid Creek has already damaged my horse and arsenic is even worse to a horse. I want to prevent that from happening.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Leanne	Olson		78	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	How would this potentially impact my well? I'm sure there is an aqua-fir or leaching happening from the creek to my well.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Leanne	Olson		78	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	How is it possible to not stop mining when this water system is a direct supply to at least 100,000 people? How far can arsenic spread? Will it go all the way down to the Cheyenne River? Are mining companies required to protect the water and land? If so, what if there is a breach? Why aren't there more protections for natural resources such as water?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
Silver City Volunteer Fire Department	Philip	Schlief		79	1	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	I have some concerns about the proposed exploratory drilling by F3 Gold. We are a small self-supported Volunteer Fire Department and do not have specific training for industrial type emergencies or the equipment that may be necessary.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section has been incorporated into the EA.
Silver City Volunteer Fire Department	Philip	Schlief		79	2	Other	Access & Transportation	I also have some concerns with added traffic on our narrow winding roads, especially large truck traffic along with the increased traffic during the warmer months to Jenny Gultch.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Lonnette	Olson		80	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Water Quality/Water Supply	I would like to object to the exploration drilling in this area because I feel it would endanger the water quality coming through Pactola and down through Rapid City and Box Elder where I live, and there is nothing more important than clean safe water- except air.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Lonnette	Olson		80	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My humble opinion is that this type of exploration drilling should not be allowed in the Black Hills anymore and that outdated laws revised.	Comment noted.
	Daniel	Belz		81	1	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	And what about the noise?	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Daniel	Belz		81	2	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	What will the noise footprint be?	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Daniel	Belz		81	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	And apart from my personal annoyance, what would the effects be on wildlife?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Daniel	Belz		81	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Heavy truck traffic could damage the road and require repair. This work may delay inhabitants and visitors from accessing Silver City, aside from the obvious cost of repair.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Daniel	Belz		81	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	They state they will not use Rapid Creek for water, but how much water will the project actually use, and where will that runoff flow?	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Plan of Operations addresses water source and is incorporated into the EA.
	Jerry	Hiebert		82	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my stringent opposition to the proposal by F3 Gold LLC to conduct exploratory drilling at various locations in the Black Hills, expressly the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.

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	Jerry	Hiebert		82	2	Other Outside of Scope	Access & Transportation Water Quality/Water Supply Mining	We are concerned about heavy vehicles using the developed and undeveloped roads in the area, the creation of new heavy vehicle roads, and the related potential negative impacts to both surface water quality and subsurface water quality that would result from both exploration and possible mining in the future.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jerry	Hiebert		82	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	These are public lands, and exploration for private benefit is contrary to the public use and enjoyment of these public lands.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jerry	Hiebert		82	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The environmental assessment should be discontinued and no permits for this type of activity should be considered or issued.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Vicky	Aughenbaugh		83	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, do not let drilling happen in this beautiful area!!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Vicky	Aughenbaugh		83	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, reconsider and not drill in the Jenny Gultch area!!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Diancy	Hoffman		84	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	We absolutely don't need mining, which would be the result if they found minerals, oil, gold, etc.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tarra	Stecher		85	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to drilling at Jenny Gultch for many reasons. Foremost, I support protection and conservation of our natural resources and National Forest lands. Drilling selfishly for gold has no benefit to our Forest land, lakes, local population, or local economy.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Penny	Bilben		86	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Gold is not a viable reason to destroy a beautiful location with pollution, compromise the integrity of the landscape, and take it out of use as a place to enjoy. I would also like to mention the detriment to wildlife.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Tessa	Andes-Mitchel		87	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not support this because of water contamination and the possible endangerment to wildlife and the ecosystem.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Bailey	Marier		88					Thank you for your interest in the proposed project.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Megan	Gordon		89	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Water Quality/Water Supply	Wildlife and water would be impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Megan	Gordon		89	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Hiking trails would also be ruined.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Carissa	Menke		90	1	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	I love hiking that area, it is one of our most beautiful trails we have in the hills and it would be upsetting to me, my friends, tourists, and many locals in the area to lose this!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Lacey	Farley		91	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Exp. Drilling Project due to environment harm and taking away of the beauty of the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Kaylee	Gakin		92	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Drilling for gold could affect wildlife in this area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Christina	Zweber		93	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am not in support of damaging natural resources for gold exploration.	Comment noted.
	Michelle	Garnett		94					Thank you for your interest in the proposed project.
	Nadine	Siferd		95	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly disagree with the Jenny Gulch exploration drilling project.	Comment noted.
	Nadine	Siferd		95	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Recreation & Travel Management	This project will affect the wildlife in the area as well as the hiking trails enjoyed by the locals as well as visitors who come to our beautiful area to enjoy trails such as those in this area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Kaitlin	Maffett		96	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I disagree with this project because it would kill wildlife and get rid of pretty walking trails and possibly contaminate drinking water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	David	Cortes Suarez		97	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Stop destroying our natural resources!!	Comment noted.
	Diana	Murphy		98	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I disagree with this project because that would destroy wildlife and also contaminate our drinking water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Jan	Humphrey		99	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am totally against mining or drilling of any kind in the Black Hills.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jan	Humphrey		99	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This kind of project will end up being a bigger problem for the surrounding land owners and we'll have to take action with you to control it probably to no avail. So a BIG NO for this project.	Comment noted.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	As you will see from our formal letter, we believe that a full Environmental Impact Statement is necessary because of the possibility that this exploration project could lead to full-scale mining, and the long-term consequences that would result.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Because of the possible long-term future impact, should this project lead to actual mining, we believe that a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prudent and necessary.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The proposed drilling depth of 500 to 6,000 feet has considerable potential to penetrate and contaminate aquifers underlying the project area and interrupt our water source, and that of an estimated 80 private wells in the watershed. The only other water source in the area is a community spring available at "the school house" from a source 3/4 of a mile up Sunnyside Gulch that could easily be contaminated.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	4	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	But beyond the current proposed exploratory drilling project lies the prospect of long-term mining development. As you are well aware, only an EIS requires the comprehensive assessment of the cumulative effects of both the current project, and reasonable foreseeable developments in the project area. If the reasonable outgrowth of the current proposed project were to be an actual major mining operation, it would have an extensive impact on the surrounding area, well beyond the possibility of long-term well contamination and water availability.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

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	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	5	Other Outside of Scope	Access & Transportation Mining	The transport of heavy equipment, as well as traffic resulting from shift changes and other staffing activities required for a subsequent mining project, would very likely increase traffic considerably on the winding blacktop Silver City Road, as well as fire trails in the area, affecting road safety and recreational use of the forest.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	6	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Hiking the trails in the region, which our family enjoys for wildflower and wildlife photography, could be interrupted or more dangerous.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	7	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Surface water could also be affected, impacting not only the immediate area of the drilling or mining, but also Lake Pactola and downstream residents and irrigators.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	8	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Financial Assurance	We have concerns of what happens after mining terminates and whether the sites will be safe and/or restored to their natural condition for the benefit of forest users.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	9	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	We also have concerns about the potential long-term impact on the overall quality of life of people who live in the watershed or vacation there, both property-owners and other visitors.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section has been incorporated into the EA.
	Michael	Marek	Charlotte Marek	100	10	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Because of the possible sweeping future impact, this project merits a holistic, comprehensive EIS, addressing the reasonable future cumulative impact of potential mining development, as opposed to a substantially more limited Environment Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	David	Hanna		101	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Another reason I'm not in favor of this exploration. Rapid City relies on all of its drinking water from Rapid Creek and the Madison Aquifer - both sources are largely impacted by what happens in the Rapid Creek watershed. This watershed should be completely off limits to any mining whatsoever.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	David	Hanna		101	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do NOT let any more mining exploration happen in the Rapid Creek watershed.	Comment noted.
	Robert	Mevissen		102	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Moreover, can there be any explanation about how potential mining operations around these Black Hill towns will affect local residents?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Robert	Mevissen		102	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	How long could mining operations last, depending on the size of the mine?	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Robert	Mevissen		102	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Can they expect long-term cleanup efforts to be ongoing even after the mine closes?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Robert	Mevissen		102	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	How will a mine affect the local economy: will it be large enough to affect local commodity prices or things like property value/taxes for local residents (i.e. to maintain roads or clean any polluted groundwater, etc.)?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Robert	Mevissen		102	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Will there be procedures in place for residents to note complaints of any operations AND a transparent mechanism for addressing those complaints?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Robert	Mevissen		102	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The last thing people want is a corporation to come in and operate with impunity while local residents' concerns and interests are silenced or ignored. It is the government's responsibility to protect people from these potential hazards.	Comment noted.
	Robert	Mevissen		102	7	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Committing the exploratory company (F3 Gold) to undertaking a Environmental Impact Statement would certainly reveal the extent to which these activities will affect the local populace and environment and give us a sharper picture about whether this is something that should proceed or not.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Gary	Abe		103					Thank you for your interest in the proposed project.

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	Rebecca	Terk		104	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Gold mining in the Black Hills and elsewhere has always and inevitably lead to water contamination - and that contamination has been shown to be incredibly costly for taxpayers and nearly impossible to clean up. Contamination of Rapid City's water supply would devastate one of our fastest-growing communities, as well as South Dakota's premiere tourism & recreation economy. While this comment period is specifically about the exploration phase, the plain fact is that exploration leads to mining, and mining leads to contamination.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rebecca	Terk		104	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Socioeconomics	Exploration near Pactola's inlet will disrupt those tourism and recreation opportunities, and undermine the area's economy as a result.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Rebecca	Terk		104	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	No matter what F3 hopes to find in our precious Black Hills, it's clear that their operations will negatively impact one of the region's premiere tourism and recreation areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Rebecca	Terk		104	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	And, as stated previously, exploration leads to mining, and mining leads to contamination--an outcome that seriously threatens communities and the economy of the Black Hills, potentially for generations.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rebecca	Terk		104	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Given the potential for such grave impacts, the Forest Service should order a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), rather than a more cursory Environmental Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Shawn	Wood		105	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a neighboring resident of Broad Gulch, I **strongly oppose** the proposed exploratory drilling in the Jenny Gulch, Broad Gulch, and Sunnyside region directly adjacent to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Shawn	Wood		105	2	Other Outside of Scope	Water Quality/Water Supply Mining	This watershed is vital to the citizens of Rapid City, Box Elder, and Ellsworth AFB. Exploration and mining in this area should not be allowed due to the significant potentials impacts to our communities.	The EA will evaluate potential project-related effects to water quality. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Shawn	Wood		105	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full EIS for this watershed should be instituted rather than the short EA process being proposed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Shawn	Wood		105	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I vehemently oppose the exploratory drilling by F3 Gold LLC in the Jenny Gulch region of the Mystic Ranger District.	Comment noted.
	Shawn	Wood		105	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	As a frequent hiker and hunter in this region I am very concerned about the impacts of this project to recreational activities in the area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Shawn	Wood		105	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The elk, deer and sheep that calve in this area will be interrupted by this project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Shawn	Wood		105	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining in this region should not be permitted due to the significant water quality concerns for neighboring land owners, and downstream users in Rapid City, Box Elder, and Ellsworth AFB.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tom	Strand		106	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Wildlife in the Sunnyside Gulch vicinity that will be affected by the proposed drilling:	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Tom	Strand		106	2	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	Access: The cabins and homes are charged $150.00 each year for access across Forest Service land. Each of the drilling sites have to be accessed by crossing Forest Service and. Are they going to be charged $150.00 for each of their accesses or are our annual charges going away. This is especially true of the drilling on and near the Sunnyside Gulch road.	The Forest Service mining rules (36 CFR 228 Part A) do not authorize the collection of fees for road use, etc. The mining law entitles an operator to reasonable access to conduct mineral operations on National Forest Service lands.
	Tom	Strand		106	3	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Road maintenance: Is the company doing the drilling going to maintain Sunnyside Gulch road? The $20,000 deposit they had to make will in no way cover all of the damage they will be doing.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. The Forest Service will approve a reclamation plan as a part of the final Plan of Operation. The Plan of Operations will have a condition that dsicusses maintenance of National Forest System Roads.

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	Tom	Strand		106	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Also, are they going to be allowed through the private land on the Sunnyside Gultch road without permission of the landowners? They seem to think they can move equipment from Silver City to the north end of SSG road. It passes through the private land of three landowners.	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions (including access permissions) prior to initiation of project activities. If private access is not granted, F3 will need to use an alternate route.
	Tom	Strand		106	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The planned drilling on Sunnyside Gulch and vicinity will probably drain at least two wells that provide water to three homes (22749, 22759 and 22761). For their 22761 home there is no alternate drilling site. Two other proposed drilling sites in the same area will, in all likely-hood, drain the only other possible well site for the 22749 & 22759 addresses.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Tom	Strand		106	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	One of the drilling sites just off Sunnyside Gulch is a prime site and is planned to run 24/7, probably for the entire 6,000 feet. This is extremely close to occupied homes and cabins. This area has recently been logged and cleared in an attempt to bring Elk back to this area. We have found some evidence that they do pass through here. How can this be allowed?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife. Based on public comments, a public health and safety section has been incorporated into the EA.
	Tom	Strand		106	7	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Also, where they plan coming in is an old road that has almost disappeared. It is extremely steep for the first 30 to 40 yards and the large vehicles coming in that way will cause extreme erosion and the spring run-off could easily flood the Sunnyside Gulch Road plus a spring that is above ground at the base of this hill.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Tom	Strand		106	8	Other	Socioeconomics	The drilling and potential mining will make it extremely difficult or impossible to sell.	F3's proposal is for exploratory drilling. Design criteria will be developed as part of the EA to help mitigate and reduce associated impacts.
	James	Huff		107	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project for the following reasons:	Comment noted.
	James	Huff		107	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There is an unacceptable potential for the polluting of the Rapid Creek watershed which is the primary source of drinking water for Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	James	Huff		107	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 Gold is an unproven and inexperienced drilling company.	Comment noted.
	James	Huff		107	4	Outside of Scope		Water permits have been issued by SD-DE&NR to Mineral Mountain Resources drilling without public input.	Comment noted.
	James	Huff		107	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A comprehensive environmental impact study has not been done.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Julie	Anderson		108	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I object to this project based on protecting our water sources.	The EA evaluates potential project related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Aaron	Ellison		109	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	With any exploration, the intent is discovery. The result of discovery is mining. That is why, while considering the exploration, we must also consider discovery of gold and the eventuality of a full mine (or several mines) being created.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Aaron	Ellison		109	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	There needs to be consideration of how these exploration sites and eventual mines will impact Native American Cultural sites and on going activities. I think a study is needed to identify and preserve Native cultural sites, graves, ceremony locations, and other areas of historical significance. If this is not done, the concern is these will be destroyed even during preliminary exploration.	This project will comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Archaeological Resources Protection Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and all other laws associated with cultural resources.
	Aaron	Ellison		109	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I have concerns about the waste and possible pollution of the water in Pactola Lake which is very near if not directly adjacent to where I understand the exploration would be.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Aaron	Ellison		109	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Financial Assurance	I have concerns about the waste when finished. When an exploration site is only semi successful, unsuccessful, or when a gold mine is depleted there is a reclamation effort. These reclamation efforts have historically been quite disastrous.	A reclamation plan will be part of the final Plan of Operations. F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Aaron	Ellison		109	5	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	The ongoing costs to the local community is another concern. Aside from health risks to miners, eventually there will be costs for removal of waste. Accident insurance, fines and fees are often inadequate to cover the full costs of clean up or damages in the event of an accident. Those costs are passed onto the local communities to deal with either financially or environmentally or both.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Aaron	Ellison		109	6	Regulatory Process		Before any exploration can be considered, a full in-depth environmental and cultural impact report is needed.	An environmental assessment, which evaluated potential project-related effects to environmental and cultural resources, has been prepared for the proposed project.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Aaron	Ellison		109	7	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Further, any consideration after the reports are compiled should be discussed in a public forum to review and debate the consequences of such exploration and eventual mines existing so close to vital public resources; Pactola Lake, Rapid Creek and Rapid City.	Project documents, including the EA, will be posted to the project website once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Aaron	Ellison		109	8	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Keeping clean drinking water and the keeping the Black Hills pristine is of greater importance to the public than private gold mine exploration which threatens both.	Comment noted.
	Latoya	Phillipe		110	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I wish to not see this drilling in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Latoya	Phillipe		110	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Botanical Resources	My rationale for this is due to the disruption to the Black Hills land, wildlife, + vegetation.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Latoya	Phillipe		110	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The drilling around the gulch will cause too much disruption and possible risks to the habitat surrounding the drill site.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Vicki	Schlief		111	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	What about our wildlife we have in the area - we have seen elk which we have just started seeing a couple years ago and our Osprey (George and Sarah) who have a nest in Silver City / they have been returning every year for the past 5 years. If this drilling cause them to leave it will be a sad day for us!!!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Vicki	Schlief		111	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	But more important - our water and the possibility of contamination - please don't let them drill!!!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Vicki	Schlief		111	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	One last thing - they should have to do a environmental impact statement and not and environmental assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Carol	Hayse		Pre-Scoping 1	1	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	I have read the MOU between the Black Hills Forest Service and F3 Gold LLC, and I notice that Task 2 in Appendix D calls for the development of a public involvement plan. I certainly hope that F3's Prime Consultant and the FS are planning a robust public involvement process.	Comment noted.
	Cindy	Larom		Pre-Scoping 2					Thank you for your interest in the proposed project.
	Susan	Olson		Pre-Scoping 3	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	These homes all have private wells that stand to be compromised as does the water in Silver City, Rapid Creek, Pactola, and eventually Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Susan	Olson		Pre-Scoping 3	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	There is no possible way for F3 Gold to completely seal 5000 ft. holes, as they say they will, due to soil, underground caves, water pockets and fissures in rock.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils. F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Plan of Operations addresses well sealing and is incorporated into the EA. F3 will be required to follow South Dakota Rules Chapter 74:11:08, Capping, Sealing, and Plugging Exploration Test Holes. (Source: 34 SDR 323, effective July 2, 2008. General Authority: SDCL 45-6C-29, 45-6D-34. Law Implemented: SDCL 45-6C-29, 45-6D-34). In addition, the Forest Service will require that plugging reports are submitted as part of the reclamation plan and borehole plugging will be subject to inspection by the State.
	Susan	Olson		Pre-Scoping 3	3	Incorporate Other	Public Health and Safety Access & Transportation General Environmental Concern	Another concern by area residents is noise, truck traffic, dust and damage to the Forest Service roads as well as the damage to this beautiful, sensitive area of the Black Hills.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Susan	Olson		Pre-Scoping 3	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Many areas are remote and better suited for an operation such as this. Why the Sunnyside Gulch/Silver City area?	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).

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	Susan	Olson		Pre-Scoping 3	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please deny the drilling permit sought by F3 Gold and anyone else wanting to drill for gold near the inlet to Pactola Lake and the Rapid Creek watershed area. We don't want gold exploration here!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Mark	Van Every		Pre-Scoping 4a					Thank you for your interest in the proposed project.
	Ben	Rhodd		Pre-Scoping 4b	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	We have not been given formal notice from the BHNF and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe for this proposed action to date.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Ben	Rhodd		Pre-Scoping 4b	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	The Rosebud Sioux Tribe seeks to be kept informed of the process and the finding of whether an EIS is warranted or the determination of a FONSI is proposed. While is it understood that the determination of an MOU is purely a BHNF Administrative decision on the one hand, the effects of the decision will have procedural and process effects on the cultural and historical ties of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota to the Black Hills.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed. Project documents, including the EA, will be posted to the project website once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Ben	Rhodd		Pre-Scoping 4b	3	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Given that this is a process of policy and procedure, we petition to be kept informed of any decision that will affect the cultural significance of the Black Hills, its land, air quality, waters, plant and animal communities, and associated resources under the charge of the BHNF.	Project documents, including the EA, will be posted to the project website once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Avery	Olson		112	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Where this exploration project is located brings me great concern. It brings me concern for my livelihood as not only an angler, but as a person born and raised in South Dakota.	Comment noted.
	Avery	Olson		112	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The proposed exploration area is only 15 miles away from residents that depend on that section of Rapid Creek for their water source. Rapid Creek as a whole gets ALL of its drinking water from Rapid Creek and Madison Aquifer. Both of these are effected by what happens in the Rapid Creek watershed. If this water were to be contaminated, it is speculated that we would have to get our water from the Missouri river, about 175 miles away.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Avery	Olson		112	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	I understand that this mining exploration is just exploration, but I ask, what does exploration lead to? Exploration occurs with hopes of leading to something to be mined. I am in favor of many kinds of commerce, but commerce that can lead to contamination of a source that provides the livelihood of my whole community I cannot support.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Avery	Olson		112	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do NOT let any more mining exploration happen in the Rapid Creek watershed.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Eilbeck	Karrie Eilbeck and Joe Eilbeck	113	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We have a cabin in Silver City that has been in our family for over 60 years, we spend a lot of our time there throughout the year and plan on making it our permanent residence in the next 3-5 years; I am extremely concerned about the proposed Jenny Gulch exploration drilling project and the potential impact that it may have on local water quality/safety of private wells in Silver City and most importantly, the watershed itself, Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Kevin	Eilbeck	Karrie Eilbeck and Joe Eilbeck	113	2	Other Incorporate Regulatory Process	General Environmental Concern Public Health and Safety	We are very concerned that the current environmental assessment study will not be sufficient in determining if this exploratory drilling should take place, especially considering the potential impact any scale of mining would have. Such as a decrease in water quality, disturbance of the natural ecosystem, noise, the construction of the supporting infrastructure and overall a decrease in qualify of life that would be experienced.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.

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	Kevin	Eilbeck	Karrie Eilbeck and Joe Eilbeck	113	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We believe because of the very large impact this project would have on the environment, Silver City residents, water quality, recreation, traffic, wildlife and general quality of life for those who live in and love the Black Hills and the scenic beauty it holds. For these reasons, we think nothing short of a comprehensive EIS is merited and necessary.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the Forest Service allowing this proposed F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project to proceed.	Comment noted.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	It is only logical that a gold exploration project will ultimately lead to actual gold mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	However, allowing gold mining in this area surrounding Pactola Lake is absolutely unfathomable for a variety of reasons. First, we all know that gold mining wrecks the environment. It takes tons of rock to yield a little gold.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	How much damage to our precious Black Hills will result?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Where are all those waste piles going to be placed?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	Gold mining operations have always caused severe damage to the environment from such things as acid had issues with as acid mine drainage - why do we think this will be any different?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	We know that toxic chemicals such as cyanide are used to extract the gold, so it is not a case of if, but when spills of such chemicals would occur creating hazards to our Lake and the water supply downstream.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	8	Outside of Scope	Mining	Rapid City is dependent on this Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir to provide pure drinking water to its residents. The greatest threat of a gold mine in this location is contamination of our water supply and so it should not be allowed for this reason alone.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	9	Outside of Scope	Mining	But furthermore, it would negatively impact the recreation in this area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	10	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Not only am I a boater and fisherman who utilizes Pactola extensively, but it is a vital part of our local tourism economy and provides a great deal of value to this part of western south Dakota.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation.
	Rick	Bell	Carol Bell	114	11	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	For all these reasons and many more, Please do not approve this proposed F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Sonja	Swift		115	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining is notoriously dangerous, wasteful, destructive. The examples abound in all corners of the world - we don't need to dig up any more metal all for some outside corporation to run off with the profits and have our water compromised.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Sonja	Swift		115	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	DO A FULL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT, not just an assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Connie	Ryan	Mike Ryan Scott Ryan Nicole Ryan	116	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	We and our children are very much opposed to any mining done in the hills and especially anywhere near Pactola and Jenny Gulch.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Mike	Ray		117	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This comment is in opposition to exploratory drilling for mining in the Rapid Creek drainage above Pactola.	Comment noted.
	Mike	Ray		117	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I believe the best use for this land is compromised by this action. I believe drill tailings could contain amounts of selenium and other minerals that could harm long term water quality.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.

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	Mike	Ray		117	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The NEPA process should be followed. I support a full EIS on this proposal.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Anthony	Turner		118	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a resident of the Black Hills, as an active user of our beautiful land, and as a HUMAN BEING I am concerned with the proposal of the potential mining in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Anthony	Turner		118	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Please hear the people! We do not want our water to become contaminated! Water is life. It is our right to have access to clean water. I do not want to see the beautiful Rapid Creek end up like the Whitewood Creek.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Anthony	Turner		118	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow this exploration of mining continue.	Comment noted.
	Anthony	Turner		118	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It is not worth ruining the lives of all the people who live around here, nor ruining the precious and fragile ecosystems of OUR HOME.	Comment noted.
	Justin	Herreman		119	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The proposed gold exploration in Jenny Gulch is of great concern to me and the following are significant and Substantial reasons I oppose this proposed exploration.	Comment noted.
	Justin	Herreman		119	2	Other Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply Access & Transportation Public Health and Safety	I am significantly concerned about the water quality impacts as well as noise and traffic concerns that might impact access to this area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Justin	Herreman		119	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	There is a single ingress/egress road and adding large water trucks to remove drilling fluids will create significant impacts to recreational users in this area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Justin	Herreman		119	4	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	I also hike and hunt in this area which will be very negatively impacted by the proposed exploration. The additional people and traffic will take away from the unique and special atmosphere in this region as well as harm the solitude and quiet of the region.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Justin	Herreman		119	5	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	An additional concern I have is the potential for a spill. The Silver City VFD has no industrial accident training and when the inevitable drilling accident occurs there is no trained response unit with a viable response timeline that can initiate response and containment efforts in a reasonable window to prevent significant ecological impact. Phone service is spotty in this region as well which leads to limited notification options when an event occurs.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Justin	Herreman		119	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Rapid City gets 100% of its drinking water from this watershed either via directly drawing from Rapid Creek or from the aquifers that are recharged in this watershed. The potential impact of this activity is significant from a water quality issue and the risk does not justify the reward.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Justin	Herreman		119	7	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The last potential impact is wildlife. I know of nesting bald eagles, osprey and long-nosed bats in this watershed that have a significant potential for impact from these activities. All are species of concern regionally.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Sue	Jorgensen		120	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please protect this area from exploratory drilling and mining.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Doug	Ebright		121	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My grandma was Bernice (No Suggestions) so pactola has been a very important part of my life so I say no drilling leave the greed out of this area and protect the great resource that is pactola.	Comment noted.
	Laura	Woten		122	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I fish, hike, bike and camp and would hate to see mining done in this beautiful area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Laura	Woten		122	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Please protect these fisheries, (some of the best in the Midwest).	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.

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	Jeremy	Kirchner		123	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Fisheries & Wildlife Water Quality/Water Supply	Please protect Pactola. Do not allow any mining or drilling or anything that would endanger the wildlife or the water that is in the lake.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Mark	Zacher		124	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	This is our most pristine and pure reservoir in our Black Hills, please do not destroy it with gold mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Mark	Zacher		124	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This reservoir does so many things for our local environment, hunting, fishing, swimming, water supply. Please do not destroy this for us.	Comment noted.
	Barbara	Felderman		125	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	This proposal is crazy, don't even think about destroying this beautiful environment. Mining will do that.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Barbara	Felderman		125	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please leave this area pristine and as it is, many people use this are for recreation and the additional traffic from out of state mining interests will destroy this area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Barbara	Felderman		125	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do not allow this company to drill in this area.	Comment noted.
	Gayle	Simons		126	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the exploratory drilling in Jenny Gulch, Broad Gulch and Sunnyside region directly adjacent to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Gayle	Simons		126	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	This watershed is so important to the people of the Rapid City and surrounding areas. My family frequently hikes, bikes and boat in this area and we are very concerned about the impacts on the environment and wildlife as well.	Comment noted.
	Gayle	Simons		126	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow this exploratory drilling to proceed.	Comment noted.
	Susan	Pond		127	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am deeply opposed to any drilling in and around Pactola and Jenny Gulch Area.	Comment noted.
	Susan	Pond		127	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Access & Transportation	We do not want our water compromised, and do not want in and around that area defaced with new roads, people, and motorized vehicles.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Susan	Pond		127	3	Other	General Environmental Concern	We want the forest and lands to remain in the pristine conditions that they are.	Comment noted.
	Susan	Pond		127	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against any type of drilling in this area.	Comment noted.
	Cathy	Roberts		128	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I think we have enough evidence that mining jeopardizes our environment & potential can contaminate our drinking water.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Cathy	Roberts		128	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please cease considering any further mining activities in these sacred black hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Wendy	Skovo		129	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Exploratory Drilling? Absolutely Not not! not! Gold Mining, not! not! not! Gold is not necessary, you can't drink gold when the water is gone.	Comment noted.
	Amiee	Laun	Donald Laun	130	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please care more about our only planet and humanity than greed and gold! We bike, fish, swim and enjoy the Jenny Gulch area. And this kind of recreation is why we live in the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Amiee	Laun	Donald Laun	130	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not let greedy corporations destroy our sacred Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Imelia	Ford		131	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow drilling in Jenny Gulch! You will destroy our beautiful serene forest for money and Gold? No!	Comment noted.
	Connie	Severson		132	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife Access & Transportation	Am very concerned about water pollution. Save our fish and no new roads into the hills.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Kayte	Halstead		133	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	STOP destroying our natural resources & tourist attractions NOW.	Comment noted.
	Hank	Halstead		134	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	The mining will end up polluting the ground water as wells as the creeks & lakes. Black Hills water is used across the state. Do not allow it to be polluted.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Mary	Maisey-Ireland		135	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	SD (the Black Hills) already has 2 SUPER fund sites as a result of gold mining! No more. Gold mining is water-intensive. This is a semi-arid region. Gold mining is NOT a good usage of our water. We need clean water for our communities, for tourists, for recreation. We do NOT need to send profits out of state, much less out of the country, derived from our natural resources. Protect our water.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Douglas	Traub		136	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Therefore I would propose that we must be suspect about any drilling or mining activity that occurs in the Rapid Creek drainage above Pactola Dam, due to unexpected results or accidents.	Comment noted.
	Douglas	Traub		136	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria		Although the slide show presentation attempts to placate us by stating no mining or milling will occur with F3 activities, who will be responsible for a drilling accident such as happened out near the Cheyenne River several years ago?	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Douglas	Traub		136	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Unless F3 is held completely responsible for accidents that might occur and for cleanup of potential contamination that would threaten Rapid City's water supply, the proposal should be a non starter. If our out dated mining laws cannot hold F3 responsible for accidents, then the only way to "regulate" F3 is to stop these activities before they start.	Comment noted. F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Douglas	Traub		136	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	General Environmental Concern	F3's proposal should address what remedial efforts they are capable of in case of accidents. (i.e. what will they do if they accidently flip a truck load of diesel fuel on the ground, what will they do if a drilling accident occurs with loss of the drilling bit and aquifers are cross-contaminated, or what will they do if toxic or radioactive drilling debris is spilled, possibly to drain into Pactola.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects.
	Hans	Stephenson		137	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my strong opposition to the mining exploration and future possibility of mining on any scale above Pactola Reservoir at Silver City. This is far too sensitive an area for mining. The dangers of erosion, toxic spills, and disturbance of the watershed so close to Pactola Reservoir are far too great to justify permitting mining activity.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to hydrology.
	Hans	Stephenson		137	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	The risk for mining activity at Silver City contaminating this vital water supply should be reason enough to halt the proposed exploration.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Hans	Stephenson		137	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	I also believe that the recreational value of the reservoir and Rapid Creek is worth considering. The recreational use and value of Pactola Lake and Rapid Creek are far too great to put at risk.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Hans	Stephenson		137	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please halt this and all future mining activities in the Silver City and Rochford areas.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Due to the mixture of impacts and the variety of what is impacted, i.e.: wide variety and disparity of human recreation, wildlife diversity, hydrology uncertainty, and vegetation abundance, I urge the Black Hills National Forest to prohibit the project or, at the minimum, conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that addresses all the cumulative impacts that drilling may have.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria		There are over 80 homes less than 1/2 mile from any one of the proposed drill sites, none of these homes show up on the overview map published by Barr Engineering.	Comment noted.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	3	Other	Access & Transportation	The seasonal and full time springs are also not shown on the map, nor are many of the trails used by UTV's and ATV's or motorcycles, I do not see the historical sites either.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Why isn't the elk habitat shown or the location of bat habitat or the osprey nesting sites or bald and golden eagle fall and winter habitat areas?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	5	Other	Hydrology	Is it common knowledge that the spring that feeds the cistern feeds the community hall in Silver City with water, that many residents of Silver City use, is located 3/4 of a mile up Sunnyside Gulch and that it is a surface spring and falls within 1/4 mile of a proposed drilling pad?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to hydrology.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	6	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Does Barr Engineering or the Mystic Ranger District know that there is a restored historic cabin, that falls under the Antiquity ACT of 1906, located at the base of Gorman Gulch and that project traffic will travel within feet of it? In addition, one proposed drill pad is within 1/4 mile of this historic site?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	7	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	Is there a decibel level deemed as excessive by the Black Hills National Forest? What is it? Who will be monitoring and enforcing the standards. Do the enforcing entities have the personnel and monetary resources?	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	8	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	What if the straw bales mentioned by Barr Engineering as a sound mitigator do not work?	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	9	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	What resources do we have when the sound becomes unbearable?	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	10	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Will operations be shut down due to inclement weather and or road conditions?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	11	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Who is monitoring and enforcing weight restrictions during sensitive times i.e.: spring ground heave, heavy rain or snow events, strong winds? Do the enforcing entities have the personnel and monetary resources?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. The Forest Service will administer and monitor the implementation of the final Plan of Operations. Permits from other regulatory entities will be adminstered and monitored by those responsible parties and coordinated with the Forest Service.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	12	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Will the Black Hills National Forest put a speed restriction on the known project traffic and will the personnel follow those restrictions? Who would be responsible for the monitoring?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. The Forest Service will administer and monitor the implementation of the final Plan of Operations. Permits from other regulatory entities will be adminstered and monitored by those responsible parties and coordinated with the Forest Service.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	13	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Will F3 Gold repair damage incurred by their 24/7 use by the heavy water trucks and drill rigs in a timely manner?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. A reclamation plan will be a part of the final Plan of Operations. The forest service will administer/monitor the Plan.
	Rita	Chapman	Tally Chapman	138	14	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Will they minimize damage by following a 20 MPH recommendation for the safety of residents, tourists, cattle? Who will monitor and make sure it happens?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. The Forest Service will administer and monitor the implementation of the final Plan of Operations. Permits from other regulatory entities will be adminstered and monitored by those responsible parties and coordinated with the Forest Service.
	Jane	O'Leary		139	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am asking that you preserve our Black Hills by not allowing the requested exploration for gold.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jane	O'Leary		139	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	If there is exploration, you know that there will be no way to curb the impact of mining if the exploration is successful.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jane	O'Leary		139	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please remember that our tourism and ag economy is critical for SD, and mining undermines these areas. The Black Hills offers one of the few amazing places to discover for families that cannot afford to travel to Disneyland or overseas. Please help maintain their right to a beautiful vacation. Not only the out of state visitors, but those of us who love and utilize this sacred land for hiking, camping, fishing and riding trails want to keep our area and our water pristine.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Keith	Rhudy		140	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Modern mining technologies, techniques and regulations enable us to develop the minerals and metals we so critically need, while preserving the environmental values. Just like we need to be oil independent it is also critical for minerals like gold. This would be an enormous economic opportunity for not only Rapid City but the entire region.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I join with thousands of citizens of Rapid City, the Black Hills, and the State of South Dakota in opposing this first step in granting to a Minnesota based exploratory firm (F3 Gold) the right to disturb our beautiful Black Hills with a scheme that has every possibility to poison the domestic waters within Rapid Creek and endangering the health, safety, and economic base for Rapid City and all of our Black Hills and many areas in western South Dakota.	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Financial Assurance	Before issuing any permit for even beginning preliminary discussions or procedures for drilling at this and other locations, the Federal Government and the State of South Dakota must require every applicant to post a $50 million environmental mitigation bond (possibly larger) with state and federal authorities. This economic protection for the citizens of South Dakota must be in place to clean up the mess(ess) and return the site(s) to their present pristine conditions. All mining firms that apply for permitting within the Black Hills must be financially strong and have the capability to file such a bond for many reasons:	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	3	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Financial Assurance	The testing may reveal negative results and also define their most economical and valid path to future gold production. In this case, the firm must be required to repair the site and eliminate any possible long term negative damage to South Dakota. These applicants may scream and protest that they do not have adequate funds to restore and repair the site. Each out-of-state (or out-of-country) mining firm may have the corporate intent to leave or abandon the sites and leave the burden to repair the sites with local, state, and federal agencies. This simply means the taxpayers of South Dakota and the taxpayers of the USA may be forced to pay 100% of the clean-up expense. These bonds must become the first step in the permitting process.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	State and Federal regulatory agencies must force the applicant to scientifically prove that mining at this site will not endanger the domestic and industrial (short-term and long-term) water supplies for short term and long term usage within the Rapid Creek (drainage area), the Cheyenne River Basin, and downstream to the Gulf of Mexico.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	These potential sites may very well pollute the water drawn from residential wells and used by cabin owners and homeowners along Rapid Creek between Pactola Lake and City of Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The applicants must prove that this drilling and the use of dangerous chemicals within this process will not endanger a major source of Rapid City's water supply; namely the Jackson Springs water source at the mouth of Cleghorn Canyon at the immediate upstream areas near Canyon Lake within the City Limits of Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	The prime question for the US Forest Service and related federal and state regulatory agencies is this: How will the mining corporation fix (mediate to the 100% level)) the damages to the Black Hills if the science for which they are advocating today is wrong and not based on established fact? This mining may result in totally un-fixable environmental issues throughout the Black Hills. In more clear terms, the question is this: "Who profits from the Gold Mine? Who gets that Shaft?"	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	8	Outside of Scope	Mining	The State must impose very high severance taxation on the values of any gold or related minerals to be extracted from public or private lands within SD.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	9	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Before exploratory or production drilling occurs, the Corporation holding the permit must complete an economic impact analysis on the potential danger to state-wide tourism if new mineral mining happens in SD.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation. Conducting an economic analysis of exploratory drilling is not a federal requirement. However, all conditions that may be required by the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources will apply. In addition, mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review; an economic impact analysis would be a part of that process.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	10	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Before the US Forest Service even begins these proceedings, it is legally certain that our Native Americans and their tribal governments should be given the opportunity to present their points of view about these radical and environmentally dangerous mining efforts that will eventually lead to the potential destruction, forever, of portions of our wonderful Black Hills of South Dakota. These Native Americans must be the first in line to voice their positions and certainly not be the last to be considered. The tribes were wonderful stewards of these lands before the 1860s. they should be first in line to express their cohesive and brilliant opposition to new gold and mineral mining within the Black Hills.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	11	Other	Financial Assurance	The state legislature must educate itself about the benefits in requiring these corporations to file environmental mitigation (or clean-up) bonds before the first road the mining site is dredged over portions of the Black Hills and before the first boring or drilling is permitted to begin.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	12	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	RC has a legal responsibility to provide water for Ellsworth. This fact must be a continuing issue as it relates to possible mining operations near the headwaters of Rapid Creek.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	13	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Any U.S. Forest Service ("USFS") review of the exploration plan must comply with federal law as detailed herein. At a minimum, if the agency proceeds with its review, an Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") should be prepared due to the potential for significant impacts from the Project - especially when viewed with its cumulative impacts from other and/or related activities.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	14	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Further, because the USFS has withheld the Plan of Operations from any public review, the agency should either 1) extend the public comment period until the Plan is made available; or 2) ensure full public information and an opportunity for additional comment on a Draft NEPA document once all relevant information has been disclosed.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. Additional project documents, including the EA, will be posted to this site once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	15	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Plan of Operations Has Been Wrongfully Withheld from Public Review	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	16	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The scoping notice for the Project demonstrates that information needed for the public to understand and evaluate the scope and the potential impacts of the proposed Project has been withheld from the public. Specifically, the notice states that "[a]dditional details regarding the proposed project are provided in F3's proposed Plan of Operations submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (FS) on November 30, 2018." However, the USFS has refused to allow the public to review any portion of the Plan of Operations. This is contrary to law.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	17	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Under USFS mining regulations, "all information and data submitted by an operator pursuant to the regulations in this part shall be available for examination by the public." 36 CFR § 228.6. This regulation specifically refers to plans of operation and the information contained therein as subject to this requirement. The only exemption from this broad rule in favor of disclosure is for "specifically identified information and data" that the operator identifies as "trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	18	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Here, there is no evidence that either the USFS nor the Project proponent have "specifically identified" any information in the Plan subject to this narrow exemption - or any basis for considering this information privileged. The agency simply withheld the entirety of the Plan. It is hard to imagine that every page of the Plan qualifies under the narrow exemption. Under that rationale, the mandate for disclosure in § 228.6 becomes meaningless, as every operator could claim that its entire PoO was "confidential".	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	19	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The withholding of this information from the Plan of Operations violates NEPA's mandate to make relevant information available to the public before decisions are made, 40 C.F.R. § 1500.1(b), to encourage and facilitate public involvement, , id. § 1500.2(d), to involve the public to the extent practicable in preparing [environmental] assessments, id. § 1501.4(b), and to make diligent efforts to involve the public in implementing NEPA procedures. ID. § 1506.6(a) See also 36 C.F.R. §§ 218.24 and 218.25 (requiring public notice and comment on USFS NEPA documents).	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	20	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The agency's refusal to provide underlying records during the NEPA process significantly prejudices the public's ability to weigh in with its views and inform the agency decision-making process. "This pattern of behavior is not acceptable under NEPA," and is ground for "invalidating any resulting final decision that the Agencies might issue."	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	21	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Because of this lack of information, the public is left without complete information upon which to base scoping comments. As a result, the USFS should extend the comment period until this relevant information is disclosed. At minimum, the agency should make available a Draft NEPA document for additional public comment to ensure that the National Environmental Policy Act's (NEPA) purpose of effectively involving the public can be fulfilled.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. Additional project documents, including the EA, will be posted to this site once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	22	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The Agency Must Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	23	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The scoping notice for this Project indicates that an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared. However, when considered along with the cumulative impacts from all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the region, including other exploration, mining, grazing, recreation, energy development, roads, etc., the impacts are significant and require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The agency must conduct its NEPA review and subject that review to public comment in an EIS, including impacts to air quality, ground and surface water quantity and quality, recreation, cultural/religious resources, wildlife, transportation/traffic, scenic and visual resources.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	24	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	In this case, because of the location of the drilling - in close proximity to areas used extensively by the public as described herein and in public comments submitted relating to this Project - "substantial questions" exist as to whether the impacts from the Project will be significant. In addition, when viewed in combination with other mineral exploration and development proposals in the area, the impacts rise to the level of significance. As such, the agency must prepare an EIS.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	25	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	The Agency Must Fully Analyze All Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	26	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	The Forest Service must fully review the impacts from all "past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions." These are the "cumulative effect/impacts" under NEPA. To comply with NEPA, the Forest Service must consider all direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed action.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	27	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	An EIS that is prepared must fully review all reasonable alternatives, provide for mitigation and an analysis of the effectiveness of all mitigation measures, review all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, and fully analyze all baseline conditions of the potentially affected environment, among other NEPA requirements.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	28	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The immediate area of the Project includes Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek, which supply water for domestic use, municipal, and agricultural use. These waters are also sources for wildlife and provide the setting for extensive recreation activities. The Project area also includes other National Forest lands and resources used extensively by the public for myriad purposes, including hiking, biking, water-based recreation, fishing and other pursuits. Immediately upstream, there is exploratory drilling occurring, as well as at least one former mine site. The agency must disclose and analyze all potential impacts to these water supplies and these uses. The scoping notice indicates that the proponent has only provided broad range of the depth of each of its proposed drill holes. Without more specific information, neither the agency nor the public are able to effectively predict and analyze the impacts. The agency must disclose with more precision the details of the proposal in order to allow the public a meaningful opportunity to provide effective comments.	The EA evaluates project-related effects to water quality/supply.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	29	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	As referred to herein and as the Forest Service is aware, several other mineral exploration projects have been proposed in the area that will contribute to cumulative impacts. For instance, the Mineral Mountain Resources Project must be addressed in addition to the four other projects/companies the Forest Service has confirmed at a recent National Forest Advisory Board meeting are seeking to apply for exploration permits.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	30	Regulatory Process	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Importantly, the agency must disclose and provide a detailed review of the impacts to cultural and historic resources in the area. There is no indication that the Project area has been surveyed for cultural resources by a competent and trained surveyor with a complex understanding of the Indigenous peoples of the area. As the agency is no doubt aware, the Black Hills - including the Project area - are subject to treaties and have been occupied since time immemorial by the Lakota and others. These parties must be involved in a cultural resources survey in order to effectively identify and evaluate cultural and historic resources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	31	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Additionally, impacts to Pe' Sla (Reynolds Prairie), which contains significant sacred, ceremonial, and historic qualities and resources, must be assessed. The character and use of this site could be significantly impacted by the proposed operation, even if indirectly. Operations proposed during the Project may have significant adverse effects on the use and character of the cultural, spiritual and religious area. The USFS must consider the obvious adverse impacts to the cultural resource, the certain adverse impacts to the cultural and religious uses of the area, including Pe'Sla, along with impacts to the users of this religious area from the noise, visual intrusions, and other direct adverse effects must be addressed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	32	Other	General Environmental Concern	The USFS Must Fully Analyze All Baseline Conditions	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects against current site conditions.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	33	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Given the lack of public information from the Plan of Operations, there is insufficient detail to satisfy NEPA's requirements for public review of the baseline.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	34	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Here, at minimum, prior to considering or approving any exploration, the Forest Service must first obtain additional information and subject the information and analysis to public review and comment. This includes the methods of drilling, the depth and extent of the drilling, the process for abandonment/sealing of drill holes, and all mitigation or other measures proposed to ensure protection of ground water and other resources.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	35	Other	General Environmental Concern	The baseline requirement applies not only to ground and surface waters, but any potentially affected resource such as air quality, recreation, cultural/religious/historical, soils, and wildlife.	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	36	Regulatory Process		The Agency Must Include an Adequate Mitigation Plan Under NEPA	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	37	Regulatory Process		Under NEPA, the agency must have an adequate mitigation plan to minimize or eliminate all potential project impacts.	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	38	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	In this case, no mitigation has been detailed in the scoping notice and the agency has refused to release the Plan of Operations for public review. As such, the public must be given an opportunity to provide additional comment on a draft NEPA document prepared by the agency and including all relevant information.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The EA incorporates mitigation and design criteria to minimize project effects.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	39	Regulatory Process		The Agency Must Fully Review All Reasonable Alternatives	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	40	Regulatory Process		NEPA requires the agency to "study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal that involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	41	Mitigation/Design Criteria	General Environmental Concern	The Forest Service Must Minimize All Adverse Impacts from the Project	The EA considers measures to minimize potential project-related effects.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	42	Other	General Environmental Concern	On the National Forests, the Organic Act requires the Forest Service "to regulate their occupancy and use and to preserve the forests thereon from destruction."	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	43	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Thus, in this case, in order to minimize all adverse impacts, the agency must consider, among other restrictions to protect wildlife and the environment, limit project activities to existing roads and upgrade those roads. Exploration-related traffic would present an undue risk on Silver City Road, given how narrow and winding the road is. Further, in the summer, the road receives a high level of traffic. Similarly, Rochford Road presents serious transportation risks, evidenced by the Mineral Mountain Resources vehicle that recently slid off the road into Rapid Creek. Transportation of fuels and any other drilling or other chemicals must be tightly controlled to prevent contamination.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	44	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Fisheries & Wildlife	Additionally, to reduce cumulative impacts to wildlife species that are sensitive to light, noise, and other human activities incidental to mineral exploration, the USFS should consider the timing of the project in relation to other adjacent or nearby mineral projects and consider imposing timing restrictions so that these multiple projects in the same general area occur sequentially rather than at the same time.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	45	Other	General Environmental Concern	The same is true for other affected resources such as ground water, surface water, and air quality.	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	46	Regulatory Process	Botanical Resources Fisheries & Wildlife	USFS Must Fully Analyze The Project's Impacts to Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Indicator Species Under NEPA, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) And Related Laws And Regulations	Section 7 coordination and concurrence is included as part of the NEPA process.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	47	Regulatory Process	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Agency Must Comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and Other Requirements to Protect Cultural, Historic, and Native American Interests and Resources	Section 106 coordination and concurrence is included as part of the NEPA process.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	48	Regulatory Process	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The USFS must comply with the NHPA and requirements regarding cultural, historic, and Native American interests and resources. Due to the likelihood that cultural and religious sites and resources will be adversely affected, it would be a violation of the NHPA and other laws (and NEPA as noted above) to approve the projects without the required review of, and protection of, cultural/historical resources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. Section 106 coordination and concurrence is included as part of the NEPA process.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	49	Regulatory Process	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	In this case, it is not evident that USFS has initiated any of the required NHPA consultations, either with the public or with the relevant Tribes. The Project area must be subject to a culturally-relevant and competent cultural resources survey, and the public and Tribes must be given an opportunity to participate and comment on the identification, evaluation, and protection of the cultural resources at the site. The agency should have initiated these reviews before seeking public comment, as the information produced from these surveys are necessary for the public and the Tribes to have the legally-required opportunity to participate in the agency's analysis and decision. this fact again necessitates that a draft NEPA document be produced and circulated for public review and comment once all relevant information has been disclosed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	50	Regulatory Process		In Compliance with the Forest Plan and NFMA is Required.	Comment noted.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	51	Outside of Scope	Mining	the Black Hills National Forest Plan lists the area around Pactola Reservoir as in management area 8.2, where the Plan states no new mining operations will be allowed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	52	Other	Hydrology Water Quality/Water Supply	Please see the attached research paper regarding the connections between Rapid Creek and the Madison and Minnelusa Aquifers. Whatever spills into Rapid Creek could contaminate all three of Rapid City's water sources at approximately the same time.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Don	Barnett	Lilias Jones Jarding	141	53	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Also, Rapid City's water department provides water for Ellsworth Air Force Base just to the east of town. If there was a spill into Rapid City's water supply, it would also shut down EAFB's operations. That makes this a potential national security issue, necessitating a full EIS.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Linda	Antolic		142	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	No one in our communities are supportive of this proposal.	Comment noted.
	Linda	Antolic		142	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	However, do we not also have environmental protection laws to prevent such blatant irresponsibility and disregard of our lands for their profit.	Comment noted.
	Linda	Antolic		142	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Do we need an Environmental Impact Statement any more powerful than the fact that the Black Hills already has two Superfund Toxic Waste Sites due to mining?	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Linda	Antolic		142	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am appealing to the US Forest Service to deny this exploratory mining proposal and demand further investigations into the impact of mining to our communities and our vital water source.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jane	Beisner		143	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please protect Pactola Lake and our drinking water! No gold mining!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Karla	Deuter		144	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There are many reasons to turn this project down, water security being the main concern.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Chris	McCurdy		145	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing you this letter in order to voice my strong opposition the F3 Gold, Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project.	Comment noted.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria		I have read the information regarding this project that has been provided to the public. I'm more than just a little dismayed that you have minimized the proximity of these drilling sites to subdivisions and homesteads. Your very poor resolution map gives the impression that this activity is taking place in the middle of nowhere. In reality, the F3 project area is uncomfortably close to Aspen Acres subdivision to the north, and it completely envelopes Sunnyside Acres Subdivision to the south. There are also several historic homesteads that are in the middle of the project area. There are homes within a few hundred feet of several proposed drilling sites.	Comment noted.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	3	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	The map also misrepresents existing USFS roads. The map show roads where there are currently only narrow ATV/motorcycle trails and closed/non-motorized logging trails. Some of these so-called "roads" that F3 will be using were reclaimed by nature years ago. These areas aren't appropriate for the kind of heavy vehicular traffic that the F3 project will create. F3's proposed use of these trails will destroy or permanently alter these areas.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Many of the drilling sites are within a few hundred feet of ponds/springs. Some of the drill sites appear to be right in the middle of seasonal creek beds. This water all feeds into the water sources of our shallow drinking water wells, and eventually into Pactola Reservoir. Why risk potential contamination? We all need water much more than we need more gold.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	5	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	All of us around here have heard the noise from these types of exploration operations in our area. The actual drill may be "as quiet as a refrigerator" (per your Powerpoint presentation), but the overall operations are extremely noisy. The hammering sounds, the vibrations and clanking of the machinery, the hum of the motors that run the drills and the heavy equipment traveling on the roads, are all far from quiet.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	We have incredibly diverse wildlife in this area that will be disturbed and displaced for these exploratory operations.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	7	Other	Vegetation & Timber Resources	Is the USFS going to allow indiscriminate destruction of trees for this exploration? The drilling rigs won't be able to get to the drill sites and set up without taking down many trees.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to vegetation and timber resources.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	8	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Recreational activities will be displaced including hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, etc. Livestock grazing operations will also be disrupted. Is it really acceptable that the public use of public land is subjugated to the profit motives of private corporations?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	9	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Residences near or within the project area are surrounded by the "roads" that will see 24-7 use by heavy equipment used in this project. Are the quality of life and property values of these people acceptable collateral damage?	F3's proposal is for exploratory drilling. Design criteria will be developed as part of the EA to help mitigate and reduce associated impacts.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	10	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Who will pay for the wear and tear on the public access roads , i.e. Jenny Gulch and Rochford road? Do these companies ever have to help maintain the infrastructure that they use and abuse?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	11	Outside of Scope	Mining	If they do find gold, what will happen to our area then? Who is actually benefitting from all of this? The rights to exploit mineral resources should not automatically take precedence over the public's right to have their water, air, land, and wildlife protected.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Chris	McCurdy		145	12	Mitigation/Design Criteria	General Environmental Concern	Who's going to monitor these operations to make sure F3 and any subsequent mining operations live up to their promises? The USFS and County can't even adequately address the damage caused by illegal ATV activity. The State of South Dakota certainly doesn't have a great track record in holding these companies accountable.	The Forest Service will administer the final approved Plan of Operations. Other government entities will be responsible for monitoring the permits they issue for this project. F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Chris	McCurdy		145	13	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	At some point the Federal Government and the State will need to decide what they want. Do they want the Black Hills to be a place where people recreate and live, and where wildlife can flourish? Or, do they want the Black Hills to be exploited to the fullest extent for its extractive resources? We can't have it both ways. The Black Hills aren't big enough, and the water resources and habitats are too vulnerable to be continually assaulted by mining activities.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	April	Shannon		146	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I live in the region of water from Pactola Lake and am concerned of the affects to the water potentially from drilling.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Tim	Robinson		147	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I use Jenny Gulch for recreating on a regular basis with my family and also get my water from Rapid Creek that comes from Pactola. Due to these circumstances I would like to join the fight to stop any mining/exploratory mining to that area.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jeremiah	Davis		148	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Everyone in the Rapid City area depends on water from Rapid Creek for domestic use.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jeremiah	Davis		148	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	In addition, Lake Pactola is a huge recreational asset to our tourism-based economy.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Jeremiah	Davis		148	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Accidental contamination of the surface water in the Rapid Creek watershed would be catastrophic.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality.
	Jeremiah	Davis		148	4	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	If multiple drilling holes are permitted, the drillers should be required to post a sufficient bond to cover this risk.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Jeremiah	Davis		148	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	An additional concern in this popular tourist area is the possibility of noise pollution, 24 hours a day, which disrupts camping and other recreational uses around Lake Pactola.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation.
	Jeremiah	Davis		148	6	Other	General Environmental Concern	I am concerned that exploratory drilling is being rushed through without adequate consideration for the long-term consequences to our region.	Comment noted. The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Linda	Conner		149	1	Other	General Environmental Concern	There are numerous studies that have been done and actual events that have occurred that support the devastating effects a proposal such as this can have on the environment, ecology and particularly the integrity of the surface and ground water at and near such activity.	Comment noted.
	Linda	Conner		149	2	Other	Access & Transportation	The footprint as set forth in this proposal is unrealistic considering the amount of heavy truck traffic to haul all the heavy equipment, heavy materials, personnel and the enormous amount of water and other drilling requirements.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Linda	Conner		149	3	Mitigation/Design Criteria		Additionally, there would be spillage and waste materials from the trucks, the drilling equipment and all other the activities involved which would turn the ground into a muddy mess.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects.
	Linda	Conner		149	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please also see the attached excerpt of an article "The General Mining Act of 1872 has left a legacy of riches and ruin" By ROBERT MCCLURE AND ANDREW SCHNEIDER. I would encourage you to read the entire article - it mentions a $40 million dollar cleanup tab left for the taxpayers of South Dakota to pay. This one cleanup bill more than offsets any increase in jobs this type of activity might bring.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

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	Eirik	Heikes		150	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	THE CONSIDERED EXPLORATORY WORK IN JENNY GULCH SHOULD NOT HAPPEN!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Eirik	Heikes		150	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	A LOCATION WHERE ENDANGERED SPECIES COULD OCCUR THIS IS A SENSITIVE AREA; RECREATIONALLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY, CULTURALLY THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE RAPID CITY GETS ITS DRINKING WATER.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Jerry	Munson		151	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	In consideration of the irreplaceable resource that is Rapid City's water supply, I am opposed to the USFS determination that something less than a full EIS is adequate, even for the test holes.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Jerry	Munson		151	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	The implications of exploration are that if gold is found, that a mine will follow.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jerry	Munson		151	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Given the disastrous history of this kind of mining activity on watersheds, ecosystems, and quality of life, an EIS from the very beginning is, in my view, reasonable and prudent.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Stacy	Smith		152	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow any drilling or mining near Rapid Creek or Pactola. Protect this beautiful lake and protect Rapid City's water supply.	Comment noted.
	Stacy	Smith		152	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Also concerned for the animals & birds that nest or drink from the lake - bald eagles, osprey, big horn sheep, etc.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Nick	Lucas		153	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We do not want the Rapid City area water supply to be threatened by drilling and mining.	Comment noted.
	Nick	Lucas		153	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Neither do we want cultural and historical areas to be threatened.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. Section 106 coordination and concurrence is included as part of the NEPA process.
	Nick	Lucas		153	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	These activities are promoted as job-producing, etc., but they have resulted in much harm and negative results when "explorers" and producers are finished with the Black Hills area they explore and then extract what they want.	Comment noted.
	Sandra	Lashley		154	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I feel the reclamation details should be very specific, and adequate money should be set aside in case the company does not comply or goes out of business. That money should be put aside by the company doing the drilling.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Sandra	Lashley		154	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	I also concur with the comments made about a possible mine doing significant watershed damage. Why spend the money now if that is likely?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rodney	Blue	Patty Blue	155	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We are concerned about the drilling affecting our water well. And if the drilling does affect the well what will be done about it?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Joy	Rehfeld		156	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am very concerned about what a mining operation will do to the aesthetics of the Pactola Lake/Silver City area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Joy	Rehfeld		156	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	But I'm most concerned about the drinking water in Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Dan	Sims	Renee Sims	157	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Location: 22765 US Highway 385, Rapid City, SD. Aquifer water, our well is 65 feet and very good water. Where & distance from boundary or is it in the drilling area?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Dan	Sims	Renee Sims	157	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Possible changes from our water quality, loss of water? Will it recover if something changes? How long?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Dan	Sims	Renee Sims	157	3	Other		Plan to start? Projection - start to finish. How long? 1 months six months longer	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Plan of Operations addresses anticipated construction timing and is incorporated into the EA.

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	Dan	Sims	Renee Sims	157	4	Other	Access & Transportation	Commercial traffic?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Deborah	Wagman		158	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	If "exploration" yields high-quality ore, full-scale mining will quickly follow.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Deborah	Wagman		158	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Exploration and full-scale mining will disrupt a fragile eco-system, damaging trees, natural watershed, water purity and beauty.	Comment noted.
	Deborah	Wagman		158	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Allowing this project to further chip away at our beautiful Hills will make them a less desirable place to live, work, and vacation.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Carol	Merwin		159	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The F3 Gold company already has more than 2,000 mining claims in the Black Hills. Another forty two explorations that can ruin water resources seems dangerously foolish. Too many corporations leave messes for the community to clean up.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Carol	Merwin		159	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The noise pollution from machines interrupts the mating calls of songbirds which contributes to there decline. There has been a decrease by half since the 1960s.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Carol	Merwin		159	3	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The indigenous people here, for whom this is their spiritual home, should not be forced to suffer even more.	Comment noted.
	Carol	Merwin		159	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, just say "no" this time.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Anna	Ball		160	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to this exploration project based upon the science and data regarding Rapid City's drinking water.	Comment noted.
	Anna	Ball		160	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Our communities (Rapid City, Box Elder, EAFB) get 100% of their drinking water from this watershed by either directly drawing from the creek or via aquifer recharge activity.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Anna	Ball		160	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Accidents happen more than they should in the mining industry, margins are tight, and profit motivations do not always beget safety and best practices.	Comment noted.
	Anna	Ball		160	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	* I am opposed to this exploration project because the recreational use will be highly impacted. I hike, mountain bike, and bird here. I occasionally kayak here. My friends fish here.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Crystal	Hocking		161	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Comment: I am in support of the proposed exploration project by F3 Gold.	Comment noted.
	Crystal	Hocking		161	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I recommend that the EA consider impacts to surface water and groundwater quality from drilling sites down gradient to the intake for Rapid City water supplies and evaluate routes of potential contamination exposure.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Crystal	Hocking		161	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The study should evaluate current or baseline water quality on Rapid Creek and nearby monitoring wells for TDS, conductivity, temperature, and any polymers (if any) that are proposed to be utilized in the drilling fluid.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. The Forest Service will administer the final approved Plan of Operations. Other government entities will be responsible for monitoring the permits they issue for this project.
	Crystal	Hocking		161	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Further, the EA and/or permit should stipulate the use of best management practices for reducing likelihood of drilling fluid spills and onsite containment of drilling fluids (berms around tanks, etc.).	Comment noted.
	Crystal	Hocking		161	5	Other	Botanical Resources Fisheries & Wildlife	The EA study should also consider impacts to sensitive or endangered plant communities and include evaluation of noise and impacts to bats and raptors.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Riyen	Carlow		162	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am writing this email on behalf of protecting the Black Hills from radioactive and destructive mining. I would like to share my perspective of the proposed mining and start of by saying that we must do all we can in our power to prevent this project from carrying through.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Riyen	Carlow		162	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	We, the Oglala Lakota people, use the Black Hills as a sacred place for prayers and ceremonies, traditional herbs, and many more uses in our culture. Although the company may be coming into just look for gold and other profitable minerals, if it is found, some companies will be eager to come mine for it.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Riyen	Carlow		162	3	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Therefore, this proposed "search" must not be allowed to happen because whether there is gold in the hills or not, the Black Hills are a sacred area for the indigenous people who use it for their culture and spirituality.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Ed	Martley	Suzanne Martley	163	1	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	We are opposed to exploratory drilling in the proposed project area because it conflicts with recreational activities, and threatens the land and water that support them.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.

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	Ed	Martley	Suzanne Martley	163	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	As you gather information to analyze the effects of the project on recreation, please consider that Jenny Gulch is one of the few lakes where seniors and families with kids can safely canoe, kayak and fish without fear of being swamped by power boat wakes or strafed by jet-skis. It is one of the most popular places in the Hills. It has shelter, quiet, and beauty. It is not buffered by winds like Deerfield and Angostura. It is not stirred up by power boats like Sheridan or Pactola. It is large enough, unlike the lakes of the Southern Hills, that boaters and fishermen can find quiet spots. On any summer day the kayakers, picnickers, and swimmers fill up the small parking are near Silver City. Closed roads, road construction, heavy equipment, drilling noise are in conflict with the peaceful recreation opportunities in this area. We urge you to spend the summer getting out there and talking to folks who use the area about how the exploration would affect their activities.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Cherie	Soesbe		164	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This is my response to the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project. I am a stakeholder that owns property that has a private water well which supplies drinking water to my cabin in the water shed of the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project. Because the private water well is in the watershed, the proposed drilling has the potential to interrupt or damage my water well. It also has potential to contaminate my water well that supplies drinking water to my residence.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Cherie	Soesbe		164	2	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	The F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project drilling may cause man made earthquakes by awakening faults which have not moved for millions of years as has happened in states that have drilling for natural gas and oil. This has been documented in 8 states: Texas, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Alabama, and Ohio. Man-made earthquakes has the potential to damage my cabin and water well.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
	Cherie	Soesbe		164	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Botanical Resources	The F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project is a threat to wildlife, native flowers and flora. There is a nesting pair of Osprey on private land close to my residence and property. The nesting and habitat may be damaged for Mountain Bluebirds, hummingbirds and Bald Eagles and other species. There is only a small area in the Black Hills that hummingbirds are found during the summer months.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Cherie	Soesbe		164	4	Other	Access & Transportation	The F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project will impact trail and road usage. The road provides access to my property. The road is gravel, very narrow with steep sides. It also provides access to Trail 40 trailhead that is used by people who hike, people who fish, and people who mountain bike. I use the road system to hike, mountain bike and for access to paddling. Every year in July there is a Volks walk that uses the road system to access Trail 40.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Cherie	Soesbe		164	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	This is a recreation area and drilling such as F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project should not be allowed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Cherie	Soesbe		164	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	In closing, my significant concern is that my private water well is in the water shed that the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project impacts. This private water well is used for drinking water. The F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project has the potential for damage and water well contamination.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Cherie	Soesbe		164	7	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I ask that an EIS process is completed before any drilling is allowed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	James	McArthur	Linda McArthur	165	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We believe that drilling near our locations will undoubtedly effect our water supplies. Obviously we are not willing to endorse the proposed drilling project!!!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Sarah	Zakhari		166	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	That sounds really good. I didn't know they were wanting to drill there! That is horrible!	Comment noted.
	Duane	Claypool		167	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to oppose the proposal by F3 Gold, LLC to conduct exploratory drilling known as the F3 Jenny Gulch Drilling project on Black Hills National Forest lands and claim that any such drilling would have significant environmental impacts.	Comment noted.

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	Duane	Claypool		167	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	As a stakeholder, a recreational user of the Jenny Gulch access point, Silver City/Trail 40 access, my use & access as a hiker & fisherman will be significantly, adversely impacted. In particular, the substantial increase in F3 vehicle & equipment activity & usage of the section of the road that is very narrow, steep, and difficult to maintain will significantly restrict my usage for access to hike and fish in this area. The impact of transporting equipment as well as shift changes & other staffing activities will cause an unacceptable significant increase in traffic that will significantly, adversely affect my ability to access this area to recreate.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Duane	Claypool		167	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I urge the Forest Service to recognize the significant environmental impacts that would occur due to the exploratory drilling & to determine through the EA process that a full EIS is required.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Rosalie	Cooperman		168	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am submitting this comment in opposition to the proposed exploratory drilling by F3 mining in the Jenny Gulch region in the Mystic Ranger District in the Black Hills National Forest. Please take into consideration of the vast impacts this could have on a thriving community.	Comment noted.
	Rosalie	Cooperman		168	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This could have a big impact on our community's drinking water and to hear that makes me uncomfortable. 80% of Pactola is designated for drinking water, usage by the City of Rapid City, Boxelder and Ellsworth AFB for drinking water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Rosalie	Cooperman		168	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	The gold exploration could lead to gold mining which involves the use of cyanide and other toxins and often leads to permanent acid mine drainage which could go into rapid City creek.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rosalie	Cooperman		168	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Is this a risk we are willing to take? Water is an absolute need for survival and I don't want to risk destroying a precious essential source that keeps my fellow community member and I alive.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Karen	Ellison		169	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Even though concerned citizens have been told that F3 will be required to truck in their water supply, that does not mean that the local water supply will not be affected. Underground water supplies are fractured mazes that intertwine and F3's drilling could divert water that naturally flows to local residents' wells to other locations underground, possible affecting availability of water in those wells. The drilling could also puncture natural flows and introduce elements not naturally occurring in the water supply affecting the residents' water quality.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Karen	Ellison		169	2	Other	Botanical Resources Fisheries & Wildlife	Although F3 will reportedly be required to reclaim the footprints of the land they will clear to create their drilling areas, that does not diminish the fact that the areas will likely be clearcut resulting in flora being destroyed and fauna being displaced. The animals who depend on the plant life (and visa versa) cannot wait N years for reclamation to occur. Theirs lives will be ended or severely disrupted / negatively impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Karen	Ellison		169	3	Other	Botanical Resources	FORTY TWO clear cut drilling pad locations is WAY too much. We would not allow FORTY TWO homes to be built in the area due to zoning laws, we should not allow FORTY TWO clearcut area to be created.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to botanical resources. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Karen	Ellison		169	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	This is "just an exploration project" but exploration is not done without the intent of future mining. Gold mining has a history of being an extremely dirty process. There are no new "clean" methods of mining gold. We should not allow pools of acidic heavy-metal laden water to be created for the gold mining process upstream from Lake Pactola. Pactola is more than a lake, it is a reservoir / water supply for all of Rapid City as well as Ellsworth Airforce Base, and is also a recreational mecca for the area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Karen	Ellison		169	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Consultation with the Native American tribes must be done to their standards and approval and on their timelines. They are a sovereign nation with ownership claims to the land that should supersede any mining claims and must be honored and respected. The land belongs to the Native American tribes, per the treaties of the US government signed with them.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Karen	Ellison		169	6	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This project, and the projects it could potentially lead to, could impact tens of thousand of people - all the residents of Rapid City, Silver City, Ellsworth Air Force base and beyond, as well as countless amounts of wildlife and native vegetation. A full Environmental Impact Statement must be developed - an Environmental Assessment will not do.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Sylvia	Lambert		170	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	If F3 Gold, like all mining operations in the exploration stages, discovers gold in the Rapid Creek watershed, a mining company will most certainly and quickly move on to active mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Sylvia	Lambert		170	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Therefore, the Forest Service must first do a full Environmental Impact Statement that includes not only an assessment of the impacts of exploratory drilling, but also those of any future mining.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Sylvia	Lambert		170	3	Other	Vegetation & Timber Resources Recreation & Travel Management Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	As a matter of course, the assessment should cover the likely effects on agriculture, tourism and cultural resources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Sylvia	Lambert		170	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	But above all, it should focus on concerns for Rapid Creek and the Pactola impoundment as the primary sources of water for Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Sylvia	Lambert		170	5	Regulatory Process	Water Quality/Water Supply	To insure that the children and grandchildren of all of us, including Forest Service employees, have safe, clean and ample water supplies, please defer action on F3 Gold's drilling application until a thorough and serious full impact assessment is conducted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Richard	Emerson		171	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I believe the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project will have significant environmental impacts and warrants an Environmental Impact Statement.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Richard	Emerson		171	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My reasoning is multi-faceted - though potential impact on water quality is of most concern.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Richard	Emerson		171	3	Other	Botanical Resources Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources) Recreation & Travel Management	I would think the Jenny Gulch area also has botanical, archeological, and recreational issues that need to be adequately addressed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Richard	Emerson		171	4	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	As an active outdoor recreationalist, I am concerned about the impacts related to the exploratory drilling in an area that has been returning to a more natural state.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Richard	Emerson		171	5	Other	Access & Transportation	F3 Gold touts the project as a 3.8-acres footprint, but the actual impact would much larger. Heavy equipment traffic on existing Forest Service roads, along with new tracks to drilling sites, indicate a more expansive footprint and should also be included.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Richard	Emerson		171	6	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Please consider the full impacts on the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project by requiring a EIS. The risks associated with the project warrant more than just an EA.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Fred	Dieken		172	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a resident of Rapid City, I am writing to comment on the proposal by F3 Gold, LLC's request to drill test holes for mining in the Jenny Gulch area. I am opposed to this request for several reasons.	Comment noted.
	Fred	Dieken		172	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This area is in the Rapid Creek drainage which provides the inflow for Pactola Reservoir. 80% of the water in that reservoir is utilized as drinking water for Rapid City, the city of Box Elder, and Ellsworth AFB. The drilling does risk contaminating this water supply. No matter how small the risk, it exists and could be irreversible in a worst case scenario.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Fred	Dieken		172	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	On an environmental level, this is a rare osprey nesting area and the 24 hour activity associated with drilling would disturb these shy raptors who only recently returned to the Black Hills in the last 50 years. Other federal and state agencies have expanded substantial resources to establish the reintroduction of this bird which had historically lived in the Hills. Additionally, the upper Pactola reservoir is choice spawning beds for brook and brown trout. Pactola Lake is also one of the few lakes in the state with a population of lake trout. The spawning beds and the lake trout would all be at risk if the drilling company had a spill or mishap and could, potentially, have long-term and/or irreversible effects.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Fred	Dieken		172	4	Other	Access & Transportation	For those living in the area, the existing roads are minimal with very little travel. The proposed operation would entail additional roads into wild forest areas and increased travel on the existing roads by large vehicles and equipment. A 24 hour/day operation would result in round-the-clock travel. The noise, dust, and travel inconvenience would affect residents who have lived here for years and have chose to, often, because of the quiet and solitude. This would be no more.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Fred	Dieken		172	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 Gold, LLC has a less than stellar track record when it comes to environmental concerns. Their past spills and discharges have violated various environmental laws and regulations involved in several of their prior operations in other states. These violations threatened the health of local wetlands and watersheds.	Comment noted.
	Fred	Dieken		172	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Black Hills National Forest is public land and is to be managed for all, as is best possible. This means that the interests of a small company should not trump the concerns of a greater population with a direct interest in preserving the integrity of this watershed.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Fred	Dieken		172	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	If precious minerals are found, there will be future proposals to mine in this area. Some areas are not suitable for mining and the associated environmental risks. Jenny Gulch area is one of those areas not suitable for mineral extraction.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jim	Bickett		173	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	#1 Exploration (drilling) will lead to full scale mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jim	Bickett		173	2	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	#2 Exploration means drilling through all kinds of rock and likely through underground aquifers.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
	Jim	Bickett		173	3	Other	Access & Transportation	#3 Drilling rigs and equipment will be driven through our hills causing damage i.e. erosion to our hill sides etc. Most holes are not going to be drilled next to existing roads requiring more to be made to accommodate equipment.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Jim	Bickett		173	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	#4 mining does not have a great clean-up record (1 example Gilt Edge Mine see example)	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jim	Bickett		173	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I am asking at the very least you ask for a Environmental Impact Statement!!	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.

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City of Rapid City	Kelsey	Sakos		174	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	WHEREAS, gold exploration could lead to gold mining, which involves the use of cyanide and other toxins and often leads to permanent acid mine drainage, which could go into Rapid Creek; and	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
City of Rapid City	Kelsey	Sakos		174	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	WHEREAS, the Rapid Creek watershed and its connected aquifers are the sources for Rapid City's water supply; and	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
City of Rapid City	Kelsey	Sakos		174	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	WHEREAS, the Rapid Creek watershed, including Pactola Reservoir, is a major recreation and tourism area, supporting Rapid City's economy; and	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation.
City of Rapid City	Kelsey	Sakos		174	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	WHEREAS, maintaining the quality and quantity of the water supply is of utmost importance to the City and to Ellsworth Air Force Base; and	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
City of Rapid City	Kelsey	Sakos		174	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	WHEREAS, the Common Council of the City of Rapid City believes that gold exploration in the Rapid Creek watershed poses an unacceptable risk to the source of Rapid City's drinking water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
City of Rapid City	Kelsey	Sakos		174	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City of Rapid City that due to the potential risk to the Rapid Creek watershed, the City's water supply, and the local economy the City expresses opposition to gold exploration and potential gold mining in the Rapid Creek watershed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
City of Rapid City	Kelsey	Sakos		174	7	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	[This comment is Resolution No. 2020-011 Resolution Expressing Opposition to gold exploration in the Rapid Creek Watershed.]	Comment noted.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I write in opposition to the exploration drilling project proposed by F3 Gold, LLC.	Comment noted.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My understanding is that F3 is proposing to truck in water to use with the operation of its drilling machinery. As that water is utilized, it will become contaminated with whatever other solvents, metal, etc. are used in the drilling. That mixture will then seep into the surrounding earth, only to eventually be washed downstream.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We are opposed to the exploratory drilling because, despite their best intentions, F3 Gold cannot ensure that the drilling itself will not compromise the water supply in Silver City, the integrity of Rapid Creek, and the surround forest and fauna. The water utilized by Silver City residents comes from the individual wells located downstream in the watershed of Gorman and Sunnyside Gulches. Once Rapid Creek and those wells are contaminated , there is no turning back. Further, contamination of Rapid Creek leads to contamination of Pactola Lake, which in turn draws into question the water supply of Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The environmental impacts of that contamination must be thoroughly examined by Barr Engineering and the United States Forest Service (Forest Service) environmental experts. In order to fully assess the situation, the Forest Service needs to require the creation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) so that the cumulative impacts of this project will be considered. This project cannot, and should not, be reviewed in isolation.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Consideration of the project must include taking into account development that preceded it, as well as future developments such as the actual mining should gold be discovered.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	6	Regulatory Process		Reasonable alternatives must be analyzed.	Comment noted.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	7	Other	General Environmental Concern	The impact on the water supply, environment, and those residence living nearby are critical in the overall evaluation of the project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	SaraBeth	Donovan		175	8	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Thank you for your expertise in and attention to this matter. I am hopeful that when the Forest Service and Barr Engineering critically analyze this project through an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an EIS, they will determine that the risk of negatively impacting the surrounding environment is too great, and they will deny the project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Gemma	Lockhart		176	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	As you review the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project I request the Forest Service conduct an Environmental Impact Statement on the project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Gemma	Lockhart		176	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Especially I request the most comprehensive review and scientific analysis possible of presence of the minnow rainbow or bronze colored fish, the Lake Chub in Pactola Lake.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Gemma	Lockhart		176	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We have a responsibility to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement for the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Gemma	Lockhart		176	4	Outside of Scope	Fisheries & Wildlife	Finally, I ask you to consider U.S. District Court Judge B. Lynn Winmill ruled just two months ago, the U.S. Forest Service violated environmental laws by failing to adequately consider potential harm to Yellowstone cutthroat in a Canadian mining company's plans to expand it's search for gold in eastern Idaho.	Comment noted.
	Gemma	Lockhart		176	5	Other Regulatory Process	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils Fisheries & Wildlife EA vs EIS	I respectfully request the Forest Service conduct an Environmental Impact Statement for the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project, to examine how the proposed exploratory drilling could affect groundwater and possibly fish.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Tauna	Lockhart		177	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am deeply concerned and interested stakeholder with regard to the proposal by F3 to do exploratory drilling in the Jenny Gulch area. I understand the company's exploratory efforts to find gold mean that the desired outcome is to find gold and either mine for gold or sell the mining rights to another company so it may be mined. With that understanding. I am going to address my concerns about the exploratory drilling as well as the potential eventuality of gold mining in this ecologically sensitive ecosystem and water supply.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tauna	Lockhart		177	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Water Quality/Water Supply	First, the exploratory drilling has the potential to impact wildlife, residents in the area, and key water sources. Including seasonal streams, drainage pathways and ultimately Pactola Lake. Pactola Lake is on of the sources for drinking water for South Dakota's second largest city, Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Tauna	Lockhart		177	3	Incorporate Other	Public Health and Safety Climate & Air Quality Water Quality/Water Supply	Exploratory drilling sites have been shown to contribute to noise pollution, air pollution, and damage to water quality.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to climate and air quality and water quality/water supply.
	Tauna	Lockhart		177	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	If the exploratory drilling leads to the creation of gold mines, we have no further to look than the Northern Black Hills for examples of destroyed habitats, ecosystems and watersheds.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tauna	Lockhart		177	5	Other	General Environmental Concern	I would like to see documentation that F3 has managed a project with these similar specifications (near a reservoir that feeds a city downstream) and that they have had little or no impact on the wildlife, water, or ecosystem in which they have worked.	The Plan of Operations will contain measures to minimize and mitigate environmental effects. Regular inspections of the drilling project will be conducted to make sure the Plan conditions are being followed.
	Tauna	Lockhart		177	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	Additionally, I would like to know if they do discover gold, will they be the ones mining or are they selling? If they are selling, will their promises of good will and remediation be a legal obligation for the company that purchases their mining rights?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tara	Flanery		178	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am extremely concerned about the impact this mine will have on visitors because of the countless ways in can impact our environment, recreation, and drinking water.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tara	Flanery		178	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	We would be deeply jeopardizing our tourism industry if this exploration - ultimately a mine moves forward. It we take care of the Black Hills, tourism will always be here. It will not "GO".	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Tara	Flanery		178	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	As a stakeholder, I ask that the USFS please require a complete, unbiased Environmental Impact Study for this project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Ken	Wrede		179	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I offer my comments in support of the proposed drilling program by F3 Gold in the area above Pactola Reservoir.	Comment noted.
	Ken	Wrede		179	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a degreed mining engineer with more than 35 years in mining and related businesses I have first hand knowledge that development and extraction of our natural resources can be done in a manner that protects our water and wildlands.	Comment noted.
	Ken	Wrede		179	3	Other	Wetlands & Aquatic Resources	I found that there were misleading statements about our water resources during public comment and would appreciate scientific and fact-based information be brought to the conversation - not just emotion.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to wetlands and aquatic resources.
	Carla	Marshall		180	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against this F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project. This is not in our Best Interest.	Comment noted.
	Carla	Marshall		180	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	First and foremost; We must recognize that Clean Water is ALIVE and that she is a living entity. We need to put Clean Water; the aquifers, springs, creeks and rivers on the endangered Species List for infinity - To be protected at all cost, especially from destructive extraction industries that contaminate with toxic "Produced" wastewater.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Carla	Marshall		180	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Next, The Black Hills is Treaty Territory under the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty and Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation should be first and foremost. I was glad to hear you say during the open house that Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation would be conducted under mandate laws, and policies and procedures.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Carla	Marshall		180	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We know that the Black Hills has unique and special ecosystems that are interconnected. We recognize that this natural world has life; the Water, the Earth, the four-legged, winged, aquatics and insect and the Plant nations. The Black Hills tells of our creation, our traditional teachings, it holds spaces for our spiritual ceremonies, and it provides our natural foods, medicines and wildlife. This land is our Church and where we put our prayer altars. We need to protect this land not tear it up.	Comment noted.
	Carla	Marshall		180	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Let's not be naïve. Large-scale extraction industries produce toxic wastewater. And many times these companies (rather large or small) will abandon their operations. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States hosts up to 500,000 abandoned mines.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Carla	Marshall		180	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	Right here in our area we have many old mines, many are historical mines, that need to be cleaned up. However, there is only one gold mine that is listed as a Federally recognized Superfund site at the Gilt Edge gold mine, which was listed 20 years ago, was abandon and has toxic waste water ponds where nothing can grow there. And let's not ignore the fact that White Wood Creek was also a Superfund Site for many years, or don't ignore the violations that Wharf Gold mine has gotten away with. Leaving waterways contaminated by Produced Water, or leaving behind "Dead Zones" is not the legacy we want to leave behind for our future generations.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Carla	Marshall		180	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	Under the United Nations it is a human rights violations to deny access to clean water for human consumption. Based on past history of mining in the Black Hills, it's not if a toxic dam or (mining mud holding pond) will break, BUT WHEN.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Carla	Marshall		180	8	Outside of Scope		Also, forensic audits on all Bureau of Land Management land descriptions should be done due to the erroneous location of mining claims that was found when this F3 Project was announced and their claims were erroneously located in the Black Elk Wilderness area.	Comment noted.
	Carla	Marshall		180	9	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	In closing, Water is more valuable than Gold. The Mniluzahan, or Rapid Creek, and the precious aquifers beneath, those underground lakes, provide us the water that sustains us. Without clean water there is no life. I drink this water and pay good money each month to having clean water coming out of the tap from the aquifers and Rapid Creek, and for that I am grateful. I also enjoy going to the creek and my dog drinks water out of the creek. If I had to, I would drink water directly out of the creek as my ancestors did for thousands of years.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Carla	Marshall		180	10	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Please deny any permits that put our water in danger of contamination or will lead to larger projects that will repeat history of abandon toxic wastewater.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Karl	Stephenson		181	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We need to make a stand and not allow the Mining Exploration here in the Jenny Gulch area. I am totally against the idea mining here in the hills as a father and outdoors-men.	Comment noted.
	Karl	Stephenson		181	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	As a father my concern is that the proposed mining is at the headwaters of Rapid Creek which is the main water supply for our city. We use the city water daily and it would be a shame to contaminate this great resource that we currently have. Mining uses so many toxic chemicals that would ruin that very quickly mining companies do not have a great track record for keeping contaminates out of the water supply. We all drink the water that comes out of the taps we bathe our children in this very same water! What would we do if this water gets contaminated?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Karl	Stephenson		181	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	My other worry about the this mining comes from my love of the outdoors. I spend a lot of my time hiking and fishing here in the Black Hills. We are so lucky to have such amazing creeks and streams here is the hills that are full of great opportunities to catch wild fish in such a beautiful environments. Mining would greatly diminish this opportunities.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Karl	Stephenson		181	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I hope that you listen to the people that use this resources the most and oppose the mining exploration here in the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Ryan	Gabert		182	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am writing to express my concern and opposition to the proposed mining in the Silver City area of Rapid Creek. The Silver City/upper Rapid Creek area is a special place to myself and many others, and the proposed mining will have a very detrimental effect.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Ryan	Gabert		182	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	In addition, the water that will be contaminated and disturbed ends up in our kitchen sinks in Rapid City - which is a fact that many people seem oblivious to.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Ryan	Gabert		182	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	The short term gains and profit from a mine will be greatly outweighed by the contamination and long term reclamation of the effects created by mining, and the monetary bonds aren't nearly enough to reclaim the area after the mining company cuts their losses and runs.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Ryan	Gabert		182	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	The proposed mining will be detrimental in many aspects, and will have a very negative effect on the Silver City area - I am writing in strong opposition to the Silver City mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Mary	Tyson		183	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Since our drinking water comes from the three sources that stand to be polluted by run off, I am strongly opposed to Mineral Mountain Resources doing even exploratory drilling in the Silver City and Pactola Lake area.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Mary	Tyson		183	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not grant Mineral Mountain Resources the drilling rights to the public area.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Gerald	Lauer		184	1	Other	General Environmental Concern	Please understand this letter is not to obstruct but to understand and seek a full understanding of what is at stake before permanent damage is done to the area.	Comment noted.
	Gerald	Lauer		184	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We and all our neighbors depend on well water. This alone needs extensive understanding before putting any of those wells at risk. I hope that a full Environmental Impact Statement is part of the process. It is critical that all impacts are brought out to the community that lives, visits and recreates there and then and only then should there be a discussion on if the impact or the need for any potential benefits to exploratory drilling is worth the price.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Gerald	Lauer		184	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	As the discussions grow it is clear that there is at best partial information that the exploratory drilling is being based upon. Please don't move this forward without a full Environmental Impact Statement is undertaken.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Pat	Richards		185	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Stop allowing Companies and Corrupt Republican leaders from taking what is for everyone here in South Dakota!	Comment noted.
	Pat	Richards		185	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We need to amend the general mining act of 1872, otherwise greedy immoral leaders will continue to line their pockets instead of protect citizens.	Comment noted.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	1. Bighorn sheep seasonally occupy areas in the Project Area in the spring and summer. Bighorn sheep are sensitive to disturbance during spring and summer and are especially vulnerable during parturition.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	2. Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) and Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) nests are identified near proposed project access routes by the South Dakota Natural Heritage Program (NHP).	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	3. Dakota Vertigo (*Vertigo arthuri*), a land snail, has NHP occurrence records in the Project Area. Records indicate the land snail inhabit north facing slopes at areas having moist and concentrated forest litter.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	4. Smooth Green Snakes (*Liocholophis vernalis*) and the Black Hills Redbelly Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata pahasapae*) are identified by the NHP in the Project Area. Both species have been recorded along roadways that follow intermittent stream drainages.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	5	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	5. GF&P agrees with Forest Service that project area mine adits should be identified and designated as potential bat habitat.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	6	Regulatory Process	Recreation & Travel Management	6. Forest Plan, Management Area 8.2 (Developed Recreation) is included inside the "Project Boundary", and contains "Drill Pad Locations". The "Activities and Opportunities" table in the Developed Recreation section of the Forest Plan indicates "No New Mineral Development", in the Management Area. GF&P requests the Forest Service determine if a conflict exists between the Forest Plan Directives for Developed Recreation and the proposed project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management. The majority of Management Area 8.2 around Pactola Lake has been officially withdrawn from mineral entry. However, these withdrawal areas do not necessarily correspond with the Management Area boundary. The three proposed drilling locations in the northwest portion of the Management Area, do occur in an area that is currently not withdrawn. Therefore exploratory drilling is not prohibited and a site specific Forest Plan amendment may be required.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	7	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Fisheries & Wildlife	1) Bighorn sheep: in South Dakota bighorn sheep are highly valued as a charismatic big game species, an iconic symbol of the western United States, its value as watchable wildlife, and as a regulated hunted species. The Forest Service recognizes bighorn sheep as a Region 2 Sensitive Species. Bighorn sheep have a narrow habitat niche and high fidelity to traditional birthing and rearing areas. They also tend to be more vulnerable to anthropogenic disturbances than habitat generalists such as mule deer. Studies also indicate pedestrian interactions cause bighorn sheep to abandon preferred lambing habitat. Project related activities near the bighorn sheep's selected habitat must be curtailed during their use periods. Forest Service analysis review and design criteria formulation must consider the important bighorn sheep use areas displayed on the Forest Service biologist's map and derived from GF&P studies. All Project Area activities, including administrative, employee or contractor access on NFSR 6711 (Sunnyside Gulch Road), must be restricted during the critical season use periods on the bighorn sheep area. A spatial buffer must keep exploration activities beyond identified habitat to ensure full use by bighorns is not diminished by personnel, vehicles or noise. A seasonal buffer from April 15th to August 31st is implemented in conjunction with the spatial buffer as the period defining bighorn sheep use and restricted mineral development activity.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	8	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Fisheries & Wildlife	2) Osprey is a state threatened species and the Northern Goshawk is a Forest Service Region 2 Sensitive Species. Both Osprey and Northern Goshawk are Species of Greatest Conservation Need in South Dakota's Wildlife Action Plan. The NHP classifies both raptors as rare. The Forest Service analysis review and design criteria formulation should identify species specific spatial and temporal buffers for nest sites of both species. Information on nest buffers can be found on the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Mountain and Prairie Website.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	9	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Fisheries & Wildlife	3) Dakota Vertigo is a species NHP classifies as rare. The snail's preferred habitat is a forest dominated by white spruce or ponderosa pine; north-facing slopes; limestone or schist substrates. The Forest Service analysis should determine the potential occurrence of snail habitat to inform design criteria that minimizes ground disturbing activities. GF&P suggests incorporating onsite visits while planning for new roads, drill pads and staging areas, to identify and avoid snail's preferred habitat.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	10	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Fisheries & Wildlife	4) Both the Smooth Green Snake and the Black Hills Redbelly Snake are classified as rare by the NHP. The Black Hills Redbelly Snake is also a Forest Service Region 2 Sensitive Species and a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Design criteria like those recommended for the Dakota Vertigo will also minimize impacts to both snake species. GF&P also suggests including scree and talus slopes that can provide hibernacula.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	11	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Fisheries & Wildlife	5) Loss and disturbance of habitat is a significant threat to bats, particularly those using caves and mines as hibernacula. Analysis should include the occurrence of Project Area features that host bats. Design criteria should require documentation and habitat searches, followed by spatial and seasonal buffers on identified features. Design criteria will also specify that exploration company employees and contractors are excluded from entering caves or adits during winter hibernation periods that begin in September and lasts through May. Aside from bat hibernation disturbance, seasonal buffers, minimize the threat of humans spreading fungus which causes white-nose syndrome to some bat species in the Black Hills.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		186	12	Regulatory Process	Recreation & Travel Management	6) The Forest Service should assess the inconsistency between the proposed project and the Forest Plan Management Directives for Developed Recreation. GF&P finds Guideline 1519 (Developed recreation areas are unavailable for mineral leasing) and Standard 1510 (Developed recreation areas should be withdrawn from locatable minerals) inhibits mineral development in Developed Recreation. GF&P finds opportunities for plan amendments and administrative changes in 36 CFR § 219.13.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management. The majority of Management Area 8.2 around Pactola Lake has been officially withdrawn from mineral entry. However, these withdrawal areas do not necessarily correspond with the Management Area boundary. The three proposed drilling locations in the Northwest portion of the Management Area, do occur in an area that is currently not withdrawn. Therefore wxolpratory drilling is not prohibited and a site specific Forest Plan amendment may be required.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Christopher	Roth		187	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am surely someone who cares about the economy of our region, but am also very concerned about the environmental impact, both immediate and long-reaching, that something like mining can affect. Viewed through a smaller scope, the wells of our friends living in Silver City can be affected by the mining process, whether through interruption of service at best, or contamination at worst; on larger scale, the reservoir of Pactola which feeds into Rapid Creek, risks contamination through the process and will affect not only the several thousand who inhabit the Rapid City metropolitan area, but those residents of surrounding areas as well.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Christopher	Roth		187	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I write today urging you to please consider the ramifications of this proposed drilling to our esteemed Black Hills. It is with no small amount of pride that I and my neighbors consider this modest but beautiful area the most cherished and special not only in the state of South Dakota but in the region as well. I urge you to please require F3 to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement before beginning any sort of significant exploration in the proposed area--it is the right thing to do. I ask you to please put Future before Finance.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Dianne	Milke		188	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	No to this project. Mining is not compatible with maintaining the natural beauty of the Black Hills and safety of our water resources. If the county won't allow me to install a traditional septic, how can we allow a mine? South Dakota has a history of allowing mines, the owners disappear, and South Dakota taxpayers are stuck with the clean-up. Especially in the current environment where we have a president scratching regulations put in place to protect us, we need to deny this project moving forward.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jessica	Utecht-Whillock		189	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to you as a concerned citizen of Rapid City South Dakota. We have been informed of the new project drilling near Jenny Gulch in the Black Hills. Although the proposed project is exploratory the repercussions that it could bring would last.	Comment noted.
	Jessica	Utecht-Whillock		189	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The most pressing issue however is to rise above the search for gold and money and greed and let clean water be enough. Please let clean water be enough.	Comment noted.
	Lynn	Rees		190	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do NOT give the shiny object more weight than our environment---we can replace shiny objects, but, once destroyed, safe water and nature are gone forever. Do not allow gold exploration in any part of the Black Hills.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Tonya	Gomez		191	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My comments are regarding the quantity and quality of water and air that may be caused by drilling holes that could reach depths of 6,000 feet. The private wells in our community draw from pockets of water at different depths which get replenished by water movement from long and unpredictable distances. The unique geology means that adjoining neighbors may tap different water sources. By drilling a deep column, the water movement will likely be affected leaving previous voids filled with water while diminishing the output of other wells. This may compromise the quantity of water that households rely upon. Similarly, heavy metals and other unwanted contaminants may travel through this water column and affect the quality of the water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Tonya	Gomez		191	2	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Silver City and its surroundings have one of the highest concentrations of radon in the state and the country. Radon gets released from underground sources. As a gas, it can travel freely through the drill holes. The radon gas can move through rock fissures and travel through water/soil where it can enter homes. I suggest that the environmental assessment studies this problem to determine the risk factors involved with the drill holes.	Radon can be a concern if it enters basements, crawlspaces, or other confined spaces; however, environmental radon typically does not pose an issue. Exploratory drilling is not designed to create new fractures or enhance existing rock fractures such that new sources of environmental radon would be introduced.
	Suzan	Nolan		192	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I urge you to stop this exploration which will lead to a full scale mining operation IF gold is found. This is dangerous to our environment, to the people who love recreating here, to the animals and all things that are disturbed by prodding and poking in the Earth. I urge you to listen to the voices of those of us who live here and love this land and wat it to be protected. So matter what engineers and miners say about how this is the safest process, we have visual reminders all over the Black Hills of the huge gouges and pits left in our area from gold mining that those who did it say were totally safe. This is not good for our health, our environment or our economy. Please deny the permits or whatever is being sought to further this.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am adamantly opposed to this being approved.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Dana	Palmateer		193	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	While I appreciate the efforts that are on-going to educate the public -- and to ensure that there are no environmental concerns, I believe that some of that 'education' is mixed with one-sided information and doesn't provide an objective case to all of those involved.	Comment noted.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	3	Other	Public and Agency Engagement	The information we received was contained in an envelope with a return address of Barr Engineering. This is the company that has been selected to conduct the environmental assessment of the project. Why does the letter from the USDA/Forest Service/Mystic Ranger Station, to allegedly make all of us aware, come to us within the Barr Engineering envelope? It does not give the appearance of a separate and objective look at this proposal.	Barr Engineering has been selected as the third party contractor responsible for preparing NEPA documentation (in this case, an Environmental Assessment) at the direction of the Forest Service.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The map provided in documentation was terrible. I would think that something that has such an impact and involves so many stakeholders, would have been more specific and professional. The map lead to much confusion as to the exact location of all of the areas that are being targeted. While it may not have been the intention, it sure gives the appearance of not being totally transparent. That map required many of us to have to go to other mapping sources to understand what exactly was being described. This is who we are supposed to 'trust' and have confidence in that this project will be managed appropriately?	Comment noted.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	5	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Per the informational meeting, it was reported that this would be a 'round the clock' operation. The drilling noise was compared to the sound of a 'residential refrigerator'. This doesn't pass the smell test. Per the reporting, there will be water trucks, 4X4 UTV's, trucks, skid steer loaders, graders, and backhoes. Perhaps the drilling itself would be a low decibel noise, but it really should be calculated with the ENTIRE scope of this project. The entire project/project boundary lines are extremely close to many residences and housing areas.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The proposed project is in and around households that live in Pennington County. Pennington County has a 'Septic Ordinance'. Residents have to comply with having an operational and frequently inspected system. This is done to ensure that all of us have safe and clean water and that our soil is not contaminated. This is to keep all of us safe. Drilling up to 42 drilling sites, 500-6,000 feet in depth has the potential to be MUCH worse than a leaking or unpumped septic tank. AND that potential impacts so many. Not just the people in and around this proposed project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	7	Other	Access & Transportation	"In addition approximately 4,700 linear feet of 8-foot wide temporary overland trails may be constructed for drill site access. These temporary overland trails would be obliterated and returned to natural conditions after project completed". After things are OBLITERATED, how in the world is something returned to natural conditions? When trees are removed, how are those returned? Ye, another thing that does not pass the smell test. It would take decades for things to 'return to their natural condition'. I'll be long gone by that time.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation, as well as measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	8	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Pennington County road dept. is another of the many stakeholders that would be impacted by this project. Have they been consulted about the 'wear and tear' to Rochford Road? And would F3 compensate them? Or like usual, will it be the taxpayers footing this bill?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation. Pennington County is on the project mailing list and attended the project's Interagency Scoping Meeting. No comments have been received from Pennington County as of May 20, 2020.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	9	Regulatory Process		But, there will be oversight with this project?	The proposed exploratory drilling project would be required to acquire all applicable federal, state, and local permits and approvals prior to initiation. The Forest Service will administer the final approved Plan of Operations. Other government entities will be responsible for monitoring the permits they issue for this project.
	Dana	Palmateer		193	10	Other	Socioeconomics	I pay high property taxes for this privilege. How am I any less important than an out-of-state company who has paid zero taxes here and has no sweat equity in the living conditions here?	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Dana	Palmateer		193	11	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I respectfully request denial of this project. "Caring for the Land and Serving the People"..... Indeed. I hope this is true and not just meaningless words on your letterhead.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Teryl	Cruse		194	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please do not allow more gold exploration in the Black Hills of South Dakota. We appreciate and take care of our land and water in South Dakota. Gold mining is toxic to the environment. If you allow gold exploration then mining will follow and gold mining is very destructive to the environment. Stop this potential environmental disaster now, let it go no further. Stop it in it's tracks!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jessica	Fenner		195	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please note that we are strongly opposed to any mining or gold exploration drilling in the Black Hills. Mining has a long history in our area and the environmental impacts have not been good.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jessica	Fenner		195	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	First, there is the visible disruption of the site and the problems that creates for the biodiversity of any given area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Jessica	Fenner		195	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Second, these are spaces where wildlife thrive. We need to leave some areas unexploited, untamed, and undeveloped.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Jessica	Fenner		195	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Third, mining would negatively impact areas where we go to enjoy hiking, fishing, boating, swimming, kayaking, etc. by not only disrupting the serene aesthetic but by building roads and adding heavy machinery and traffic.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jessica	Fenner		195	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Lastly, and most importantly, we know from past experiences that mining can create irreparable pollution to the water. The area proposed is too delicately connected to the watershed leading to Pactola and the Rapid Creek watershed where we all get our drinking water from.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jessica	Fenner		195	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	Finally, clean water is worth more than all of the gold in the world. No more mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Norma	Wilson		196	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not permit F3's Gulch Gold Exploration Project to drill for gold in the Rapid Creek watershed area.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Norma	Wilson		196	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This could pollute Rapid City's water supply and negatively impact not only Rapid City citizens but the many visitors to our Black Hills.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Vicki	Koebernick		197	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the proposed exploratory drilling in the Jenny Gulch, Broad Gulch, and Sunnyside region directly adjacent to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Vicki	Koebernick		197	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This watershed is vital to the citizens of Rapid City, Box Elder, and Ellsworth AFB. Exploration and mining in this area should not be allowed due to the significant impact to our communities.	Comment noted.
	Vicki	Koebernick		197	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full EIS for this watershed should be instituted rather than the short EA process being proposed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Vicki	Koebernick		197	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	There has never been a major gold mining operation in the Black Hills that hasn't harmed water quality.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Vicki	Koebernick		197	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Even a small spill from a gold mining operation into Pactola would harm wildlife and fisheries.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Vicki	Koebernick		197	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	A larger spill or a legacy of cleanup from an abandoned mine could threaten our water supply for generations to come.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Vicki	Koebernick		197	7	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am not a blanket opponent mining. I oppose any steps to mine in this pristine watershed. Our water is a critical resource beyond gold.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Amanda	Gunter		198	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I truly and adamantly oppose the exportation mining in this area of the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Amanda	Gunter		198	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Water Quality/Water Supply	Not only does it cause concern for our recreation, but Water is life! The water that sustains our lives comes from there! I am a seriously concerned citizen who trembles at the thought of potentially contaminated water coming into my home and the home of the people in this community. It is far to fragile to risk. I cannot imagine anything worse.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Jack	Antolic		199	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Last night, at the Rapid City council meeting, those of us supportive of further environmental impact evaluation into the proposed mining exploration in the Pactola Reservoir watershed area were characterized as an uninformed, uneducated, fear-mongering extremist minority. We are none of those things. If the citizens were allowed to vote on this issue, you would find that a very great majority would not want approval of this mining project for well documented reasons. However low the mining companies claim the impact and risk to be, there will be an impact and is it a risk we have to take? Can we not say "no", the risk is too great? The risk is to our vital water source is too great to accept. Please do not approve this mining proposal.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Sue	D.		200	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am a Silver City SD resident for 22 years and I am writing to state my objections to any mining exploration in the area I live in.	Comment noted.
	Sue	D.		200	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	First of all evidence shows possible mining does contaminate water, air and soils. I am fearful since this area has many springs that are in the exploration area that will be disturbed and ruined. One supplies a spring fed reservoir that is used by many residents and visitors. These springs all feed into Pactola Reservoir.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Sue	D.		200	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The watershed from Rapid Creek is most of the water supply for Rapid City and others. We must protect this water source. Also there are many private wells in this area that are used by permanent residents of our area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Kevin	Ryan		201	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the exploration and drilling test holes for gold in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Ryan		201	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	It is also prime habitat for bald eagles and ospreys and feel it will pose a threat to these animals, the recreation (that we pay for) and to the water supply itself for Rapid City (where I live), and surrounding areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Kevin	Ryan		201	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	This drilling itself is harmful to the environment and if sufficient gold deposits are found, the force of greed may be unstoppable.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Kevin	Ryan		201	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please note my opposition to this drilling in the Rapid City, Pactola and Jenny Gulch watershed.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Ryan		201	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Water is life, and it should not be subject to harm or potential destruction. The best way to prevent this destruction is to not allow the introduction of modern mining into this area at all. Thank you for supporting the residents of this area, including myself. We love our Black Hills and our clean water!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jeremy	Boyd		202	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Recreation & Travel Management	As a resident of the Black Hills who enjoys recreation activities such as paddling, hiking/trail running, and mountain biking I oppose this companies plans to explore for gold and rare earth minerals. We need to embrace outdoor tourism for the industry in the Black Hills and not allow anymore gold mining. That time has come and gone for mining. Look at the Lead/Terry Peak area for the blight they cause in the Black Hills. Do not allow them to drill an decontaminate the water that flows into Rapid City and Pactola that people enjoy in the summer. I enjoy paddling in Rapid Creek and do not want to lose out on this.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Michelle	Thomson		203	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to exploratory drilling in the Upper Rapid Creek basin. I am a frequent user of our public lands and- as the BHNF- feel it is important to protect our resources.	Comment noted.
	Michelle	Thomson		203	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	The watershed is vital to the citizens of Rapid City, Box Elder and EAFB. Drilling will surely lead to mining and surely no mining is safe this close to a major water source.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Michelle	Thomson		203	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	In addition, this area is vital outdoor recreation opportunities and should not be compromised with mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Michelle	Thomson		203	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	A complete environmental impact statement seems imperative with the possibility of mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Colleen	Ragan		204	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am very concerned at the potential of exploration for gold in our Black Hills region. This exploration will impact our water, in terms of pollution and potential reduction for uses our citizenry takes for granted. Clean, safe water is of paramount importance to me!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.

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	Colleen	Ragan		204	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not permit exploration for gold in our hills.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Colleen	Ragan		204	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration, if "successful" results show potential, the next step will be drilling and removing gold, building more roads, and the increased possibility for damage to our watershed. We DO NOT NEED any more gold to be removed from the Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Colleen	Ragan		204	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, protect the Black Hills from further damage! Please protect our water for the children, grandchildren and future generations. No amount of shiny metal is worth this environmental cost.	Comment noted.
	Cindy	Thomas	Tom Thomas	205	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We are very concerned about this project as it is in a high impact area that could impact thousands of people. The Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just a short Environmental Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Cindy	Thomas	Tom Thomas	205	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Rapid City water and/or a well by Rapid Creek will be impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Cindy	Thomas	Tom Thomas	205	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Recreation activities could be impacted especially in the Pactola Lake and Rapid Creek area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Cindy	Thomas	Tom Thomas	205	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration leads to mining, and the environmental review process should cover all potential impacts of the project.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Cindy	Thomas	Tom Thomas	205	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Vegetation & Timber Resources	Yes, we need healthy economic development and we do value the current tourism and agriculture, but both will be negatively impacted by this project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Mark	Lindvall		206	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in opposition to granting a permit for mineral exploration at Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Mark	Lindvall		206	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Water Quality/Water Supply	The exploration will disturb wildlife habitat, threaten municipal water supplies, and an important fishery.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Mark	Lindvall		206	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	If and when an environmental assessment is prepared it should include the impacts of the mining should marketable minerals be found.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Cathryn	Grimwood		207	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the exploration and drilling test holes for gold in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Cathryn	Grimwood		207	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	It is a prime habitat for bald eagles and ospreys and I feel it will pose a threat to these animals, the recreational area of Pactola and the surrounding acreage (that we pay for) and even more importantly to the water supply itself for Rapid City (where my extended family lives), and surrounding areas. The drilling itself is harmful to the environment.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Cathryn	Grimwood		207	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Please note my opposition to this drilling in the Rapid City, Pactola and Jenny Gulch watershed. Water is life, and it should not be subject to harm or potential destruction. The best way to prevent this destruction is to not allow the introduction of modern mining into this area at all.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Rachel	Saum		208	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am writing to urge that the Forest Service do a full Environmental Impact Statement for the potential Jenny Gulch exploration project. Not only is this a high impact area where many people go for recreation near Pactola Lake and Rapid Creek, but these kinds of "explorations" lead to mining, so the environmental review process should look at all potential long-term impacts of approving this sort of project.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review. The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.

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	James	Rankin		209	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the Jenny gulch Exploration Drilling Project that was discussed at the January 16, 2020, public meeting and on the USFS/BHNF website.	Comment noted.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	As a policy matter, the Sierra Club Black Hills Group is opposed to gold mining in the Black Hills National Forest.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Though we would prefer a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), we support the process of Environmental Assessment (EA) on which the Forest Service is embarking, and will comment on the EA when it is published later this year. Given the potentially significant impacts of the proposed project on the watershed for Rapid Creek, we question whether the environmental analysis and decision document can result in a Finding of No Significant Impact, and encourage the Forest Service to be open to proceeding with preparation of an EIS.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	3	Regulatory Process		With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 1. Full consideration of a range of action alternatives, in addition to a no-action alternative and a preferred action alternative.	Comment noted.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	4	Other	Climate & Air Quality	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 2. A comprehensive baseline of the current state of resource categories presented at the public meeting, with full discussion of the effects of climate change on BHNF resources.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	5	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 3. The Sierra Club is particularly interested to see thorough evaluation of: A. Wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors in the exploration area;	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 3. The Sierra Club is particularly interested to see thorough evaluation of: B. Potential effects of sound disturbance from drilling, traffic, and road construction on migrating on nesting and breeding birds;	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	7	Other	Botanical Resources	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 3. The Sierra Club is particularly interested to see thorough evaluation of: C. Presence of vulnerable botanical resources in the exploration area;	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to botanical resources.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	8	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 3. The Sierra Club is particularly interested to see thorough evaluation of: D. Historic and sacred sites in the area;	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	9	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 3. The Sierra Club is particularly interested to see thorough evaluation of: E. Data on recreational use in the proposed exploration area, including the potential for conflicts with high recreational uses in summer, such as boating, fishing, picnicking, hiking.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	10	Other	Cumulative Assessment	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 4. Discussion of potential impacts in the context of the totality of the affected area, not on a drill site by drill site basis, including analysis of the cumulative impacts of "temporary overland trails" in the entirety of the project area.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	11	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 5. Sufficient monitoring during the exploration activities to ensure that projected areas of disturbance, water use and disposal comport with the proposed activities. The data resulting from such monitoring will be essential for further project planning and the determination of bonding requirements should the permittee elect to proceed to engage in mining and processing in the project area.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be. The Forest Service will administer the final approved Plan of Operations. Other government entities will be responsible for monitoring the permits they issue for this project.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Ludicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	12	Mitigation/Design Criteria	General Environmental Concern	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 6. Incorporation of adaptive management options in the alternatives in the event monitoring reveals divergence from predicted impacts.	The EA considers measures to minimize potential project-related effects.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Ludicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	13	Mitigation/Design Criteria	General Environmental Concern	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 7. Full discussion of relevant mitigation measures, management, monitoring, and compliance requirements for potential impacts on water, soils, wildlife, and plants, and loss of recreation opportunities. Such data and the agency's analysis of it during the exploration stage of the project will be essential to future planning in the project area in the event the permittee elects to seek authority conduction mining and processing operations in the project area.	The EA considers measures to minimize potential project-related effects.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello Martley	Sandra Seberger	210	14	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	With regard to the preparation of an EA, we urge you to consider the following: 8. Document the actions taken by your agency and/or the applicant permittee to inform the public and stakeholders of the project and process for decision-making, including required consultations with Tribes, state, and federal agencies.	Comment noted. The EA is prepared in accordance with U.S. Forest Service NEPA guidelines.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Andy	Thorstenson		211	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed exploratory gold drilling project in Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Andy	Thorstenson		211	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The reasons for my opposition are numerous. The project would have negative impacts on water quality for the thousands of residents downstream.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Andy	Thorstenson		211	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	If the United States Forest Service is committed to protecting and managing lands for the benefit of American citizens the agency would clearly reject this proposal.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		212	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This project is in a high impact area that could impact thousands of people. The Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just a short Environmental Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		212	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Not only will it affect everyone who lives in the Black Hills it will also degrade the million dollar tourism economy that stabilizes the SD economy. Mining is a boom and bust industry. We've had enough of that in the Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Eric	Zimmer		213	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I am writing to encourage your office to require a full Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed drilling and mining project north of Jenny Gulch.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Eric	Zimmer		213	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	I am concerned about the impact this project would have on area wildlife, recreation, and drinking water for everyone who is supplied by the Rapid Creek watershed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Donna	Moe		214	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I just say I'm shocked that a mining permit is even being considered for this area. It will have a lasting impact on the entire watershed area. Please strongly oppose this.	Comment noted.
	Matthew	Bauman		215	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm writing to voice my opposition to gold exploration in Jenny Gulch and anywhere near Rapid Creek waters.	Comment noted.
	Matthew	Bauman		215	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The risk of contamination is too great to contaminate in any manner Pactola Reservoir and the groundwater serving Rapid City and area residents.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Matthew	Bauman		215	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I strongly encourage you to enforce a full Environmental Impact Statement, protect tourism and local pride, preserve the watershed that supplies the largest city in western South Dakota.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Robert	Bickett	Kelly Bickett	216	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	My family would hate to see mining so near Silver City. The traffic and spoiling of the beautiful Black Hills near our home due to mining would detract immensely from the value of our home and spoil the quiet and heavenly atmosphere of the Black Hills near Silver City.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Robert	Bickett	Kelly Bickett	216	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Another more serious concern is the potential harm to the surface and underground water in the area proposed for exploration. It would seem prudent to require that the risk to the water shed should be absolutely zero. The water from the proposed exploration area drains into Lake Pactola which as everyone knows is a critical water supply for Rapid City. I would have doubts about any study saying that there is no risk to the this water supply. Please do not be satisfied with only one study of the water supplying Pactola. It seems that at least 2 independent studies should be completed by competent professionals.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Claudia	Wieland-Randall		217	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against any disturbance in or near the Pactola / Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Claudia	Wieland-Randall		217	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion General Environmental Concern	I am against any disturbance in or near the Pactola / Jenny Gulch area. The Black Hills is a vigorous local and tourist economy. Any $$ generated by exploration and / or drilling is short term and cannot replace the negative impact of disturbance of water, roads, quality of life for humans and animals.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Carrie	Gerlach		218	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The potential for water contamination is the number one concern. With Pactola being the primary source of drinking water for Rapid City, stopping this project seems obvious. Once gold is found and the project moves forward, there will be no way to protect the safety of our water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Carrie	Gerlach		218	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	We and our partners in the tourism industry use the land that is being proposed for the drilling project and the Forest Service roads for the UTV activities in the Black Hills. For the duration of the project and years after, the natural beauty and access will be compromised.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Carrie	Gerlach		218	3	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Jenny Gulch is where we take the majority of our guests for kayaking. The noise related to the proposed project will diminish the sacred beauty and serenity of the area. If gold is found and the area is mined, the natural beauty of the area will be severely compromised as well.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Ivy	Allard		219	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am in full support of the project.	Comment noted.
	Jade	Temple		220	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I would hate to see the negative impact and potential dangers due to mining and mining exploration to this special area, water source and outdoor oasis. Please help protect this vital Black Hills resource.	Comment noted.
	Robin	Englehart-Bagley		221	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I ask that you not allow this exploratory drilling to go forward due to the potential groundwater contamination future gold mining could bring to the Black Hills. I understand that this is exploratory drilling and that no mining would take place at this time; however, exploratory drilling could open the area up for future gold mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Robin	Englehart-Bagley		221	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	We don't need gold mining in the Black Hills; the area's economy is doing fine without it. Hard rock mining is one of the nation's most toxic industries and poses a risk to our forest's multiple use and outdoor recreation economy.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Michael	Loos		222	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I write for purposes of documenting my strong opposition to the above-referenced project.	Comment noted.
	Michael	Loos		222	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I have great concerns about the possible prejudice to the watershed in the area, which potentially could compromise the drinking water where I raise my family and run my business.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Michael	Loos		222	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	In my experience these mining activities also are a blight on the aesthetics of the land which I believe is worthy of protection.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Michael	Loos		222	4	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	We are a tourist and recreation area and these interests are not furthered with mining operations.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jessica	Hessler		223	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Should mining pollute our landscape and soundscape, rip up what little forest we have preserved, the surrounding area would lose much of its appeal to visitors.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jessica	Hessler		223	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Private well located on the banks of the creek which would surely be polluted by runoff, as would the city water supply.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	1	Other		Despite these clear statements in your scoping letter, we anticipate that some commenters may raise concerns about the potential impacts of mining, milling, processing, and road construction. We want to emphasize that such activities are neither pertinent to our proposed activities nor reasonably foreseeable results of our proposed activates. Any comments suggesting otherwise are inaccurate.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria		When considering the scope of the EA it is important to remember that exploratory drilling for minerals is distinct from other types of drilling, such as for oil and gas. The drilling process for mineral exploration is conducted on a small footprint with drilling equipment equivalent to the equipment utilized in drilling a water well.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	3	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	Exploratory drilling such as we have proposed poses no significant environmental impacts. The process does not use any toxic chemicals or hazardous materials. The process uses a diamond core drill bit, steel pipe and natural and biodegradable lubricants. The holes drilled are approximately 3" in diameter. The process uses the same equipment and techniques that are commonly used to drill water wells. The only thing we will be removing is the core rock sample, which is a cylinder of rock approximately 3" in diameter.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	As your scoping letter points out, water used in the drilling process will not be sourced from Rapid Creek or any surface water source. All water used for drilling will be sourced from approved industrial or municipal water sources.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	5	Mitigation/Design Criteria		The water used in drilling is captured in a system of settling tanks to allow drill cuttings to settle out of the water. No sumps will be used in the proposed exploration drilling project.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	6	Mitigation/Design Criteria		At the conclusion of drilling each site, all exploration core drilling holes will be sealed and reclaimed according to state and federal regulations. (See graphic "drill Pad: Before & After")	Comment noted.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	In short, mining is not a reasonable effect of our project and if mining were ever proposed, numerous additional environmental review and permitting requirements would have to be satisfied before it could happen.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	8	Regulatory process		F3 Gold's proposed project would normally fall within a categorical exclusion - a fact that USFS staff acknowledged during its public information meeting for the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Project held at the Mystic Ranger District Office on January 16, 2020. But despite the existence of a categorical exclusion for projects like ours, and the fact that no other opposed exploration drilling project has even required to undergo the EA process, the USFS determined that F3 Gold's proposed plan of operations should undergo an EA.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	9	Outside of Scope	Mining	We are counting on the USFS to keep its focus on the project, as proposed by F3 Gold, and not speculative impacts from future events far outside the scope of our proposal, such as the fear by some that a mining operation may someday be developed in the area. Not all exploratory drilling leads to a mine. In fact, less than a tenth of one percent of all exploration projects lead to the development of a mine.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	10	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	Our proposed drilling sites are located within the Precambrian rocks that form the crystalline core of the Black Hills. Our proposed operations are approximately 13 miles from the Madison and Minnelusa aquifers, which are the source of drinking water for Rapid City. It is Scientifically impossible for proposed drilling to intersect the Madison or minnelusa aquifers and impact the drinking water for Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply, geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	11	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	For example some have claimed that drilling in the Black Hills will impact water quality or contaminate sources of drinking water for the City of Rapid City, or even Ellsworth Airforce base. First, as discussed above, there is no scientific or environmental evidence to substantiate how the proposed drilling operations would pose significant risk or threat to either the pactola reservoir, or the Madison and Minnelusa aquifers. Our project will not intersect with or impact the Madison or Minnelusa aquifers which supply Rapid City. Furthermore, Ellsworth Airforce Base is not located with the Rapid Creek Watershed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply, geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	12	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Recreation & Travel Management	Other concerns raised include impacts to those who wish to access the Black Hills National Forest for recreation and are concerned with road and trail access, noise, dust or other factors. Our plan of operations calls for up to 42 drill pad sites that are 50ft by 50 ft. This small footprint represents less than four acres out of the 1.2-million -acre national forest. Our plan also calls for the use of existing trails and overland trails, with no new road construction proposed. Core drilling is a wet process and the water used in drilling means minimal dust will be generated. Far more dust is created by the UTVs that frequent the trails and gravel roads in the forest.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
F3 Gold, LLC	Rob	Bergman	Brian Lentz	224	13	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Finally the noise generated by the core drilling is approximately 38.2 decibels at 400 ft. - or approximately the volume of a kitchen refrigerator - and will not create a significant impact.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Lisa	Sihrer		225	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Please protect our water our lakes and wells, etc. PROTCECT PACTOLA!	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Lisa	Sihrer		225	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	This area matters significantly for locals and tourists alike.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Lisa	Sihrer		225	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow this to happen!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jane	Leone		226	1	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Vegetation & Timber Resources	We need healthy economic development. Our current tourism and agricultural industries should be valued. This project would negatively impact both of those industries.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Jane	Leone		226	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In addition, the area along Highway 385, especially Pactola Lake, is one of our most scenic areas. It is a gem of the Black Hills and gold exploration would not fit here.	Comment noted.
	Kathy	Durrum		227	1	other	Statement of Project Opinion	These cut-and-run gold companies would leave the environment a disaster.	Comment noted.
	Kathy	Durrum		227	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We need a Environmental Impact Statement on this project, not just an Environmental Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Kathy	Durrum		227	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please consider the cumulative impacts of the proposed project. Which would include other gold operations in the area (Some of which are unknown to us), the possibility of mining, and the impacts of mining on climate change.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Bonnie	Meisner		228	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	It is mining in this area that is putting our water supply, human health, wildlife, recreation, peoples businesses, the environmental at risk.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jill	Point	Chuck Point	229	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This request for exploration should be denied.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Jill	Point	Chuck Point	229	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	If the request is not denied, the Forest Service should conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement, NOT just a short Environmental Assessment before giving any approval for exploration. Exploration leads to mining and the environmental review process should cover ALL potential aspects of the project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Jill	Point	Chuck Point	229	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This project is in conflict with the use of this scenic area and threatens both the lake and the entire watershed for Rapid Creek which supplies water for Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base and surrounding areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply and recreation.
	Jill	Point	Chuck Point	229	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I am also concerned about the Forest Service timing of tribal consultation. Tribal consultation should come first.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Jill	Point	Chuck Point	229	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I respectfully request that if the project proposal cannot be denied outright, that at a minimum a full environmental impact statement (EIS) is conducted.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Kelli	McCormick		230	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in support of F3's proposed exploration drilling in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Kelli	McCormick		230	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This activity is minimally invasive and the law requires them to reclaim the disturbed areas. Additionally, the drilling is no more or less at risk of affecting groundwater than any water well, and DENR requires proper plugging of each well. For these reasons, I see no reason to oppose F3's exploration project at Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Susan	Hey		231	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I have grave concerns about the effects on water quality below the exploration.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Susan	Hey		231	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Recreation will be affect. My family and many visitors appreciate the quiet beauty of the Black Hills for Biking and Hiking.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Susan	Hey		231	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	It is their responsibility to give proof and examples of clean mining before a permit is even considered.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Matthias	Roth		232	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am much concerned over the proposed exploratory drilling to occur in the vicinity of Pactola Reservoir and the headwaters of Rapid Creek. I have actually stumbled onto a couple of claims while out hiking and am upset that anyone think it sane to consider mining so close to vital waterway.	Comment noted.
	Matthias	Roth		232	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	A single spill would destroy the creek and pollute the reservoir, which of course is more than just a holding tank for Rapid City's drinking water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality.
	Matthias	Roth		232	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	I still come out there to fish with my Dad. Now if a tailing pond sprang a leak and leached cyanide into the water, who's going to fish there? Who is going to swim there? And who is going to foot the bill for the cleanup?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Matthias	Roth		232	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	My worry is that these sorts of exploratory operations are rushed through the regulatory process. I would like a full environmental Impact Statement to be done on this project, as it doesn’t take an ecologist to observe that a gold mind in the headwaters of Rapid Creek would be a disaster.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Matthias	Roth		232	5	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	The threat of a spill is a potential, but what would be certain if the project went through would be an increase in road construction and heavy truck use which would lead to an increase in soil erosion.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Matthias	Roth		232	6	Outside of Scope	Mining	The mine(s) would likely be large irrevocable scars in the Black Hills, destroying crucial forest habitat. And its operation would continually stress wildlife; the economic cost falling on the hunting industry.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jeffery	Sugrue		233	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am concerned this exploratory drilling could impact the water quality/quantity of local private water wells, and also potentially contaminate pactola reservoir, a major water source for Rapid City and Ellsworth AFB.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jeffery	Sugrue		233	2	Other	Access & Transportation	Silver City Road is a narrow two-lane asphalt highway with steep grades and countless sharp curves. This highway has a thin asphalt layer that is old and is barely sustained to meet current light vehicle traffic to Silver City and access to upper Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek. there are areas along this road with obvious subsidence due to current vehicle traffic. Any additional heavy vehicle traffic by F3 Gold drilling apparatus could cause significant damage to the highway or be the cause of an accident due to a road slide at one of the subsidence areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Jeffery	Sugrue		233	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	There are active osprey nesting sites in the vicinity of the drilling area. There are also bald eagles, numerous owl species, and at least one goshawk nesting site nearby this are. Drilling activity could potentially disrupt raptor nesting and the survival of hatchlings.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Jeffery	Sugrue		233	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Potential water contamination of Pactola Reservoir could impact the aquatic environment and fish populations. This could have secondary impacts on wildlife, such as the osprey and eagles, that feed on these fish.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Jeffery	Sugrue		233	5	Regulatory process	EA vs EIS	Due to the above potential impacts, I strongly urge you to require the completion of a full-scale Environmental Impact Statement prior to any decision/permit that would allow exploratory drilling	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Vernon	Paulson	Craig Kingsbury Cindy (Kingsbury) Sakai	234	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Our family who owns a home in Silver City is extremely concerned with the proposed gold/drilling/exploration.	Comment noted.
	Vernon	Paulson	Craig Kingsbury Cindy (Kingsbury) Sakai John Sakai	234	2	Other Outside of Scope	Water Quality/Water Supply Mining	Although we are not against hobbyist mining, the proposed search drilling and inevitable corporate mining is something that will drastically alter the quality of life, water and recreation we all enjoy.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Kim	Haug		235	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the proposed exploratory gold drilling project in Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Kim	Haug		235	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Were this proposed project to proceed, it would adversely affect the water quality for all rapid City residents and everyone else who lives downstream from the drilling sites.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Carol	Bell		236	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am very concerned for families throughout the Rapid City as we all receive our water from the Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Carol	Bell		236	2	Other Incorporate	Fisheries & Wildlife Public Health and Safety	Tanks delivering this hazardous chemical could have a accident not unlike the water tank that turned over in Rochford. Should such a spill with cyanide tank take place every fish and wildlife will die in the creek. And it is possible that human life will be at very great risk.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife. The exploratory drilling process uses pressurized water; no cyanide will be used in the drilling process. Any materials placed belowground in the drilling process must meet drinking water quality standards.
	Carol	Bell		236	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The loss of water due to contamination is a death sentence to tourism, it could result in cancellations of projects at Ellsworth AFB, loss of wildlife and our own human lives.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jaclyn	Lanae		237	1	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Water Quality/Water Supply	Please protect the beauty of the Black Hills, the associated recreation and tourism, the previous commodity that is clean water and healthy earth.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Carter	Taylor		238	1	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	As a recreational stakeholder I am mostly concerned about disturbing this unique landscape and reducing the fishery.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Anonymous	Anonymous		239	1	Regulatory process	EA vs EIS	You need to do a full Environmental Impact Statement on the F3 Jenny Gulch project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Nancy	Kile		240	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Downstream communities are at risk and it is the responsibility of the Black Hills Nation Forest Service to protect human communities from distant and foreign extraction ventures that absolutely will degrade public lands.	Comment noted.
	Ann	Harjes		241	1	other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am vehemently opposed to exploratory drilling, which sole purpose is to lead to gold mining, around out water sources.	Comment noted.
	Ann	Harjes		241	2	Regulatory process	EA vs EIS	At a very minimum I would expect a highly in-depth environmental impact study be done.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Lynn	Arnold		242	1	Other	General Environmental Concern	I am deeply concerned at the level of destruction to our area's most precious resource: our Black Hills. The impact on wildlife, access to the area for recreation and damage to our forests are all very real factors.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources
	Lynn	Arnold		242	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The risk of contamination to our watershed is a grave concern.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality.
	Lynn	Arnold		242	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Our area depends on the natural beauty of the Black hills for tourism.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Lynn	Arnold		242	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This is too precious of an area to even entertain without a full Environmental Impact Statement. I want to know all about the environmental implications and associated risks that come with finding gold.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Maggie	Lang		243	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I want to voice my opposition to the exploration project.	Comment noted.
	Maggie	Lang		243	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	While I realize mining techniques have advanced over the years, there will still be impact on the area. Whether it is visual or the increased traffic. Which can create a myriad of other problems within itself. Those would be the least of our problems if a breach of our water system occurred.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Maggie	Lang		243	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Recreation & Travel Management	There is a vast amount of land that could be explored, doing so around our water source and a very important recreational area does not make sense.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Andrea	Brickey		244	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in support of the F3 Jenny Gulch exploration project.	Comment noted.
	Fran	Linn		245	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am deeply concerned about the proposed gold mining at Pactola Reservoir.	Comment noted.
	Fran	Linn		245	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Pactola and Spring Creek are the primary drinking sources for Rapid City and gold mining has the potential to negatively affect the health and safe drinking water of the second largest city in South Dakota.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Fran	Linn		245	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	In addition, Pactola is preferred reaction site that brings needed tourism dollars into the area. The lake is used for recreation year-round from boating in the summer to ice-fishing in the winter. A gold mine with a 24 hour crew would have a severe negative impact on this as well.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Philip	Heckman		246	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a resident of the Black Hills I am concerned with the impacts of exploratory drilling proposed in the Jenny Gulch Exploration Project.	Comment noted.
	Philip	Heckman		246	2	Regulatory process	EA vs EIS	The unknown impacts to the area should, at the very least require an EIS to obtain more detail on any adverse effects drilling would have to surface and subsurface water in the area.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Rebecca	Fisher		247	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am asking you to please not allow exploratory drilling in the Black Hills	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Rebecca	Fisher		247	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As you know both exploratory drilling and mining use and contaminate water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Rebecca	Fisher		247	3	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Even if accidents don't happen, which they usually do, it endangers our health.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section has been incorporated into the EA.
	Rebecca	Fisher		247	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	So many people are getting cancer, we don't need another pollutant in our environment. Nor do the wildlife that live in the Black Hills.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	1	Other	Wetlands & Aquatic Resources	For those of us who live on Rapid Creek we are constantly reminded of our water resources. It is not just something we take for granted when we turn on our taps. For those of us who rely on our own wells it is even more of a concern We have seen the creek full and we have seen the creek very low in drought years. pactola is our water resource. the streams and springs that feed into pactola are our watershed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to wetlands and aquatic resources.

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	Cheryl	Rowe		248	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Rapid City being the second largest city in SD is of economic importance to our state. With the coming growth of the EAFB in the near future we will need more of a water resource than ever before. Again this is of great importance to the economic growth of our community.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	3	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	Drilling into rock that contains elements that should not be brought to the surface and discarded haphazardly is more than absurd. It is reckless and wasteful. These elements would threaten the waters that flow into our water reservoir.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	What measures will be taken to ensure that all waste water from drilling is disposed of safely?	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions prior to initiation of project activities. As part of this, F3 would need to work with its contractor to develop an approved waste management plan.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	5	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	What are the specifics on drilling waste? What elements are within the discharge from drilling? Are any elements radioactive? What elements are toxic?	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions prior to initiation of project activities. As part of this, F3 would need to work with its contractor to develop an approved waste management plan.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	6	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	What data will be shared with the public?	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. Additional project documents, including the EA, will be posted to this site once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	7	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	Who will monitor? How will the monitoring be done, how often and by whom? Is there continuous monitoring of waste to determine what elements are being brought to the surface? What is the time in for testing, monitoring and sharing data?	The U.S. Forest Service will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of F3's final, approved Plan of Operations. Similarly, for permits required by other agencies, those agencies will be responsible for following up with F3 on any monitoring requirements they issue for the Project
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	8	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	How do we known that the company is not drilling at angles under private land? How will those land owners know?	F3 will be required to conduct the Project in accordance with the final Plan of Operations as approved by the U.S. Forest Service.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	9	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Do we who live downstream and own our own wells, have to be concerned for any contamination into our aquifers? Our watersheds?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	10	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	Will the drilling impact our aquifers?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	11	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	How and when will this monitoring take place? Who will pay for our wells to be monitored?	The U.S. Forest Service will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of F3's final, approved Plan of Operations. Similarly, for permits required by other agencies, those agencies will be responsible for following up with F3 on any monitoring requirements they issue for the Project
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	12	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As you can see I am concerned for the quality of our water. But I am also concerned for the quantity. I have personally witnessed sever drought here.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Cheryl	Rowe		248	13	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	At the lowest recorded data, how would drilling impact our water resources? Factoring in the future growth of our area?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Caitlin	Monahan		249	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Mining exploration in the Silver City, Jenny Gulch, and Sunnyside Gulch region of the Black Hills is not acceptable.	Comment noted.
	Caitlin	Monahan		249	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Recreation & Travel Management	Recovery of any mineral resources in this watershed will jeopardize pactola reservoir and Rapid City's water supply not to mention a huge source of recreational activities enjoyed by thousands of local families and a huge source of tourism revenue.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Perry	Grosz		250	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow exploration or mining in the Jenny Gulch area.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Justin	Herreman		251	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a Key stakeholder in this project and significant user of the Jenny Gulch Basin and Rapid Creek watershed I am vehemently opposed to the current process in place for this proposed exploration project.	Comment noted.
	Justin	Herreman		251	2	Regulatory process	EA vs EIS	The EA process is inadequate to address this project and a full EIS needs to be undertake for the sake of completeness.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.

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	Justin	Herreman		251	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The wildlife impact of this project presents significant concerns as this basin is summer and nesting habitat for critical protected species including osprey and bald eagles also with elk, deer and mountain goats.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Justin	Herreman		251	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The potential for a chemical spill in the watershed with the exploratory drilling will occur is another significant concern.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality.
	Justin	Herreman		251	5	Other	Access & Transportation	The access roads into the basin (particularly silver city road) are not adequate to support the equipment required for the drilling process and the traffic increase will harm the quality of life for the residents of the area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Justin	Herreman		251	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The other significant concern is for the amazing recreational area and trout fishery.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Leon	SwiftBird		252	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Any spill or unintended release of drilling fluids during the exploration project would migrate through fractured crystalline bedrock and contaminate this shallow aquifer/well water supply, which would compromise drinking water quality in Jenney gulch and impact homeowners immediately - (Leading to a larger impact of citizens in Rapid City and the general region of South Dakota).	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Leon	SwiftBird		252	2	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	As you may or may not know, the Jenny Gulch area has been flagged as an area of vulnerability/concern since a research study of the Black Hills water since 2012 (See Attachment) which has been documented as due to the decades old mining operations on the property leaving the area with high susceptibility. As homeowners, we have taken extra precaution to protect our area water supply since this flag of vulnerability/susceptibility.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Leon	SwiftBird		252	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Any leaching of acid mine drainage from this exploration could impact water quality in Rapid Creek and Lake Pactola, which has implications for the entire Black Hills region.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Leon	SwiftBird		252	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Recreation & Travel Management	Any migration or subsurface transport of drilling fluids, upwelling of deep brine, or generation of acid mine drainage during this exploration would flow towards rapid creek and pactola Reservoir, and impact fisheries, wildlife, and recreation opportunities in the Black Hills.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Brad	Evans		253	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	However, I am in favor of drilling by F3 Gold and Mineral Mountain. I can see no harm by drilling to determine the underground geology.	Comment noted.
	Laural	Bidwell		254	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not approve any mining activity- neither exploration nor mining, anywhere near Pactola Reservoir or any other location that may impact the Rapid City Watershed.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Laural	Bidwell		254	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Recreation & Travel Management	In addition to water quality concerns, the Black Hills is a major tourist and outdoor activity center. We do not want to blight the environment for external companies to extract gold.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Laural	Bidwell		254	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose any permits for F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Exploration.	Comment noted.
	Plazyk	Ranch		255	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I OPPOSE this project for the sake of clean & clear water in the Pactola watershed.	Comment noted.
	Plazyk	Ranch		255	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a fly fisher woman I implore you keep drilling from this water source.	Comment noted.
	Lesley	Warren		256	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to any drilling in the BHNF.	Comment noted.
	Marlis	DeMitchell-Sade	Dr. Irony Sade	257	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploratory mining operations would negatively impact our ability to enjoy the splendor of the pactola lake area in many ways including the aesthetic ugliness of mining operations, the disruption of fauna and flora from the mining operations, as well as the potentially negative consequences of mining operation , which will introduce environmentally damaging effects to the area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Marlis	DeMitchell-Sade	Dr. Irony Sade	257	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We do not want the Rapid City water supply impacted by mining. The Pactola Lake area is critical for the Rapid City water supply. We rely on clean drinking water when we are in Rapid City, whether at work, shopping, or eating out. Even though it has been stated that F3 will be required to truck in their water supply, that does not rule out that the local water supply will not be impacted by mining operations. Underground waterways communicate in ways that we are unable to see; drilling introduces new pathways that can divert water with unintended consequences. In addition to creating new pathways that can divert water, new chemicals or elements can also be introduced that can destroy the cleanliness and palatability of the water. We do not want the quality of our water to be threatened by mining operations.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Marlis	DeMitchell-Sade	Dr. Irony Sade	257	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The land is owned by Native American tribes. Not only are the Black Hills sacred land to Native American tribes, but they have ownership claims to the land per signed treaties with the US government, that should supersede any mining claims. and consultation with them about the proposed project has been inadequate. Native American tribes are a sovereign nation, and consultation about the proposed project must be done to their standards and approval, and on their timelines. I cannot stress enough how important it is that the tribes who have ownership of the land be in agreement with the planned exploratory mining, that the treaties signed by the US government be honored and respected.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Marlis	DeMitchell-Sade	Dr. Irony Sade	257	4	Other	Vegetation & Timber Resources	Clearing areas in order to complete the exploratory drilling project will negatively impact the Pactola Lake area. Although F3 will reportedly be required to reclaim the footprints of the land they will clear to create their drilling areas, they will most likely utilize clearcutting in order to make the space they require for their operations. The negative effects of clearcutting have been well documented, and may include increased stream flow during storms and resulting destruction, loss of habitat and species diversity, and overall disruption of the forest ecosystem. It provides increased opportunities for invasive species to take root and crowd out native flora. It also frequently results in loss of recreational opportunities and destruction of scenery. It takes years to reclaim the clear-cut areas, years which will have negative consequences for the flora and fauna impacted by clearcutting. 42 clear-cut sites are far too many to allow. Clear-cut sites are ugly.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to vegetation and timber resources.
	Marlis	DeMitchell-Sade	Dr. Irony Sade	257	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Gold mining does not benefit the Pactola Lake area, but rather introduces only detriments to that area. Although is supposed to be "exploratory," one cannot ignore the fact that it is being undertaken in order to determine if it is worthwhile to F3 to mine the area for gold. Gold mining is notoriously dirty and environmentally damaging. It has been known to introduce toxic chemicals to areas, including cyanide and mercury, contaminate water supplies, and destroy vital ecosystems. We were unable to determine a single positive consequence for our family for the proposed project.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Laura	Armstrong		258	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As President of the Rapid City Common Council, please know I am strongly against the proposed exploratory drilling in the jenny Gulch, Broad Gulch, and Sunnyside region directly adjacent to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Laura	Armstrong		258	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Exploration and mining in this area should not be allowed due to the significant potential harmful impact to these surrounding communities.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Laura	Armstrong		258	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I would recommend completing a full, unbiased Environmental Impact Study for this watershed rather than the short EA process being currently proposed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Annette	Freeman		259	1	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	The Black Hills are a sanctuary surrounded by prairie, 350 miles from any metropolitan area. The clay soil of the prairie prevents water absorption, therefore theoretically the BH act as a funnel replenishing groundwater aquifers.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.

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	Tom	Whillock		260	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a citizen of the Rapid City, please know I am strongly against the proposed exploratory drilling in the jenny Gulch, Broad Gulch, and Sunnyside region directly adjacent to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Tom	Whillock		260	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Exploration and mining in this area should not be allowed due to the significant potential harmful impact to these surrounding communities.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Tom	Whillock		260	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I would recommend completing a full, unbiased Environmental Impact Study for this watershed rather than the short EA process being currently proposed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Barbara	Iwan-Limbo		261	1	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	I and my family are users of the lake, we kayak, fish, scuba dive and camp in this area. The negative impact to the land and lake far exceeds the positive.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Byron	Schulz	Barbara Schulz	262	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There is no way that once the aquifers providing water to Rapid City (Minnelusa and Madison) are damaged or polluted they can be restored. No amount of bond money could be enough to cover the environmental impacts. The water supply for thousands of people would be destroyed.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Audra	Olson		263	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I have major concern for certain water pollution due to the depth and number of drilled holes. Out water supplies are being threatened continuously by big money.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Audra	Olson		263	2	Other	Access & Transportation	I have major concern for noise, dust, road damage truck traffic…..all of these threaten the safety of those living in the immediate area, specifically Sunnyside Gulch residents.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Audra	Olson		263	3	Other	Vegetation & Timber Resources	I have major concern for the forest being damaged by machinery cutting trails to drill sites.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to vegetation and timber resources and transportation.
	Audra	Olson		263	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The perfect thriving Black Hills will be turned into a barren wasteland. Wildlife will be driven away…deer, elk, MT lions, bobcats, fox and many smaller forest animals	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Simon	Tambling-Harris		264	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The project area is likely to impact a high number of people. A full EIR must be conducted before the project is progressed, not just the shorter, less full Environmental Assessment	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Simon	Tambling-Harris		264	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The project puts the safety of Rapid City water, and the health and wellness of those who depend on it, at risk.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Simon	Tambling-Harris		264	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploratory processes inexorably lead to full mining. A full EIR that considers all likely outcomes, not just preliminary intentions, is essential.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Simon	Tambling-Harris		264	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultations have been inadequate. They must be made as a precursor to a project, not as a check box after a project is already underway.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Simon	Tambling-Harris		264	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	In the same vein, assessments currently conducted sow no meaningful consideration has been given regarding native/cultural access to, us of or dominion over the project area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Simon	Tambling-Harris		264	6	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The project would negatively impact current recreation, tourism and agriculture operations and income with no meaningful plan to ameliorate such harm.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Erik	Glood		265	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My biggest concern is my well water for 22781 Sunny Gulch. If somehow my water source is affected by their drilling what is the recourse for my water supply at my residence?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Erik	Glood		265	2	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	Has there been any sort of comprehensive environmental impact survey performed on both above ground areas and also below ground water tables and aquifers? Some of these drill sites are very close to my property. I am extremely concerned about the impact this could have on my water resources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Erik	Glood		265	3	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Access & Transportation	Another concern is will this company be required to restore the condition of the roads they will use to access these drill sites?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Erik	Glood		265	4	Other	Socioeconomics	Furthermore the majority of my life savings is invested in this property. The land value of this property is critical to me. I hope that I never have to sell it but if I do it is critical that its value not be tarnished by any unforeseen environmental impacts caused by this proposed drilling project.	F3's proposal is for exploratory drilling. Design criteria will be developed as part of the EA to help mitigate and reduce associated impacts.
	Kendal	Haug		266	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the proposed exploratory gold drilling project in Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Dawn	Lueck		267	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	the local indigenous people do not support this	Comment noted.
	Dawn	Lueck		267	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The impact could negatively impact thousands of people harming the waters of Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Dawn	Lueck		267	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation should always come first and it did not.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Dawn	Lueck		267	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Cultural resources will be harmed. Just for greedy seekers.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Dawn	Lueck		267	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	this will harm the economics of the area. Effecting tourism	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Larry	Beezley		268	1	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Water Quality/Water Supply	I oppose the Forest Service allowing the drilling project to proceed without a full environmental assessment, to include the future economic impact on tourism and recreation and on quality of Rapid City's major water supply.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Larry	Beezley		268	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am a fisherman, hiker, and general outdoor enthusiast, concerned that this project if eventually leading to full scale mining may have unintended consequences for our precious water and for the appearance of the Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Dianne	LaRoe		269	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service didn’t consult the local tribes fist which violates the free, prior and informed consent as laid out by there permanent forum on indigenous rights at the United Nations.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Dianne	LaRoe		269	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Gold exploration leads to mining which impacts the water quality and quality of life in the community it can impact access to sacred sites and recreation.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	John	Simcha		270	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow ANY extraction from sacred and unceded lands.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	John	Simcha		270	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This project is in a high impact area that could impact thousands of people. The Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just a short Environmental Assessment	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	John	Simcha		270	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	If you use Rapid City water or a well by Rapid Creek, tell them you don’t want your water impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	John	Simcha		270	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration leads to mining, and the environmental review process should cover all potential impacts of the project	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	John	Simcha		270	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The forest service did not state tribal consultation early enough. Tribal consultation should come first.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	John	Simcha		270	6	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Cultural resources and access to them would be hindered	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	John	Simcha		270	7	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	WE need healthy economic development and value our current tourism and agriculture, which would be negatively impacted by this project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	John	Simcha		270	8	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Recreation activates could be impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	John	Simcha		270	9	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The area along Highway 385 and Pactola lake is one of our most scenic areas, and gold exploration would not fit with this use.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	John	Simcha		270	10	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	People live in the immediate area where drilling could happen, and 24-hour noise and traffic would destroy their use of their property.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Nina	Turner		271	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	The Black Hills have already suffered the results of mining. The water pollution and noise will negatively affect tourism, residential life, and the unique environment in this beautiful area.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Frida	Kahlo	Princess Mora	272	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full environmental impact statement should be conducted by the forest service, not just an environmental assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Frida	Kahlo	Princess Mora	272	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service did not begin tribal consultation early enough. Tribal consultation should come first. Indigenous people must be respected and consulted accordingly. Furthermore access to cultural resources would be hindered.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Frida	Kahlo	Princess Mora	272	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The scenic area along Highway 385 and Pactola Lake would be ruined by exploration and potential mining, as would current agriculture and tourism activities.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Erik	Carlson		273	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I believe that the proposed operation can be completed without ill effect under the supervision of the appropriate governing agencies.	Comment noted.
	Margaret	Bail		274	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The project could impact thousands of people, so the forest service should do a full environmental Impact Statement, not just a short assessment	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Margaret	Bail		274	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Because exploration leads to mining, the environmental review process should cover all potential impacts of the project.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Margaret	Bail		274	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The forest service did not start tribal consultation early enough, tribal consultation should come first.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Margaret	Bail		274	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Cultural resources and access would be hindered and those things are more important.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Margaret	Bail		274	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Agriculture and tourism are important economic avenues and this project would negatively impact those recreation would be impacted as well.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Margaret	Bail		274	6	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Gold exploration would impact scenic areas seen along highway 385 and Pactola Lake	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Margaret	Bail		274	7	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	The noise traffic and inconvenience of the drilling will negatively impact people who live in the immediate area.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.

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	Frances	West		275	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	First of all, there was no consultation with the Lakota tribe this is their sacred land.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Frances	West		275	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Second, there needs to be a full environmental Impact Study, not just a short one, to include the impact on water and land.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Frances	West		275	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	The Black Hills is a high impact area which would affect thousands of people. We know that exploration is really mining. And this will affect not only the year round residents, but tourists as well. It will negatively impact the local economy.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jeff	Ostler		276	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I also came to an understanding of the historical injustice that occurred when the United States took the Black Hills from the Lakota's in 1877, a historical injustice which the U.S. Supreme court recognized in 1980. Because of this, I believe that without the full approval of the sovereign Lakota Nations in the region the project should not go forward.	Comment noted.
	Andrea	Robbins		277	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Any disturbance and destruction would be completely disrespectful violation of the sacred Black Hills, would impact the water, and harmful to the environment at large.	Comment noted.
	Evelyn	Provell		278	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to drilling exploration which may lead to full-scale mining in Jenny gulch, a headwaters area of Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir.	Comment noted.
	Evelyn	Provell		278	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Economic rewards of a few out-of-state investors must be measured against the cost of long-term damage to the main water source for Ellsworth and Rapid City areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Natalie	S.		279	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I will be conducted in an area with thousands of people without proper discussion with the tribe or the other local communities that could be impacted by the potential environmental repercussions of the project.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Natalie	S.		279	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	With recent lessons of water contamination that has devastated communities like Flint, MI and Bethpage, NY, I do believe that would be the height of irresponsibility to continue such a project without a full Environmental Impact statement from the Forest Service at the very least, and for the local peoples especially they deserve the opportunity to have their voices and concerns heard, respected and considered for as well.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Rob	Ripley		280	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This project is in a high impact area that could impact thousands of people. The Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just a short Environmental Assessment	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Rob	Ripley		280	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	If you use Rapid City water or a well by Rapid Creek, tell them you don't want your water impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Rob	Ripley		280	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration leads to mining, and the environmental review process should cover all potential impacts of the project	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rob	Ripley		280	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The forest service did not state tribal consultation early enough. Tribal consultation should come first.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Rob	Ripley		280	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Cultural resources and access to them would be hindered.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Rob	Ripley		280	6	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	WE need healthy economic development and value our current tourism and agriculture, which would be negatively impacted by this project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.

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	Rob	Ripley		280	7	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Recreation activates could be impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Rob	Ripley		280	8	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The area along Highway 385 and Pactola lake is one of our most scenic areas, and gold exploration would not fit with this use.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Rob	Ripley		280	9	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	People live in the immediate area where drilling could happen, and 24-hour noise and traffic would destroy their use of their property.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Amie	Townsend	A L G Townsend	281	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do NOT allow gold exploration to move forward in the Black Hills. Please listen to the voices of the Oceti Sakowin who say the site is sacred to them.	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Wendi	Wachsmuth		282	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I am writing to say consultation with tribes was not initiated on time in regard to gold mining in the Black Hills. These are sacred lands, already stolen and besmirched with the visages of those whole stole them. This is an unnecessary project which will only harm relations further with the indigenous people of the United States.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Bonnie	Gantz		283	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing today to oppose gold exploration in the sacred Black Hills of the Lakota. This would have a destructive and dangerous impact on the land, the people and the culture of this area.	Comment noted.
	Bonnie	Gantz		283	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation did not begin early enough in the process in the process, it would negatively impact the physical health of the people of the region.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Bonnie	Gantz		283	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	A negative impact would occur to the water table of the area, which could further impact the water for the rest of the state.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Tauna	Lockhart		284	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am deeply concerned and interested stakeholder with regard to the proposal by F3 to do exploratory drilling in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Tauna	Lockhart		284	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	First the exploratory drilling has the potential to impact wildlife residents in the area, and key water sources, including seasonal streams, drainage pathways and Ultimately Pactola Lake. Pactola lake is one of the sources for drinking water for South Dakotas second largest city, Rapid City. Exploratory drilling sites have been shown to contribute to noise pollution, air pollution, and damage to water quality.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Tauna	Lockhart		284	3	Other	General Environmental Concern	I would like to see documentation that F3 has managed a project with these similar specifications (near a reservoir that feeds a city downstream) and that they have had little or no impact on the wildlife, water, or ecosystem in which they have worked.	The Plan of Operations will have requirements in it to protect natural reources. Regular inspections of the drilling project will be conducted to make sure the Plan conditions are being followed.
	Tauna	Lockhart		284	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Additionally, I would like to know if they do discover gold, will they be the ones mining or are they selling? If they are selling, will their promises of good will and remediation be a legal obligation for the company that purchases their mining rights?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Becca	Jayne		285	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	It will absolutely destroy the natural water supply we depend on.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Becca	Jayne		285	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	It will destroy the homes for any animal near the sites- these animals require the serenity they've been born into for survival. It will introduce toxicity on a level unfixable, do not do this to Pactola.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife and water quality/water supply.
	Becca	Jayne		285	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The visitors that come to enjoy the Black Hills, especially that of Pactola, will refuse to visit. It will degrade our economy and heavily reduce any chance of future growth.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Mark	Bowron		286	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In short, I am in favor and support the applicants plan for the proposed drilling exploration.	Comment noted.
	Mark	Bowron		286	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria		I think there is a real possibility that opponents to this project may intentionally attempt to sabotage or vandalize the drill rigs or other activates associated with the project. This concern extends even to intentional and illegal dumping of noxious chemicals, with the intent of blaming such activity on the applicant, or even the possibility of inflicting harm on the applicants employees and contractors. This possibility represents a greater threat to the public lands and the proposed drilling program itself.	Comment noted.

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Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Brandon	Isakson		287	1	other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 Gold's proposed Jenny Gulch exploration Drilling Project Utilizes low-impact, precision diamond drilling techniques that have, for many decades, been used to test subsurface geology, access clean water, and measure ground stability in infrastructure development. This technique has rarely, if ever, resulted in significant impact to the environment. The proposed project should be reviewed on its merits as an exploration project and Big Rock Exploration urges the Forest Service to ignore any comments that speculate on anything other than the specific work proposed by F3 Gold.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
	Andrew	Kelly		288	1	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	As an anthropology major, it is of great importance to me that cultural resources are protected, and I believe that the law and the institutions which exist in the government should go to great lengths to accomplish that goal.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Andrew	Kelly		288	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Additional, as I have mentioned, mining runoff can leech into the groundwater and cause numerous health problems including cancer for local residents.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Andrew	Kelly		288	3	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Adding to that is the risk of flying dust and pollution from the use of gasoline powered equipment which can cause serious respiratory illness, especially to small children.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Andrew	Kelly		288	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	When we include the impact that even the noise pollution can have on local wildlife we have to question the projects value.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Andrew	Kelly		288	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I remind you that the law requires tribal consultation for any; project which may impact native American Land, not just archaeological projects.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Kyra	Levine		289	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service consultation with tribal leaders did not come early enough and has not been sufficient. Tribal consultation MUST come first.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Kyra	Levine		289	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	Moreover, this project is in a high impact area and there absolutely must be further review of the impacts on local populations, on local natural resources, and ecosystems, on agriculture, and tourism.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Kevin	Carroll		290	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	It is my belief that before any exploration drilling is done in these public lands, it is your duty to continue to protect them by ordering a complete and thorough Environmental Impact Study (EIS) rather than the short EA process being currently proposed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Kevin	Carroll		290	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The potential contamination of this critical drinking water source for over 80,000 residents should be a primary concern and consideration	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Kevin	Carroll		290	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	As important, tens of thousands of residents and visitors to Pactola use the Jenny Gulch Recreation Area as well as the entire reservoir for a variety of year around activities.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Mike	Decker		291	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration can lead to mining, and this area has been a sacred place to the Lakota people. Especially given the history of how this country has treated Native Americans, we should be doing all we can to ensure that sacred areas are preserved, instead of permitting the continued spread of greedy developers.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Bruce	Ellison		292	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Since F-3 is another private corporation conducting detailed exploratory mapping in the same area for gold, with gold at its extreme value, such exploration is likely to lead to one or more gold mines in my watershed, in the major water resource emanating eastward from the central Black Hills, recharging the Minnelusa and Inyan Kara aquifers, such gold mining threatens the future of these invaluable water resources.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Bruce	Ellison		292	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The proposed exploration will interfere with my use of the Mickelson Trail by horse and foot in the exploration area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Jennifer	Seidel		293	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	This sacred land and it needs to be preserved for religious, cultural, environmental, and even economic (Tourism) reasons.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	William	Armstrong		294	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my opposition to this project.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	William	Armstrong		294	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The short environmental Assessment is insufficient for a region of this density and the Forest Service should perform a full Environmental Impact Statement.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	William	Armstrong		294	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Vegetation & Timber Resources	Such a project would hinder tourism and agriculture, degrading the economic development of the area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	William	Armstrong		294	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Projects like this degrade groundwater safety and may put thousands of Rapid City Dwellers at risk	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	William	Armstrong		294	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation is an imperative and the Forest service did not engage with them swiftly enough.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Wade	Ellett		295	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	While the risks of the proposed drilling project are likely low, there are risks should something go wrong, water pollution will directly affect the well water in Silver City, and likely the water in Pactola Lake- which supplies drinking water to residents of Rapid City.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Wade	Ellett		295	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Osprey, a threatened species make their nests at Pactola as well, so its important that we keep that area as safe for them as possible as well.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Wade	Ellett		295	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I think the best possible option for this project is to undertake an Environmental Impact Statement, so that both the Forest Service and F3 Gold will have a true understanding of the long term effects of this project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Brody	Salazar		296	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This project is in a high impact area that could impact thousands of people. The Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just a short Environmental Assessment.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Gemma	Lockhart		297	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I request the Forest Service conduct an Environmental Impact Statement on the project.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Gemma	Lockhart		297	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Especially I request the most comprehensive review and scientific analysis possible of presence of the minnow rainbow or bronze colored fish, the lake chub in pactola lake.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Gemma	Lockhart		297	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I respectfully request the Forest Service conduct an environmental Impact statement for the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration drilling project, to examine how the proposed exploration drilling could affect groundwater and possibly fish.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Joel	Albright		298	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a long time resident of Rapid City and the Black Hills, I am strongly opposed to the proposed F3 Gold LLC Jenny Gulch Exploratory Drilling Project.	Comment noted.
	Joel	Albright		298	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	I frequently kayak, hike, fish, and generally enjoy the natural beauty of the area in whichF3 Gold wants to drill, with the intent of mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Joel	Albright		298	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I also rely on this source for my daily drinking water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.

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	Joel	Albright		298	4	Other	Access & Transportation Fisheries & Wildlife	F3 Mining's proposed exploratory drilling and intended mining will lead to increased industrial traffic and activity in the area. This will likely have a negative impact on roads wildlife and natural beauty of the region.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Joel	Albright		298	5	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Exploratory drilling and the intended mining will put the fishery at higher risk. This includes the entire Rapid Creek watershed at and below the proposed drilling site.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Joel	Albright		298	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Exploratory drilling and the intended mining will put the primary water sources for all areas downstream at higher risk of contamination. This includes Rapid City, Box Elder, and Ellsworth AFB.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Beth	Brekhus		299	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the proposed exploratory drilling in the Jenny Gulch, Broad Gulch, and Sunnyside region directly adjacent to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Beth	Brekhus		299	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Economic impact of a potential contamination of the Rapid City area water sources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Beth	Brekhus		299	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Economic impact of a potential contamination of area streams and creeks where people fish on a daily basis.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply and fisheries and wildlife.
	Beth	Brekhus		299	4	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The economic impact to recreation activities on Pactola Reservoir if there is a contamination.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Beth	Brekhus		299	5	Mitigation/Design Criteria		What is the estimated cost of restoring the land to its natural state following the exploratory drilling activities.	The cost of site restoration depends on a variety of factors. F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the U.S. Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Beth	Brekhus		299	6	Other	Financial Assurance	Please address the past exploratory drilling experience of F3 Gold LLC and its financial stability.	F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the U.S. Forest Service for the exploration project. The U.S. Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The U.S. Forest Service has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Beth	Brekhus		299	7	Other	Public and Agency Engagement	Please make public the qualifications of Barr Engineering and how the election process was conducted by the Forest Service. Please also provide a copy of the agreement between Barr Engineering and F3 Gold LLC.	Barr Engineering was approved by the U.S. Forest Service based on the company's qualifications. A Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Forest Service and F3 Gold outlines roles and responsibilities of all parties. Provisions of 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1506.5 will be followed.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	1	Outside of Scope	EA vs EIS	This project is in a high impact area that could impact thousands of people. The Forest Service should do a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just a short Environmental Assessment	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	If you use Rapid City water or a well by Rapid Creek, tell them you don’t want your water impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration leads to mining, and the environmental review process should cover all potential impacts of the project	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The forest service did not state tribal consultation early enough. Tribal consultation should come first.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Cultural resources and access to them would be hindered	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	6	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	WE need healthy economic development and value our current tourism and agriculture, which would be negatively impacted by this project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	7	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Recreation activates could be impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	8	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	The area along Highway 385 and Pactola lake is one of our most scenic areas, and gold exploration would not fit with this use.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Jennifer	Strange		300	9	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	People live in the immediate area where drilling could happen, and 24-hour noise and traffic would destroy their use of their property	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, has been incorporated into the EA.

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	Jennifer	Strange		300	10	Other	General Environmental Concern	These can include and in no way be limited to unintentional consequences for the human population in terms of: increased traffic inconvenience and fatalities, increased air water and ground pollution, stress on public and human services including schools and hospitals, increase of drug and other illegal substance use and access, Man camps that often serve as hot bed of criminal behavior including sexual assault and sexual exploitation of women and children and more.	Comment noted. Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Jo	Nelson		301	1	Other	Public and Agency Engagement	With regard to the conduct of the open house, I feel as if the format was deliberately staged to provide as little information to the members of the public who were in attendance and to prevent as many questions as possible.	Comment noted. The public was encouraged to discuss the project and ask questions with a number of project team members in attendance. A presentation on the project was also provided during the open house. In addition, comment cards were available for members of the public to submit written comments.
	Jo	Nelson		301	2	Other	Public and Agency Engagement	Prior to the slide presentation, a USFS spokesperson said that the information to date as included in the presentation, indicated the F3 project would qualify for a USFS CAT-X. I feel that the USFS deliberately used acronyms instead of full terminology because many people in attendance would not understand the information. I conducted on-line searches of federal, regional, and local USFS sites and could not find a full listing of USFS CAT-X items. I found references to proposed amendments to a few CAT-X items for Special Use Projects (none applied to this situation) as well as references to other documents, such as land management plans. Searches of the other referenced documents also did no locate any such CAT-X items.	The expression "CAT-X or CATEX" is an abreviation for a "categorical exclusion" in NEPA. This was presented and defined during the public meeting power point presenation. The power point presentation was also made available on the BLack Hills NF website with this project's scoping documents.
	Jo	Nelson		301	3	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The USFS spokesperson said an EA was being prepared because of water resources concerns; however, the letter send out providing public notice indicated the EA was being prepared " to facilitate planning, decision making, and public disclosure." which one is true.	The description in the scoping letter is correct. Water resources is one of the many resources that will be evaluated in the EA.
	Jo	Nelson		301	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The USFS spokesperson also said the USFS is confident the result of the EA will be a FONSI - this seems to be jumping to a conclusion before the studies and research have been conducted, which is the reverse order of a normal scientific process. The spokesperson then said, if significant impacts are found, the USFS will go for a full EIS. I fail to understand how you can be confident of a FONSI in one statement, then in the next statement purport that significant impacts could be found.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Jo	Nelson		301	5	Regulatory Process		The pre-meeting letter noted the Forest Service roads (primary and additional), some of which will need to be widened or improved, as well as temporary overland trails that will need to be constructed prior to being used to access the proposed bore hole sites, the 42 drill sites, and 2 larger equipment staging areas. Without more detail, the limited information presented pushes against the 5-acre upper limit requiring a NPDES Permit, SWPPP, and BMPs for Stormwater Discharge Associated with Small Construction Activity, and could easily exceed the 5-acre trigger requiring a NPDES Permit, SWPPP, and BMPs for Stormwater Discharge Associated with an Industrial Activity.	The proposed exploratory drilling project would be required to acquire all applicable federal, state, and local permits and approvals prior to initiation.
	Jo	Nelson		301	6	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	Will [drill] cuttings be containerized and removed off-site? Will the cuttings be left on sites? If left on site, will they be covered or left exposed to precipitation? If left on site and exposed, how will the surrounding land and watershed be protected from runoff?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jo	Nelson		301	7	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	None of the USFS personnel I spoke with at the meeting could or would answer the question as to what will happen to the water/fluids used for drilling. Will the fluids be captured and disposed offsite, will the fluids be allowed to run on/into to surrounding land or watershed? Will the fluids be allowed to seep into subsurface faults and or fractures? Is there any possibility of fluid migration into any of the local aquifers?	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jo	Nelson		301	8	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Are there any plans to sample private or public wells in the area surrounding the proposed project Area?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Jo	Nelson		301	9	Other	Public and Agency Engagement	The provided map which identified locations associated with the proposed 42 bore hole sites was so lacking in information an/or coordinates that the area could not be identified in any of the following resources: 1. Guidebook to Geology of the Black Hills, 2nd Edition, 2015. John L Lufkin, Jack A. Redden, Alvis Lisenbee, Tom Loomis. 2. USGS Atlas of water Resources in the Black Hills Area, South Dakota. Hydrologic Investigation Atlas HA-747, 2002. 3. Geologic Map of the Black Hills Area, South Dakota and Wyoming. Ed Dewitt, J.A. Redden, David Buscher, and Anna Burack Wilson. Published by the U.S. Geological Survey, 1989.	Comment noted.

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	Jo	Nelson		301	10	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There was also no mention in either the pre-meeting letter or the presentation that discussed the fact that many of the minerals in the Black Hills contain naturally-occurring arsenic. Locals sometimes refer to the bare hillsides near Pactola Reservoir as the Arsenic Hills and speculate this is why no trees grow on the hills. Arsenic is also known to be a chronic problem in the drinking water supply for Hill City. IF drill cuttings are allowed to remain unprotected on site, or if drilling fluids are allowed to run onto the land or into the watershed areas, are there any plans to protect the land or watersheds from arsenic contamination? If water from the Hill City municipal water supply is used as a water supply for the drilling operations, will the water be tested to determine the arsenic level in order to ensure no subsurface arsenic contamination occurs from the drilling operations?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply, geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
	Deanna	Lammers		302	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Fisheries & Wildlife	I oppose the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project because the people that use Pactola could be harmed along with wildlife.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Deanna	Lammers		302	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Any spill could contaminate our drinking water and put our lives at risk.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Billie	White		303	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Fisheries & Wildlife	I oppose the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project because even a small spill from a gold mining operation into pactola would harm wildlife and fisheries.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Sarah	Pierce		304	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Water Quality/Water Supply	I oppose the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project as the process could lead to the contamination of out water supply.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Cante	Heart		305	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife	I, Cante Heart, oppose the F3 Exploration Drilling Project and all toxic mining or drilling in the Black Hills. These projects harm water quality and wildlife.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Cante	Heart		305	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Our lives are put in danger if our drinking water is affected.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality.
	Andrew	Bentley		306	1	Other	Wetlands & Aquatic Resources	This proposed gold exploration project threatens the watershed for Rapid Creek, which will impact Rapid City and Surrounding areas.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to wetlands and aquatic resources.
	Andrew	Bentley		306	2	Other	General Environmental Concern	This project not only threatens regional water supplies, but Tourism agricultures, wildlife, recreation, and Cultural Resources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Edith	Clemmons		307	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Water Quality/Water Supply	I oppose all toxic mining and drilling in BH because they harm our water quality and our lives.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Ann	Sandberg		308	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	What would you do, if your drinking water was contaminated? And how much or your taxes would be diverted to decontaminate the municipal water supply.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Paula	Fox	Paula Long Fox	309	1	Regulatory Process		What is the protocol when two laws give you conflicting messages? For instance the old mining law of the 1800s is in direct conflict with the federal water pollution acts listed below: P.L. 86-517' 16 U.S.C. 528-531). This act declares that the purposes of the national forests include outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and fish and wildlife. The act directs the Secretary of Agriculture to administer national forest renewable surface resources for multiple use and sustained yield. Federal water Pollution Control Act, Act of June 30, 1948) (P.L. 80-845; 33 U.S.C. 1251-1387, October 18, 1972, as amended 1973-1983, 1987, 1988, 1990-1992, 1994, 1995, and 1996). This act is a comprehensive statute aimed at restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters.	All Forest Service NEPA decisions must follow applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The pupose of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), Decision Notice (DN), and Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared under NEPA are to provide an objective review of project-related affects.
	Gena	Parkhurst		310	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose drilling in the Black Hills for the purpose of gold exploration due to the toxic legacy left behind by previous gold exploration and mining activities.	Comment noted.

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	Gena	Parkhurst		310	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I respectfully suggest that the proposal now before you warrants an EIS due to the fact that the drilling would take place in Rapid City's Watershed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Julie	Santella		311	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to register my strong disagreement with F3 Gold's proposal to explore for gold in the central Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Julie	Santella		311	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Nothing further should take place before a nation-to-nation, government-to-government consultation process occurs with all tribal nations with connections to the Black Hills.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Julie	Santella		311	3	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The process to evaluate the proposed project area for its cultural and spiritual relevance must not just involve tribes; the process must be driven by tribes.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. This project will comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
	Julie	Santella		311	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Given the significance of this area, an EA is inadequate and an EIS must instead be completed.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Julie	Santella		311	5	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	Cumulative impacts of this project must also be meaningfully considered, with attention to: the mining history of the Black Hills and broader region, including superfund sites and ongoing cleanup efforts and contamination' the history of the theft of indigenous lands and disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples in this region; the potential impacts to Rapid City and Box Elders water supply (As a Rapid City resident, I am concerned about this); and other potential impacts.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.
	Christian	Donovan		312	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining will pollute nearby water sources.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Christian	Donovan		312	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation should come first.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Christian	Donovan		312	3	Other	Recreation & Travel Management Vegetation & Timber Resources	Recreational activities, tourism and agriculture will be negatively impacted.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Courtney	Julep		313	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I strongly urge you to conduct a full Environmental Impact Assessment of this project and the potential mining usage that could follow.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Courtney	Julep		313	2	Other	General Environmental Concern Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	How will it harm the water, the land, the indigenous people who's Cultural resources will be hindered?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Ray	Geff		314	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm writing this letter in favor of the drilling proposal for F3 Gold, LLC for 3 reasons.	Comment noted.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Please do an extensive and thorough Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.	An environmental assessment has been prepared for this project. The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in "determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact" (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	2	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	Please consider cumulative impacts of the Jenny Gulch F3 project exploration and potential mining and Mineral Mountain Resource's exploration and potential mining.	As part of the NEPA process, the Forest Service must address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts across all resource categories.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	3	Regulatory Process		Please disclose the Forest Service Management areas that the prospective mine would overlap.	The EA identifies the Forest Service Management Areas that overlap with proposed project elements.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please collect and display geo-chemical data and details on eventual mining system planned.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	5	Other	General Environmental Concern	Please collect and display a lot of baseline data on the weather, surface water, underground hydrology, air quality, soil, historic cultural properties, scenery, recreational use and biodiversity values. Please discuss any impacts to the above values.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects against current site conditions, as well as potential project-related effects to these resources.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	6	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Please discuss any wastes and waste management or storage.	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions prior to initiation of project activities. As part of this, F3 would need to work with its contractor to develop an approved waste management plan.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	7	Other	Botanical Resources Fisheries & Wildlife	Please discuss impacts to "at-risk" Plants & animals, including sensitive or state and federal threatened and endangered species.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	8	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Please discuss effects on scenery. Please discuss the Scenery Management System's designations and objectives for the area & the impacts from the Project to the visuals. Please "ground-truth" SMS assigned values, please review the SMS assigned values to see if they were done correctly during the Forest Plan Revision -- As Joby Timm (FS landscape architect) calculated the designations in 3 days, calculating beauty from a computer at the Supervisor's Office. (not by inspecting areas). Some of the values factored in by the computer were pine structural stages and cover types. With beetle kill or logging in the area the structural stages or cover type may have changed and thus the SMS values perhaps should be changed, but at lest need to be checked.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	9	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Please review wildlife related recreation like bird watching or fishing.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management, as well as impacts to wildlife and fisheries.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	10	Other	Access & Transportation	Will it have any effect on Silver City? Please discuss effects on Transportation systems	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	11	Outside of Scope	Mining	Will any mining happen nearby on private land, which would be connected action?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	12	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	Are there any nearby areas with special road less, wild/pristine appearance or remote values?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	13	Incorporate	Recreation & Travel Management	For forest service lands - please discuss both the assigned and potential Recreational opportunity spectrum classes for the area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	14	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Please discuss noise & light pollution.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	15	Mitigation/Design Criteria		Please discuss using setbacks, as mitigation to various impacts.	The EA process evaluates measures to minimize and mitigate potential project-related effects.
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	16	Incorporate	Unsure	Will it have any effect on Central City RNA?	There are no RNA's located within or directly adjacent to the proposed project area. The Canyon City RNA is located to the West of the proposed project boundary.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Prairie Hills Audubon Society	Nancy	Hilding		315	17	Outside of Scope	Mining	We attach links to a 2006 report "Comparison of Predicted and Actual Water Quality at Hard rock Mines." Please study this report. Do any of the conditions Kuipers identifies as problematic for water quality during mining/mine closure exist at F3 Jenny Gulch or Mineral Mountain?	The Best Available Science (BAS) approach will be used while conducting environmental analysis for the proposed project. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Alicia	Sutliff-Benusis		316	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	First, this area is directly at the access point of Pactola Reservoir that provides drinking water to Rapid City and surrounding communities. We cannot risk our water supply.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Alicia	Sutliff-Benusis		316	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Second, many locations in which exploratory drilling occurs in the Black Hills are damaged beyond repair: The ecological risks are not worth it.	Comment noted.
	Alicia	Sutliff-Benusis		316	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Third, there are no examples of metallic sulfide mine that has been operated and closed without substantial negative impacts to water quality and the surrounding environment.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Karissa	Loewen		317	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We rely on the clean water of Rapid Creek just as does everyone in our community. We do not need to allow outside interests to damage such a beautiful place, and we have no reason to trust that they will care for our water resources.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		318	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Ellsworth Air Force Base (EAFB) has concerns about threats to surface waters and groundwater from the proposed action. This is a situation where EAFB has equities that could be directly impacted by the action (granting the permit to allow exploratory drilling) of BHNF.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		318	2	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	Specifically we are interest to know details about significant material storage locations, materials to be stored, waste characterization and storage, structural controls and pollution prevention practices, monitoring for contaminate migration, and reports.	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions prior to initiation of project activities. As part of this, F3 would need to work with its contractor to develop an approved waste management plan.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		318	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We think the proposed action underestimates the extent of disturbance.	Comment noted.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		318	4	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Water Quality/Water Supply	The proposal indicates industrial or municipal water will be used but is silent as to where that water will come from or how it will be delivered.	F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Plan of Operations addresses water sourcing and is incorporated into the EA.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		318	5	Mitigation/Design Criteria	Public Health and Safety	Additionally, a 6,000 ft. borehole to extract a core is likely to produce a significant quantity of drilling mud. To our knowledge, no provisions for containment or disposal of drilling by products have been discussed.	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions prior to initiation of project activities. As part of this, F3 would need to work with its contractor to develop an approved waste management plan.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		318	6	Out of Scope	Mining	Our main concern will be mitigating the high level of risk posed by failures of mining structural controls and practices within geologic formations. Such failures have been known to generate acid drainage and migration of heavy metals into water sources. Integrating Air force Operational Risk Management Principles, we consider that the probability of failure, for most types of structural controls and practices, is in the "likely" category. The Severity of Impact, to Consider degradation of our primary drinking water resource as either temporary or permanent, can be categorized as "critical" to catastrophic." As a result the risk of mishap could be categorized as "High" to "Extremely High"	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		318	7	Regulatory Process		In our view, any proposal or study involving mining within the Pactola basin would have to identify robust practices that mitigate mishap probability, such as permanent and temporary structural controls, a storm water pollution prevention plan, routine inspection and monitoring, routine and emergency reporting, Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures plans, adequate coverage for mishap cleanup, and site restoration (esp. how to plug wells), and off -site disposal or treatment of waste.	F3 will be required to obtain all relevant permits, approvals, agreements, and other permissions prior to initiation of project activities. As part of this, F3 would need to work with its contractor to develop an approved waste management plan. In addition, F3 Gold will be required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Jeni	Stum		319	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please refuse the permits to mine at Pactola. Tehe lake is not only a historic gathering point, but South Dakota has so abused it's watersheds that few safely support life. We cannot afford what happens when clean water is gone.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply. The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Northern Cheyenne Tribe	Teanna	Limpy		320	1	Regulatory Process	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Our office requests copies of class III surveys and literature reviews for the entire project area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. This project will comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The FS will coordinate findings of cultural resources reviews with the appropriate parties.
Northern Cheyenne Tribe	Teanna	Limpy		320	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Additionally, due to the ground disturbance activities proposed for this project we request that tribes conduct a site visit to ensure that sites of religious and cultural significance to tribes are properly identified , assessed, and formally evaluated. Otherwise, our office requests tribal participation in any pedestrian field work the contractor for this project conducts.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. This project will comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Monitoring efforts will be discussed as a part of the tribal consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
	Kurt	Ketelson		321	1	Other	Wetlands & Aquatic Resources	I am concerned about some locations near my developed springs, also some of these test locations are on meadow where I have seen small pickups stuck in the mud. I am sure that drill rig would cause considerable more damage than a light pickup.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to wetlands and aquatic resources.
	Debbie	Renner	Steven Renner	322	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am concerned about water contamination with this drilling project.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Debbie	Renner	Steven Renner	322	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	This particular area is also a recreation area important to everyone living here as well as visitors.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Richard	Fisher		323	1	Incorporate Other	Public Health and Safety Access & Transportation	While we live just north of the proposed drilling project, our land is close enough to be affected by the sound and traffic since we face south on a meadow which is part of the Joker District of the Black Hills National Forest.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Richard	Fisher		323	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The proposed drilling area includes land frequented by elk and deer. Elk pass through this area on a regular basis. Deer nestle down at night, nearly every night, on and adjacent to the meadow. There is no way they wont be affected by the drilling.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Richard	Fisher		323	3	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	In summer we and our neighbors cool our homes by opening our widows. Any noise in the area echoes across the meadow if drilling proceeds on a 24/7 basis, there is no way we wont be affected by noise from the drilling.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA.
	Richard	Fisher		323	4	Other	Rangeland & Non-native Invasive Species	This land is leased each summer by a rancher for grazing cattle. His cattle frequently graze and bed down in this area. There is no way they wont be affected by the drilling.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to rangeland and non-native invasive species.
	Richard	Fisher		323	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	All of the residents of Alpine Acres Meadow Subdivision have individual wells, to the depth of 85 to 100 feet. While the water has some iron content, we are concerned that drilling will impact the source of our wells by releasing other materials and pollutants. Will be assured that our water source will not be affected by the drilling.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Richard	Fisher		323	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir are directly impacted by the results of this drilling. If the water quality is ruined by the drilling process there is probably no way the drillers or the state or the federal government will be able to restore it to its pristine quality.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Richard	Fisher		323	7	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	This area is popular for ATV enthusiast. There is no way they wont be affected by drilling and the transporting of equipment. This is especially the case on the Rochford and Jenny Gulch Roads.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	David	Heikes		324	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am firmly in opposition to this project because- to my understanding- Jenny Creek is the upper end of the Pactola Lake Watershed which is a primary source of Drinking Water for Rapid City Residents and a lovely part of the Hills.	Comment noted.
	David	Heikes		324	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Why, in Heavens' name, would the agency potentially approve a project that could threaten a water supply with sediment, possibly chemical pollutants, and actions that may affect the area's hydrology?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	John	Knutson	Arnis Knutson	325	1	Other	Socioeconomics	We feel that any exploration or mining in this area will do nothing but lower the value of our property and yet our taxes will not go down.	F3's proposal is for exploratory drilling. Design criteria will be developed as part of the EA to help mitigate and reduce associated impacts. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review. The proposal is for exploratory drilling. The EA will display design criteria to help mitigate and reduce impacts.
	John	Knutson	Arnis Knutson	325	2	Incorporate Other	Public Health and Safety Access & Transportation	Its going to create more noise and traffic in the area. We bough this property for the peace and quiet.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Pat	Roseland		326	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My comments are against the Jenny Gulch Exploration Drill Project.	Comment noted.
The Izaak Walton League of America, Inc.	Frank	DiCesare		327	1	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	The proposed exploratory bore holes will likely transition through various aquifers. There can be no guarantees that these bore holes will not act as conduits which may allow natural contaminants from the surface or various subterranean levels to cross into potable aquifers, potentially contaminating the water sources on which many people residing in the central hills relay.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
The Izaak Walton League of America, Inc.	Frank	DiCesare		327	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This exploratory process will require large amounts of water to lubricate the drilling equipment. Containment and cleaning of the drilling water is crucial to protect the various surface and near-surface watersheds in the area.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
The Izaak Walton League of America, Inc.	Frank	DiCesare		327	3	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	If the borings determine that there are no feasible gold deposits for future mining then appropriate and timely methods must be implemented to guarantee no cross-contamination of aquifers for years to come.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils.
The Izaak Walton League of America, Inc.	Frank	DiCesare		327	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Should sufficient gold deposits be found to justify mining, then the resulting impact of any follow-on excavations needs to be addressed in addition to the impact of the explorations. Simply stated, the cause and effect needs to be analyzed and addressed in the initial environmental assessment.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Darlene	Hutchinson		328	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not approve.	Comment noted.
	Darlene	Hutchinson		328	2	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	They would ruin the beauty of the Hills	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Darlene	Hutchinson		328	3	Other	Access & Transportation	We have enough traffic with people going to Jenny Gulch. They would destroy the road.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
	Donna	Fisher		329	1	Other	Mining	While I have immediate personal concerns about noise and dust from trucks on nearby roads and long-range concerns about the inevitable upheaval if gold is discovered, I wish to raise an issue of economic impact in a multiple use forest.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Donna	Fisher		329	2	Other	Rangeland & Non-native Invasive Species	Since 1995, we have known the ranchers who have grazing permits for pasture bordering our development. Those ranchers have been good citizens. Together we maintain fences, exchange phone calls about safety of animals, etc. Literally in my back yard and throughout the proposed drilling area, area ranchers have a substantial number of cow-calf pairs in this multiple-use forest.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to rangeland and non-native invasive species.
	Donna	Fisher		329	3	Other	Wetlands & Aquatic Resources	There were similar wetlands throughout the area proposed for drilling. Noise and dust from drilling rigs, truck traffic and damage to surface waterways seem impossible to manage safely.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to wetlands and aquatic resources.
	Donna	Fisher		329	4	Other	Rangeland & Non-native Invasive Species	Other wildlife can coexist with their cow-calf summer visitors, using same resources without much disruption. However, young calves, still nursing, are likely to experience the most stress from this invasion of their grazing lands.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to rangeland and non-native invasive species.
	Donna	Fisher		329	5	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	In drought years, spring provide essential water these cattle. Given the complex hydrology of the shale and shist of Silver City/Jenny Gulch area, contamination of these springs could have long-range economic consequences for lessees as well as for area wildlife.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Donna	Fisher		329	6	Other	Rangeland & Non-native Invasive Species	Finally, heavy equipment on the Rochford Road and Jenny Gulch-Sunnyside will be no friend to easily-damaged cattle gates. Who will pay for inevitable damage?	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to rangeland and non-native invasive species.
	Donna	Fisher		329	7	Other	Rangeland & Non-native Invasive Species	I respectfully request that any impact studies take into consideration the economic disruption on grazing lessees and animal safety.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to rangeland.
	Donna	Fisher		329	8	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	South Dakota lists the Black Hills redbelly snake, S.o. pahasapae, as a species of concern due to its limited range and vulnerability to factors affecting the suitability of habitat. Within the Black Hills National Forest in Wyoming and South Dakota the Black Hills redbelly snake is considered sensitive by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to fisheries and wildlife.
	Donna	Fisher		329	9	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I request that any impact studies consider the Black Hills redbelly snake.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Susan	Olson		330	1	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	There is no possible way for F3 Gold to completely seal 500 ft. holes, as they say they will, due to soil, underground vanes, water pockets and fissures in rock.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to geology, geohydrology, geochemistry, and soils. F3 has made its Plan of Operations available on the U.S. Forest Service project website. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428. The Plan of Operations addresses well sealing and is incorporated into the EA. F3 will be required to follow South Dakota Rules Chapter 74:11:08, Capping, Sealing, and Plugging Exploration Test Holes. (Source: 34 SDR 323, effective July 2, 2008. General Authority: SDCL 45-6C-29, 45-6D-34. Law Implemented: SDCL 45-6C-29, 45-6D-34). In addition, the Forest Service will require that plugging reports are submitted as part of the reclamation plan and borehole plugging will be subject to inspection by the State.
	Susan	Olson		330	2	Incorporate Other	Public Health and Safety General Environmental Concern	Another concern by area residents is noise, truck traffic, dust, and damage to forest service roads as well as the damage to this beautiful sensitive area of the Black Hills.	Based on public comments, a public health and safety section, including noise, has been incorporated into the EA. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to these resources.
	Susan	Olson		330	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Black Hills National Forest consists of 1.2 million acres. Many areas are remote and better suited for an operation such as this. Why the Sunnyside Gulch/Silver City area?	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Susan	Olson		330	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please deny the drilling permit sought by F3 Gold and anyone else wanting to drill for gold near the inlet to Pactola Lake and the Rapid Creek watershed area. We don't want gold exploration here!	The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, states that all valuable mineral deposits in Public Domain lands of the United States are to be free and open to exploration and development (30 USC 22, 28). The Forest Service, through the Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. 482, is authorized to create rules to regulate the occupancy and use authorized by the United States mining laws of certain National Forest System lands open to mineral entry. F3 Gold, LLC has a statutory right to explore locatable minerals (gold) as proposed in accordance with the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
Oglala Sioux Tribal Council Rhonda Two Eagle	John	Yellow Bird-Steele		331		Regulatory Process		[This comment is a copy of the Ordinance of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council of the Oglala Sioux Tribe]	Thank you for your interest in the proposed project.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Tribal Historic Preservation Officer)	Jon	Eagle Sr.		332	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	I have reviewed the letter sent and would like to accept your offer of a face to face meeting.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Tribal Historic Preservation Officer)	Jon	Eagle Sr.		332	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	We would also like to accept your offer of a field trip to review the project areas on the ground, visit previously recorded sites, and discuss any unrecorded sites for the purpose of protection.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Tribal Historic Preservation Officer)	Jon	Eagle Sr.		332	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We would like this letter to serve as notice to our objection to the above mentioned project.	Comment noted.
	Janice	Thomson		333	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a property owner in the proposed Jenny Gulch Exploration Project I am opposed to the exploratory drilling to be done by F3 Gold, LLC.	Comment noted.
	Janice	Thomson		333	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As a concerned citizen I fear the interruption of the water source as well as the potential for well contamination of my well as well as the other private wells in the Silver City Basin.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Janice	Thomson		333	3	Other	Access & Transportation	I also have a concern for the road access and maintenance that will be affected with the impact of transporting equipment and increase in traffic.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to access and transportation.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Based on the information provided, we would like to notify you that that Yankton Sioux Tribal Historic Preservation Office does not agree with this project set forth. We are opposed to any extraction (See attached Resolution) in Treaty lands and do not thing proper consultation has been met with the Yankton Sioux Tribe. We are opposed to any projects that continually erode the cultural landscapes of Treaty lands.	Comment noted.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Through the process outlined in the Ihanktonwan Consultation Wo'ope, we would like to have the are monitored during construction of the project.	Monitoring efforts will be discussed as a part of the tribal consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Please let us know if you will engage in consultation pursuant to the Ihanktonwan Consultation Wo'ope.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Yankton Sioux Tribe has adopted the Ihanktonwan Consultation Wo'ope (Protocols for Consultation with the Yankton Sioux Tribe). Accordingly, in order to go into consultation with the Yankton Sioux Tribe, the USDA, Black Hills National Forest, Mystic Ranger District Office must follow the process set forth in the Ihanktonwan Consultation Wo'ope.	Comment noted. The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Based on the information provided, we would like to notify you the Yankton Sioux Tribal Historic Preservation Office does not agree with the determination that there will be "No Adverse Effect". HeSapa (Black Hills) is sacred to the tries and to determine that an undertaking will have no effect is not possible, due to the fact that the entire HeSapa is a cultural landscape and any undertakings that occur in the HeSapa adversely affect our sacred Black Hills.	Comment noted. The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to cultural resources. A determination of effect to cultural resources has not yet been made.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are opposed to any projects that continually erode the Black Hills cultural landscape.	Comment noted.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	7	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	If this project continues despite our objection, we would like to be notified if any inadvertent discoveries or cultural artifacts are found.	This will be discussed as a part of the tribal consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
Yankton Sioux Tribe	Kip	Spotted Eagle THPO Director		334	8	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	This letter is not a consultation. In order to go into consultation with the Yankton Sioux Tribe, the USDA, Forest Service, Mystic Ranger District must come and meet with the tribes General Council and Business and Claims Committee. The Yankton Sioux Tribe is a Non-IRA tribe and has a traditional form of government.	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	197 signators			335	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I am writing to request that you release all information on proposed and actual gold exploration projects in the Mystic Ranger District and complete full Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for each gold mining project. The futures of Rapid Creek, the central Black Hills, Lakota cultural and treaty resources, Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base are threatened by these projects, and full disclosure and complete consideration are imperative.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	197 signators			335	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Proposed gold mining projects require tribal consultation and serious consideration of the issues raised by the Lakota and other indigenous peoples in the region. Without full EIS evaluations, these concerns will not receive the required "hard look."	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	197 signators			335	3	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The release of all information being withheld by the U.S. Forest Service on current and proposed projects is a prerequisite to thorough EIS processes.	Project documents, including the EA, will be posted to the project website once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	197 signators			335	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Historically, mining operations have harmed land, wildlife and water in the Black Hills, and two former gold mines have been declared Superfund sites. If there were to be a mining spill (usually cyanide, arsenic and other heavy metals), Rapid Creek would be polluted, and the aquifers would be polluted soon after.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	197 signators			335	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Concern over the potential harm that could be caused to Rapid Creek and its associated communities has led American Rivers to include it on the list of America's Most Endangered Rivers(r) of 2020.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	197 signators			335	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	All of Rapid City's water sources have their beginnings in Rapid Creek, and damage to the Creek could have permanent, widespread impacts.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	197 signators			335	7	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	What's more, the economy depends on tourists who want to continue fishing, boating, hiking, bicycling and sightseeing in a beautiful ecosystem that centers on plentiful, clean water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Rich	Morrison		336	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This issue is scary. For many reasons. The idea that we would allow this mining activity to threaten the Rapid Creek watershed on this level is insane. It’s basic risk management. The potentially negative outcomes far far outweigh the possible benefits. It’s not even close.	Comment noted.
	Rich	Morrison		336	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I am writing to request that you release all information on proposed and actual gold exploration projects in the Mystic Ranger District and complete full Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for each gold mining project. The futures of Rapid Creek, the central Black Hills, Lakota cultural and treaty resources, Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base are threatened by these projects, and full disclosure and complete consideration are imperative.	The purpose of an environmental assessment is to assist in “determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact” (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The intensity factors would be addressed in that document.
	Rich	Morrison		336	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Proposed gold mining projects require tribal consultation and serious consideration of the issues raised by the Lakota and other indigenous peoples in the region. Without full EIS evaluations, these concerns will not receive the required "hard look."	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Rich	Morrison		336	4	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The release of all information being withheld by the U.S. Forest Service on current and proposed projects is a prerequisite to thorough EIS processes.	Project documents, including the EA, will be posted to the project website once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Rich	Morrison		336	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Historically, mining operations have harmed land, wildlife and water in the Black Hills, and two former gold mines have been declared Superfund sites. If there were to be a mining spill (usually cyanide, arsenic and other heavy metals), Rapid Creek would be polluted, and the aquifers would be polluted soon after.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project-specific NEPA review.
	Rich	Morrison		336	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Concern over the potential harm that could be caused to Rapid Creek and its associated communities has led American Rivers to include it on the list of America's Most Endangered Rivers(r) of 2020.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Rich	Morrison		336	7	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	All of Rapid City's water sources have their beginnings in Rapid Creek, and damage to the Creek could have permanent, widespread impacts.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Rich	Morrison		336	8	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	What's more, the economy depends on tourists who want to continue fishing, boating, hiking, bicycling and sightseeing in a beautiful ecosystem that centers on plentiful, clean water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.
	Carole	McKinstry		337					This party has been added to the project mailing list.
	Tisha	Johnson		338	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	There has to be accountability and the acceptance that mistakes and weeks happen and is the cost to the people in the area worth the risk and worse revenue revenue if it even comes into their own pockets. My belief is no it does not.	Comment noted.
	Tisha	Johnson		338	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Proposed gold mining projects require tribal consultation and serious consideration of the issues raised by the Lakota and other indigenous peoples in the region. Without full EIS evaluations, these concerns will not receive the required "hard look."	The Black Hills National Forest has issued invitations to 17 Tribal governments to initiate formal government-to-government consultation regarding the F3 Gold proposal. The Forest Service is following up on all responses received. The Forest Service will also be consulting with Tribal governments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as the appropriate data become available and consultation packages are developed.
	Tisha	Johnson		338	3	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The release of all information being withheld by the U.S. Forest Service on current and proposed projects is a prerequisite to thorough EIS processes.	Project documents, including the EA, will be posted to the project website once available. https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57428
	Tisha	Johnson		338	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	All of Rapid City's water sources have their beginnings in Rapid Creek, and damage to the Creek could have permanent, widespread impacts.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.
	Tisha	Johnson		338	5	Other	Recreation & Travel Management	What's more, the economy depends on tourists who want to continue fishing, boating, hiking, bicycling and sightseeing in a beautiful ecosystem that centers on plentiful, clean water.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to recreation and travel management.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Bradley	Evans		339	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing this to support the work being done by Fs Gold and Big Rock Exploration.	Comment noted.
	Bradley	Evans		339	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	People are excited because they think that drilling will ruin their wells and that fracking is going to take place, because they are looking for uranium. This is far from the case. They want to do exploratory drilling.	The EA evaluates potential project-related effects to water quality/water supply.

Appendix I

Draft EA Comments and Responses

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Carol	Hayse		1	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	It is inconceivable that the FS would consider granting access to a drilling company in such an important and vital recreational area as Pactola. I hike Silver City towards Deerfield, where there are ugly signs threatening "trespassers" onto mining claims. What a calumny! If it is not in you to protect this treasured environment, then at least consider the impact of drilling on the local communities. And if mining occurs, the financial impact on all of western South Dakota would be considerable. Few would want to go boating, hiking, hunting, etc. in an area with an ugly and polluting mine on its perimeter.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Carol	Hayse		1	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The FS has claimed that it has no power to deny mining exploration. This is untrue. There are several instances around the country where drilling/mining has been prevented. Please develop some courage and place obstacles in the way of this project.	Comment noted. The USFS administers exploration and development on the National Forest System lands under mining regulations defined in 36 CFR 228, Subpart A. USFS mining regulations state that, "operations shall be conducted so as, where feasible, to minimize adverse impacts on National Forest System surface resources (36 CFR 228.8). These regulations do not allow the USFS to deny entry or preempt the miner's statutory rights granted under the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Carol	Hayse		1	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	Part of F3's proposed drilling area extends into an 8.2 Management Area. What will you do about that? Will you protect that area or just roll over and allow the company to have its way?	See Draft EA Section 2.3, "Alternative C relocates these three drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment at this time." Also see Draft EA Sections 2.4 and 3.3.3.
	Carol	Hayse		1	4	Other	Public Health and Safety Fisheries and Wildlife	F3 proposes to keep drilling rigs operating 24/7, year around. This obviously involves great noise, and lighting. How does that NOT affect nearby wildlife, or human activity?	Drilling rigs will not operate at each drill pad site constantly for the project duration. As stated in Section 2.2.3 of the Draft EA, up to four drill rigs would be used at a time. Once a drill pad is drilled to the desired depth, drilling would cease at that location. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Carol	Hayse		1	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Your decision to classify this project as an EA, instead of an EIS, shows that your concern for the environment is deeply secondary to your support for companies that pollute the air and water. This is shameful.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Carol	Hayse		1	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Taking "No Action" is an option you can impose. Please do so.	Comment noted.
	Carol	Hayse		1	7	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Meanwhile, please extend the public comment period. For such a sensitive issue, this seems fair and appropriate.	The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects.
	David	Simonds		2	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm opposed to this exploration project! I'm concerned of the environmental impacts it poses to our water sources and damage to the landscape! This exploration should not be allowed to move forward!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3, and reclamation is discussed in Appendix A of the Draft EA.
	Tally and Rita	Chapman		3	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	We received a postcard in the mail today letting us know the comment period is open. We are working on getting our comments and facts in order. Could you please give us longer than 30 days? It seems a bit short with our busy workdays and we would like more time.	The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Garry	Abrahamson		4	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Ah, just a few bore holes scattered about, nothing to see here..... BUT when they find what they are looking for, then comes the destruction of Jenny Gulch. Oh, I forgot. There is a supposed and promised time limit on the destruction. Now I feel so much better!	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Leanne	Olson		5	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Rapid Creek splits my property and I live down stream from Rapid City. I already deal with polluted water in the creek from the city, including losing my mare to lead poisoning. The last thing I need is to have arsenic in my well and in the creek too. It is my understanding this will affect Pactola, Rapid Creek, and our aquifer. Why is this being tolerated? Why isn't the water for Rapid City and the surrounding areas not being protected?	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Leanne	Olson		5	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly disagree with this drilling project.	Comment noted.
	Kathy	Durrum		6	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	We ask for an extension of time, so that we can do a thorough review of the document, and so everyone who wants to make comments gets the opportunity to make comments.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Charles and Anita	Lyden		7	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We are concerned about clean water in The Black Hills.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Charles and Anita	Lyden		7	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	We request an extension on the Jenny Gulch uranium mine proposal.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
Lynn Canal Conservation	Jessica	Plachta		8	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Please extend the public comment period for the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Project. Thirty days is too short a timeline for the public to become informed and submit comments on such a potentially impactful project.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
Lynn Canal Conservation	Jessica	Plachta		8	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	This project would occur in the Black Hills, which are the treaty territory of the Lakota people. The USFS should ensure that government-to-government consultations are undertaken, and that if the project goes ahead, free, prior and informed consent has been granted from the Lakota traditional councils.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Lynn Canal Conservation	Jessica	Plachta		8	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	With Rapid City, a major Air Force base, and reservation and rural communities downstream, this project stands to risk the water supplies for everyone downstream, and therefore must be held to the highest standards.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	This is a formal request for an extension of time to comment on the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch project. The EA requires substantial research and consideration, and we cannot complete this task within 30 days.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	First, thirty days is not enough time to read, research, consider, and comment on the draft Environmental Assessment (EA). Our request for an extension of the time to comment was summarily denied. Hence, these comments are not as knowledgeable or as thorough as they would be with more time to consider the draft EA. This puts the public at a disadvantage.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Second, the EA is vague, general, and incomplete. It does not contain enough information for members of the public or organizations with a direct interest in the F3 project to be fully informed. Whole realms of potential impacts are written off with the comment that the applicant's actions in following federal laws and regulations will solve all potential problems.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	4	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Third, the format of the EA defies logic and – again -- transparency. Most information is included in Appendices. For example, in the section of the EA about geology, the text refers to information in Appendix E nine times in two pages. This is not informing the public.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Fourth, your attempts at tribal consultation are weak and totally unacceptable.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	6	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Fifth, we again request that an Environmental Impact Statement be completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	7	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Next, the EA provides only two alternatives for this project, two similar alternatives – each with a similar level of drawbacks and a similar level of benefits. This is clearly not "all reasonable alternatives". The Forest Service needs to go back to the drawing board on this and really think about what other alternatives might be possible.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	8	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Given the evident lack of thought shown in the draft EA, we most certainly would select the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	9	Outside of Scope	Mining	Next, another major lack in this document is the lack of consideration of all impacts and the related lack of consideration of all likely cumulative impacts. Most obviously, gold mining is a likely impact of this project. Yet the EA mentions mining only once -- in Appendix E. Each section of this EA needs to consider the substantial, foreseeable, cumulative impacts that mining would bring to Jenny Gulch.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within each technical report appendix that is included as part of the EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	10	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The EA also needs to consider the growing impacts of climate change, particularly in the sections related to water flows, flooding, amount of precipitation, aquifer recharge, the likely ranges of plants and animals, and related topics.	Greenhouse gas emissions from the project would occur from fuel combustion associated construction equipment. However, due to the short-term nature (one year) of the project, there would be a negligible impact to resources from climate change. As such, a climate change analysis is not warranted for this project.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	11	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	And a last over-arching problem that we would like to point out is that the EA does not consider all of the comments provided in the scoping process. We have read all the comments provided in the scoping process, and there are a number of things that are not covered in the EA.	All substantive comments received during project scoping were used to develop the resource issues, issue statements, and evaluation criteria carried forward for assessment in the Draft EA, as described in Section 3.1 of the document.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	12	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Rapid Creek and the water in Pactola Reservoir supply all the water needs of not only Rapid City, but also of Ellsworth Air Force Base. Some of this water is gathered directly from Rapid Creek, while other water from the Creek recharges the Madison and Minnelusa aquifers, from which Rapid City also draws water. This makes this proposed project a national security issue.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in Sections 3.6 and 3.7 and Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, of the Draft EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	13	Other	Project Description	How many holes does F3 plan to drill at each drill pad?	The number of holes drilled on each drill pad will depend on the findings in the field, with the average drill pad having one to two holes and some having up to four holes. This has been clarified in Section 2.2.1 of the Final EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	14	Incorporate	Project Description	Does F3 plan to do directional drilling? If so, under what properties, and do they have permission to be there?	Exploration drilling involves drilling holes vertically and at an angle from the surface. That angle can vary between -90 degrees (vertical) and -45 degrees. Once the angle is set, the drill will remain at that angle until completion of the drill hole. Directional drilling that controls the direction of the boring during drilling (as commonly used in oil and gas development) or horizontal drilling methods will not be used.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	15	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Service's discussion of enforcement of the many laws it mentions is vague. Enforcement will just happen somehow. Who will be enforcing what laws – not just what agency, but what office or position is responsible for each type of enforcement? Who will hold them accountable?	A USFS minerals specialist will be responsible for the administration of the final Plan of Operations.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	16	Regulatory Process	Project Description	In some places, F3's adherence to Forest Service standards and guidelines is assumed. What is the basis of this assumption?	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	17	Regulatory Process	Project Description	How often will the project area be inspected? What penalties are possible?	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental commitments issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental commitments and stipulations that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	18	Regulatory Process	Project Description	What is the state government's role in this project?	F3 will be required to submit an Exploration Notice of Intent with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. F3 will be required to comply with all environmental commitments and stipulations that may be issued in the other permits with the State they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	19	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	What office is responsible for considering amending the Forest Plan? Who makes the decision on this?	The Forest Plan can be amended by project level decisions (such as the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project) provided the effects of any amendments are evaluated and disclosed in an environmental assessment or environmental impacted statement prepared for the project proposal.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	20	Incorporate	Project Description	The draft EA repeatedly says "no other chemicals or solvents would be used in drilling." Typically, drilling involves more than the use of water. What other substances will be used? What are their characteristics when they impact the environment? What are the "biodegradable" solvents the company says it uses? Why are they not mentioned in the EA?	It is acknowledged that, in addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. Table 2-1 and Section 2.2.1 have been updated to more accurately depict this.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	21	Other	Public Health and Safety	The EA also repeatedly says that petroleum products – gas, oil, fuel, etc. – will be used at the drilling sites and refers to "chemical storage." These are hazardous "chemicals or solvents" and need to be accounted for as such in the relevant sections of the EA. What happens when these substances meet the environment, including a spark? How will you and the company prevent this from happening?	Potential project effects on hazardous waste and contamination are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Section 2.3.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	22	Incorporate	Project Description	What will drilling wastes and cuttings be composed of? Why does the Forest Service think placing these on the ground would be an adequate disposal method for some of them? Under what circumstances would the Forest Service determine that drilling wastes and cuttings should be "transported off-site to an approved disposal location"? What are the decision criteria and scale?	Drilling "wastes and cuttings", as described in Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA, consist of soil, rock fragments, water, and inert bentonite clay designed for such purposes (exploration drilling) and are ANSI approved. Additional text has been added to Section 2.2.1 noting that thin-spreading and burying cuttings beneath the topsoil is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the Western U.S. Burying the cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Should on-site disposal in this method not be feasible, off-site transport and disposal may be required in coordination with the USFS.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	23	Other	Public Health and Safety	What are the capabilities of local first responders, compared to the issues that could arise? This needs to be discussed in more detail.	Potential project effects on other public health and safety considerations, including emergency response, is described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Sections 2.2.5 and 2.3.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	24	Other	Public Health and Safety	Why was the decision made to limit drilling to one, 12-hour daytime shift only within 500 feet of a residence, which only impacts two drill pads in one alternative. Did the Forest Service consider applying this practice to all drill sites? Why is this not in one of the alternatives offered in the EA?	Rationale for applying this noise minimization method is discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	25	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Why was socioeconomics not discussed in the EA? This was raised in the scoping comments.	As noted in Section 3.1 of the Draft EA, some resources, such as socioeconomics, were not identified as issues based on project scoping and review of the proposed project in the context of the environmental setting. As such, these resources are not discussed further in the Draft EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	26	Other	Botanical Resources	The EA states that there are no "known" plant species of local concern in the project area. Did you look for them? Did you talk to local people who have a detailed knowledge of the area's flora?	Botanical surveys were conducted by USFS. These findings, along with habitat presence in the Project area, were utilized to inform the environmental analysis for this project. Potential effects of all project alternatives on botanical resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix C - Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation Technical Report.

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Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	27	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Botanical Resources	Is there any factual basis for the draft EA's assertion that wildlife that is chased off the project area by this project will "return to previous habitats" after the project is completed? How will plants that have been torn up "return"?	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. There have been several studies (see references below) completed on disturbance/noise effects to wildlife, especially with big game. Species will have a flight response initially but soon many habituate to a disturbance over time. These studies show that wildlife will return once disturbance stops. References: Frid, A. and Dill, L., 2002. Human-caused disturbance stimuli as a form of predation risk. Conservation ecology, 6(1). Bowles, A.E., 1995. Responses of wildlife to noise. Wildlife Recreationists, Island Press, Washington, DC, 57, pp.109-156. Knight, R.L. and Cole, D.N., 1995. Wildlife Responses to. Wildlife and recreationists: Coexistence through management and research, 51. Project activities are considered short term (less than 1 year) and not occurring at the same time across the Project area. Disturbed areas would be reclaimed and reseeded as discussed in Draft EA Appendix A, the Draft Reclamation Plan.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	28	Other	Public Health and Safety	Which historic mine workings in the project area are at risk of failure due to the presence of project equipment? How will the company and the Forest Service prevent damage to humans, equipment, and the environment from these workings?	As noted in Section 3.6.3.2 of the Draft EA, known mining-related features have been mapped and considered in Project planning; planned drill holes are not anticipated to intersect any known historical mine shafts, holes, adits, or workings. The historical underground mines have been small, and workings have been within crystalline rock. Therefore, there is a low risk of activity triggering ground subsidence into underground mine workings.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	29	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	How disingenuous can you be to state that "no lakes are present in the Project area," when everyone knows there is a major lake close by? Pactola Reservoir is only half a mile from the proposed drilling sites – and downstream. What would the impacts on the reservoir be?	Section 3.8.1 of the Draft EA states, "There are no natural lakes present in the Project area. One perennial stream, Jenny Gulch Stream, is located within the Project area and flows southeast to the outlet into Pactola Reservoir, which is approximately 0.5 miles south of the Project area and represents the primary source of aquatic recreation in this region.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	30	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	How much water would the proposed project use?	Per F3's Plan of Operations, approximately 5,000 to 10,000 gallons of water would be used per day per drill rig; however, water would be recycled back into the drilling process to minimize total water needs.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	31	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	The Forest Service says more than once that project activities are "not anticipated" to impact municipal watersheds. Is the Forest Service aware that almost the entire project area is a municipal watershed?	Section 3.7 of the Final EA and Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3 have been updated to remove the reference of no affects to the municipal watershed. As noted in the EA and Appendix E, water would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced directly from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	32	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	Why was an air quality monitoring site 15 miles from the project area (and which was misidentified as being in Rapid City) and in completely different ecology used to determine air impacts? This proposed project clearly requires a local air quality station.	Justification for selecting this air quality monitoring location is described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Section 2.2.1. The reference to Rapid City has been corrected.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	33	Other	Reclamation	Who makes the decision when reclamation of Forest Service infrastructure is modified and/or maintained on an "as-needed basis"?	The Forest Service will approve a reclamation plan as a part of the final Plan of Operations. The Forest Service will monitor the implementation of the reclamation plan and will not release the bond until the agency's reclamation requirements have been met. If reclamation is not completed to Forest Service requirements the bond will be used to complete the reclamation.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	34	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	How can the Forest service prove both that a species is found in multiple places on South Rochford Road and that it is not likely to be in the project area?	The USFS has conducted many surveys in the area and uses those findings, along with habitats present in the Project area, to inform the impact assessment for this Project. Potential effects of all project alternatives on botanical resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix C - Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	35	Other	Access & Transportation	What "local authorities" would be involved in the decision on whether to provide prior approval for project equipment to exceed local road weight restrictions?	Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, states that F3 and/or its contractor's equipment would not exceed local road weight restrictions without prior approval by applicable authorities. The applicable authority would be the entity that has jurisdiction over the particular roadway and is expected to be either the USFS or Pennington County, depending on the roadway.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	36	Incorporate	Recreation	How can the Forest Service say both "No direct effects to fishing or aquatic activities are anticipated" and that there will be "potential increased short-term sedimentation and turbidity" as a result of the project? Which is it?	Section 3.8.3 of the Draft EA and Section 3.3.2 of Appendix B have been updated to clarify that no long-term effects to fishing or aquatic activities are anticipated.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	37	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Botanical Resources	There are repeated assertions that animal and plant species are "not known to occur" in the area. Has anyone looked for them? From the information given in Appendix C, it appears not. The Forest Service is only guessing.	The USFS has conducted many surveys in the area and uses those findings, along with habitats present in the Project area, to inform the impact assessment for this Project.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	38	Other	Botanical Resources	The draft EA says repeatedly that vegetation removal would only be done when "necessary." Who determines what is "necessary" in this instance? Who will monitor vegetation removal?	As described in the Draft EA, vegetation could potentially be removed from all disturbance areas in order to facilitate access. Reseeding is discussed in Draft EA Appendix A, the Draft Reclamation Plan. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	39	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Bald eagles have nested about a quarter of a mile from the project area. What steps will be taken to protect them? The Forest Service just dismisses the potential impacts, but their own Standard 3101 prohibits "new disturbances" within a mile of bald eagle nests.	The Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report has been updated to clarify that while bald eagles have been observed foraging around Pactola Lake and that suitable bald eagle nest habitat is present near Pactola Lake, field surveys have not actually documented any bald eagle nests in this area. There are no documented bald eagle nests within a mile of the Project area. As noted in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report, Standard 3101 states the following, "Prohibit new disturbances not existing at the time of bald eagle nest initiation, that may detrimentally influence nest success within one mile of bald eagle nests during the nesting season (February 1 through September 1)."
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	40	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Forest Service Standard 1113 requires that roads be sited "to minimize sediment discharge into streams, lakes and wetlands." How is it possible to construct roads – cleverly disguised as "trails" -- in waterways for this project?	As noted in Section 2.3 of the Draft EA, these crossings would occur during the winter months to the extent practicable.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	41	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Forest Service Guideline 1506(a) prohibits material from mineral activities from being deposited "in natural drainages." This project proposes to place cuttings on the ground along the edges of waterways. How does this follow the guideline?	The Draft EA does not state that the project proposes to place cuttings on the ground along the edges of waterways. Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA states that "drill cuttings and used water would be recovered and collected in tanks at the drill site. Settlement would be used to separate the cuttings, allowing the water to be reused in the drilling process. Upon completion of a drill hole, the cuttings would be either buried beneath the topsoil or transported off-site to an approved disposal location."

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Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	42	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	What are the characteristics of the many springs in the project area? Are they – and particularly the springs near drill sites – connected hydrologically? Are they used by area residents?	Springs in the project area are rheocrene (having a distinct outflow forming a spring brook) or helocrene (diffuse groundwater upwelling without a distinct outflow point) according to Springer and Stevens (A.E. Springer and L.E. Stevens. 2009. Spheres of discharge in springs. Hydrogeology Journal, DOI 10.1007/s10040-008-0341-y). Springs in the project area generally discharge less than 1 cubic feet per second based on site observations (P.H. Rahn and J.P. Gries 1973 Large springs in the Black Hills, South Dakota and Wyoming. Report of Investigations No. 107, S. Dakota State University and S. Dakota Geological Survey). Springs are generally not connected hydraulically or hydrologically to groundwater due to the underlying geology (metamorphic graywacke and undifferentiated metamorphics). There are some exceptions to this where springs are grouped together within individual wetlands. In this case the springs share the same localized source of groundwater, which is the alluvium associated with streams/drainages and their floodplains. As already captured based on the springs locations within drainageways and stream channels or their banks and floodplains, most springs are hydraulically connected to streams. Section 3.2.2.1 of the Draft EA Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3 has been updated to clarify that the springs in the project area are unlikely to be connected hydrologically to groundwater or other springs but are likely connected to nearby streams where they exist. Most of the springs are undeveloped. A few have been developed for stock watering purposes and have a constructed pond impounding the spring outflow and/or a spring collection box that pipes water to an offsite stock tank. One spring, located on USFS land near the northwest corner of private property in Township 2 North, Range 4 East, Section 13 SW1/4 has a special use permit allowing the private landowners to use the spring water for private stock watering. No springs on USFS land within the project area have been developed for domestic uses. No known springs are currently mapped on private parcels within the project area based on field observations (drive by from road way) and interpretation of remotely sensed air imagery.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	43	Other	Statement of Opinion Fisheries & Wildlife	Clearly, the Forest Service's talk about avoiding disturbance "should lambing be observed" is wildly inadequate. No one should be there to look for [bighorn sheep] lambing. The sheep need to be left alone.	Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	44	Other	Statement of Opinion Fisheries & Wildlife	I have attached a map that we developed using information from SD GF&P and from the Bureau of Land Management's database that shows the substantial overlap between F3's claims and 2021 bighorn sheep range. Neither the B nor the C alternative provides a solution to this problem. This needs to be researched, rethought, and accounted for.	Comment noted. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	45	Incorporate	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	The geological information is incomplete and provides little hint about what the Precambrian core would be like at 6000 feet – or at most of the shallow areas. The text of the EA shows a lack of understanding of aquifers in the area, saying that the major aquifers in the Black Hills are "crystalline core bedrock aquifers" – which they are not. An "aquifer vulnerability study" credited to the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology is not shown in the references for the geology information.	Section 3.7.1.2 of the EA has been updated to clarify that that the aquifers are not crystalline. As noted in Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.2.2.2, the aquifer vulnerability study reference is reference number 24: Lisenbee, A. L., et al. Aquifer Vulnerability Map of the Precambrian Units, Silver City Quadrangle. 2012.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	46	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	The applicant and the Forest Service really have no idea whether the proposed drilling would impact existing wells, because no one knows the subsurface geology of the crystalline core in any detail. The EA just mentions that the probability of this happening is "low" without proof.	Potential impacts to wells is discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2 and Section 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	47	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	Similarly, the draft EA says that "it is unlikely that any high-yield aquifers would be encountered and mix with water in the existing fracture-flow aquifer." How does the Forest Service know this, when the crystalline core is large unexplored? You don't. Speculation without a factual basis has no place in a planning document such as an EA.	Potential impacts to aquifers is discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2 and Section 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	48	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	It lists hazardous materials that would be controlled with a "spill kit." It does not give information on what's in a spill kit, so how can the public judge the effectiveness of this "kit"?	Spill kits would be used to control unanticipated spills of materials such as petroleum products, lubricants, and fuels including diesel and gasoline. Spill kits typically include containment and cleanup materials.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	49	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	It lists arsenic risks from old mining sites, but not exactly where they are found or what water they are contaminating. The material does not even indicate whether this is a problem in the project area or whether it might be exacerbated by the proposed project. More detail is clearly needed.	These impacts are discussed in Section 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, impacts would be minor, localized, and short-term due to the limited quantity of drilling water.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	50	Incorporate	Project Description	In the EA, there is an admission that arsenic, iron, manganese, or other "acidity and/or metals" could be mobilized by the drilling process. Then, saying only that the amount of drilling water used in the project is "limited" – not how much water would be acquired or used – the Forest Service concludes that these effects would be "minor, localized, and short-term." This is a values judgment -- there is no research to back this up, and given the lack of information about the subsurface in the crystalline core, we suggest this research does not exist for the project area. This means the Forest Service is guessing. Guesses are not good enough for the NEPA process, especially when it comes to the area's water in a semi-arid region.	These impacts are discussed in Section 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, impacts would be minor, localized, and short-term due to the limited quantity of drilling water. Additional references for this subject have been added to Appendix E.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	51	Other	Public Health and Safety	The nearest residence to a drill pad in the project area is 42 feet from a proposed drill pad. The impacts on the residence will be more than "short-term, localized effects."	As stated in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Section 2.3.2.3, there are no residences within 500 feet of Alternative B drilling locations. Section 2.3.3.2 of this same appendix indicates there are three Alternative C drilling locations that are within 500-feet of a residence: SCP-12, SCP-020, and SCP-033. These drilling locations are 390, 400, and 380 feet, respectively, from a known residence.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	52	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Noise throughout the project is also an issue for Lakota people who are active in spiritual practices in the area, recreationists, and anyone who values the quiet of the forest.	Comment noted. Potential project effects on noise are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	53	Other	Public Health and Safety Access and Transportation	Not only are emergency services some distance away in Rapid City, but the draft EA should also reflect the fact that the roads between the project area and medical services are winding, slow, and often of poor quality – in other words, dangerous. These roads are also totally inappropriate for heavy equipment.	Distance to the nearest hospital clinic and emergency medical facilities via the existing roadways is described in the Draft EA, Appendix F, Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Section 2.2.5. Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.

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Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	54	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	The information provided at the public information meeting on January 16, 2020, was inadequate. For example, maps were provided that had no reference points. The Forest Service limited questions. The agency should provide additional opportunities for the public to receive information and make verbal comments on the proposed project.	See Draft EA Section 1.3.2. This Project complies with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 CEQ Regulation 40 CFR 1500, USFS Regulation 36 CFR 218, Forest Service Manual 1950, Forest Service Handbook 1909.15. Also see Draft EA Appendix G, Public Involvement Plan.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	55	Outside of Scope	Mining Fisheries & Wildlife	As with endangered species and threatened species, the Forest Service talks only about the current proposed project in its discussions of vulnerable species. The EA needs to discuss the cumulative impacts on these species, including the impacts of large-scale, open pit mining. The current information is totally inadequate.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	56	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As noted in Appendix E of the draft EA, the water in the project area is "some of the best surface water" in the state. The water "is a source of drinking water in downstream communities." There are "no impaired streams or waterbodies" in the project area. Let's keep it that way by implementing the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	57	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	It's ridiculous to say that project exploration wells would be "essentially the same as if a residential well" was drilled. Existing water wells in the area are 80 to 140 feet deep. The applicant proposes to drill as much as 6,000 feet deep. And no one is sure what the characteristics of the rock are at 6,000 feet, as there hasn't been this deep drilling in the project area in the past. So there is no basis for this false comparison.	Section 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA states the following: "The downhole activity (drilling, drilling fluid, abandonment, etc.) is essentially the same as if a residential well were being constructed or abandoned. The primary difference is that exploration core drilling is not intended to result in water production. Water well drilling is designed to leave sub-surface open space allowing for water transport, and which uses a method whose diameter is far greater than core drilling: 6 or 8 inch minimum for water compared to around 3 inches for exploration cores. Open space within an exploration core drilling hole is limited to the annular space between the boring wall and the core drill bit: the annular space allows for circulation of bentonite "mud," or drilling fluid, to facilitate drilling progression and recovery. The purpose of exploration drilling to proposed depths is to classify structural and geological makeup of geologic material at depth. Pressurized drilling fluid (impervious bentonite clay mixed with water) minimizes passage of water into the drill hole. Exploration core holes are backfilled with pumped grout slurry consisting of bentonite and water then capped at the surface.
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance	Lilias	Jarding		9	58	Other	Public Health and Safety	Drilling and related activities would disturb the silence of the project area and create both noise and light pollution. These disturbances are labeled in the EA as not being "significant." However, they would be significant to native spiritual practitioners, area residents, recreationists, and anyone seeking refuge from city life.	Potential project effects on noise are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report. The Project would be temporary, as it is anticipated to last one year from start-up through reclamation.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I have seen the notice for the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch project. Is the current due date for comments October 21? It's always a bit hard to know how to do the math.	For counting purposes, today (legal notice publication date 9/22/21) is day zero. Tomorrow (9/23/21) would be day 1. We use calendar days to count to 30.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I would also like to request an extension of time to comment on the EA for this project.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I am formally requesting an extension of time to comment on the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Environmental Assessment. Thirty days is not sufficient time to read, digest, research, and write comments on a document that is 1-3/4" thick and organized poorly.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	4	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Thirty days was too short of a time to do thorough review, research, and comments on this project.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The project would have significant impacts on public assets, water, wildlife, cultural resources, recreation, socioeconomics, public health, and the local economy, and a full EIS should have been done.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.

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	Lilias	Jarding		10	6	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Services' definition of the purpose for this project is very narrow. You have "given" F3 gold its project without questioning the need for it, defining and evaluating a variety of alternatives, fully informing the public, discussing obvious cumulative impacts, protecting public assets and the environment, making a reasonable and fact-based decision, or fulfilling the requirements of NEPA.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	7	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation, a critical element of the NHPA and the NEPA process, is absent.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	8	Outside of Scope	Mining	Among the cumulative impacts that should certainly be considered are the fact that the goal of this project is to mine gold just upstream of the area's major recreational lake and in the drainage of a municipal water source; that there is another similarly sized gold project a few miles to the north and in the same watershed; and that the increasingly obvious impacts of climate change in the last 5 to 10 years has made	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within each technical report appendix that is included as part of the EA.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	9	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Impacts on wildlife and flora are not fully considered, but are dismissed with a generalized attempt to say that there won't really be any impacts. This is particularly true of the potentially catastrophic impacts on bighorn sheep, which lamb and migrate in the project area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on rare botanical species are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix C - Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on rare wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish species are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	10	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The presence of bald eagles is similarly dismissed.	The Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report has been updated to clarify that while bald eagles have been observed foraging around Pactola Lake and that suitable bald eagle nest habitat is present near Pactola Lake, field surveys have not actually documented any bald eagle nests in this area. There are no documented bald eagle nests within a mile of the Project area.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	11	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft EA fails to consider all the scoping comments that were sent in, but cherry-picks the comments that a Forest Service employee considered what I would term "important enough." This is not okay and the Forest Service should start over on the process of drafting the EA. include the socioeconomics issues and the public health issues and any other comments that have been ignored.	As noted in Section 3.1 of the Draft EA, some resources, such as socioeconomics, were not identified as issues based on project scoping and review of the proposed project in the context of the environmental setting. As such, these resources are not discussed further in the Draft EA. As also noted in Section 3.1 of the Draft EA, a public health and safety assessment was not originally considered, but was added to the issues summary based on scoping comments.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	12	Other	Public Health and Safety	Another issue that is not addressed is the presence of hazardous materials at the drill pads and staging areas - as well as on the winding, steep, low-quality roads that would be used. The EA repeatedly says that no "chemicals" would be used, then talks about petroleum products, oil, and gas - all of which are hazardous chemicals. There would also be some "chemicals" other than water used in the drilling process - chemicals that are not identified in the EA. This echoes the applicant, which advertises that there would be "no hazardous chemicals or toxic substances," which is obviously false.	It is acknowledged that, in addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. Table 2-1 and Section 2.2.1 have been updated to more accurately depict this. Potential project effects on hazardous waste and contamination are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Section 2.3. Fuels, oils, and petroleum-based products would only be used in access/site preparation, drilling equipment and/or lighting equipment as stated in Section 3.9.3 of the Draft EA and in Section 2.3.2.4 of the Draft EA, Appendix F - Public Health and Safety. These materials would not be used in the drilling process itself.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	13	Other	Public Health and Safety	Along the same lines, the EA does not specify most of what one needs to know to evaluate preparations for situations that require first responders. How many are available locally? In the winter? How long does it take to get from Silver City to the north end of the project area?	Potential project effects on public health and safety, including emergency response, are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Sections 2.2.5, 2.3.2.5, and 2.3.3.5.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	14	Other	Public Health and Safety	What does a "spill kit" include, and how large of a spill of what substances could it be used with?	Spill kits would be used to control unanticipated spills of materials such as petroleum products, lubricants, and fuels including diesel and gasoline. Spill kits typically include containment and cleanup materials.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	15	Other	Public Health and Safety	How long does it take to drive from the center of the project area to a hospital?	Distance to the nearest hospital clinic and emergency medical facilities via the existing roadways is described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Section 2.2.5.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	16	Other	Public Health and Safety	How will you communicate in an area without cell service?	Work crews may rely on alternate methods of communication such as timed check-in meetings, two-way radios, or designated cell signal locations as needed during construction.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	17	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The potential for water contamination from traffic, drilling, road construction, wastes, and hazardous materials all need more attention.	Potential effects (including potential for water contamination) of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	18	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	The unpredictability of the area's geology and the lack of information about it are mentioned - but the possibility that something could go wrong is just barely mentioned. So again, there's no plan for addressing problems when they arise. The EA also shows a lack of understanding of the area geology, which is scary when a company wants to drill to 6000 feet, and no one knows much of anything about the specifics of the geology in this area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on geologic resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. This exploration drilling project is a geological investigation seeking information to better the understanding of geology at depth.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	19	Regulatory Process	Project Description	While the draft EA lists a lot of laws, regulations, standards, and guidelines, there is almost no information on how all of these would be enforced. Who will be watching what? How often? Where? What will be the state's role? Simply saying there won't be any problems or simply saying that the applicant will be honest is clearly shrugging off the agency's legal responsibilities.	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental commitments issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental commitments and stipulations that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	20	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We don't want exploration or more mining in the central Black Hills. We want it to continue to be the anchor of our area's recreation, agriculture, and tourism economy.	Comment noted.

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	Lilias	Jarding		10	21	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Last, the draft EA does not mention the fact that all of the water for Ellsworth Air Force Base comes from Rapid City, and hence from the Rapid Creek watershed and connected aquifers. I know you are aware of this, because I have seen the alarmed correspondence you received from the base's leadership. The impacts of this project on the base's operations and the potential cumulative impacts on our national security need to be addressed clearly and in detail in the NEPA documents for this project.	Potential effects (including cumulative effects) of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Lilias	Jarding		10	22	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	For these and other reasons, I support the "No Action" Alternative.	Comment noted.
	Sonja	Swift		11	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project, directly upstream from Pactola Lake and Rapid City's water supply is a grave and inane threat that an Environmental Assessment of any sensibility would declare too risky to proceed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Sonja	Swift		11	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I implore you to extend the review time for citizens to review this draft document.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Sonja	Swift		11	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Act with common sense and STOP further gold mining in the Black Hills. I personally know the impacts of gold mining from time spent and research done in Peru, Honduras and Guatemala. There is not a single example of gold mining that has not polluted water, land and people. With profits going away from the local community, and the most requisite of all left destroyed: clean water.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Sonja	Swift		11	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I stand firmly opposed to gold exploration because water is more valuable than gold.	Comment noted.
	Melissae	Bletsian		12	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This kind of project has no place on our public lands and absolutely should NOT be happening. We have destroyed enough of our lands in pursuit of riches and it is well past time to put that practice to rest. Will we mine, drill, frack, and explore our way to total annihilation? We're actually not very far off from that. It is imperative that we leave our natural resources as they were meant to be, in place. We need to leave something for the future generations and we certainly cannot drink gold any more than we can drink the waters that will be ruined by this project. Nor can we breath air without enough oxygen, so destroying our National Forests for profit and plunder is a terrible idea.	Comment noted.
	Christine	Stephenson		13	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to oppose any exploratory drilling in the Jenny Gulch/Mystic area. The drilling will disturb a fragile ecosystem that is of immense value to the people of South Dakota. Please choose Alternative A, No Action.	Comment noted.
	Carol	Risdall		14	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am not against mining - we use minerals. However, I am strongly in favor of a very conservative approach to this area in view of its closeness to our water source. Also I believe for the better good of the people this land should be used for recreational purposes only.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Scott	Diagostine		15	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the Jenny Gulch Drilling Project. Let's leave things as they are.	Comment noted.
	Scott	Diagostine		15	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I am concerned about the long-term effects on the water quality.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Mars	Diagostine		16	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the Jenny Gulch Drilling Project.	Comment noted.
	Mars	Diagostine		16	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife	I am concerned about the long-term effects on the water quality, the impact on wildlife, how it may effect the use of our lake, and we may end up with another Super Fund Disaster.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jennifer	Hasvold		17	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose any drilling nor further exploration in the Pactola and Jenny Gulch area. This area is a priceless jewel for our community and should be preserved from commercial use!! Furthermore, so many flock to our beautiful Black Hills to celebrate this incredible area. Our local tourism economy depends on us keeping this areas protected and pristine!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources (including tourism) are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		18	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I am asking to please consider extending the 30 day comment period on this matter. It is too important an issue for the Black Hills area and the folks who live, recreate and depend on the water from this area for vital life source. More time is needed to get important documentation and notify ALL the effected people.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		18	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to urge you to chose the "no Action" alternative in the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Mining Exploration proposal.	Comment noted.

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	Juli	Ames-Curtis		18	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	There are so many reasons to not allow mining in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		18	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I believe a full Environmental Impact Statement is needed to assess the risk of drilling activity to our water, our forest, wildlife, and recreation.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		18	5	Regulatory Process	Comment Period EA Content	The assessment that has been done is insufficient, relies too heavily on promises from the company proposing the drilling, and does not provide adequate time for comment: just 30 days on activity that poses a risk of decades of harm.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		18	6	Other	Recreation	The financial impacts of recreation in the F3 Jenny Gulch mining exploration project area are in the millions of dollars per year.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Juli	Ames-Curtis		18	7	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Not only does mining effect people it has a negative effect on wildlife. Gold exploration just upstream from Pactola Reservoir in the Black Hills will have a direct impact on not only water, but wildlife, such as a unique bighorn sheep birthing area and their migration route would be negatively impacted.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Julie	Santella		19	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I'm writing to request an extension beyond the 30 day period that's been set for the public to review this document--I feel a project this consequential requires more time for public review of important documents.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Julie	Santella		19	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	I'd also like to state that government to government consultation was not completed on this project, and therefore the EA should not have been released yet.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Julie	Santella		19	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to register my continued strong disagreement with F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold project in the central Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Julie	Santella		19	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	As part of the comments I provided regarding this proposal in February 2020, I stated that nothing further in this process should take place before a nation-to-nation, government-to government consultation process occurs with all tribal nations with connections to the Black Hills. Not even one of these processes, required by federal law, has happened. Within the scoping comments and responses, found within Appendix H of the draft Environmental Assessment, evidence can be found of at least six (6) federally recognized tribal nations registering serious concerns with this proposed project. Free, prior, and informed consent, per the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, has not been granted, and therefore this proposal is in violation of the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples who have lived in relation with these lands since time immemorial.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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	Julie	Santella		19	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The draft EA does not describe details on the cultural resources site visit completed (p. 21 of draft EA). The State Historic Preservation Officer lacks the knowledge and expertise to protect cultural resources and sacred sites in the Jenny Gulch area. Prioritizing the SHPO over Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) for relevant tribes is not only in violation of federal law (National Historic Preservation Act), but also ensures that resources in this area will not be protected. The process to evaluate the proposed project area for its cultural and spiritual relevance must not just involve tribes; the process must be driven by tribes. Indigenous people must be in charge of evaluating the significance of their own sacred lands. Non-Indigenous people do not have the knowledge necessary to do this successfully.	See Draft EA Section 3.4.1, which states: "Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements." Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4; the Project is in compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. Also see Draft EA Section 3.4 and Appendix G, Public Involvement Plan, Section 3.5.
	Julie	Santella		19	6	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	Cumulative impacts of this project must also be meaningfully considered, with attention to: the mining history of the Black Hills and broader region, including Superfund sites and ongoing cleanup efforts and contamination; the history of the theft of Indigenous lands and systematic disenfranchisement of and violence toward Indigenous peoples in this region; the potential impacts to Rapid City and Box Elder's water supply (as a Rapid City resident, I am concerned about this); and other potential impacts.	The Project is temporary, as it is anticipated to last one year from start-up through reclamation; as such, cumulative effects are discussed in this context. Potential effects (including cumulative effects) of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Julie	Santella		19	7	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Given the significance of this area, an EA is inadequate and an EIS must instead be completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Julie	Santella		19	8	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	This project violates Indigenous sovereignty, threatens precious Black Hills water (more specifically the Rapid Creek watershed, which supplies Rapid City's water), and would fundamentally disrupt the lifecycles of bighorn sheep as well as other species dependent on the Black Hills.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Any potential impacts directly linked to tribal sovereignty are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Julie	Santella		19	9	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose it and urge the Forest Service to proceed with Alternative A (No Action).	Comment noted.
	Julie	Santella		19	10	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	30 days is far too short of a comment period on an environmental review process of this gravity, and an extension should have been granted.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Julie	Santella		19	11	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Further, the body of the draft Environmental Assessment was only 40 pages long, which seems wildly inadequate for a proposal this serious.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Julie	Santella		19	12	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Finally, I would like to request any additional documents relevant to this proposal.	The USFS followed up with communication to this commentor for clarification on this statement. At this time the USFS, has not received any communication back from the commentor.
	Julie	Santella		19	13	Regulatory Process	Project Description	Glancing through many of the comments made during scoping back in 2020, it appears that the EA doesn't actually address all of the comments made. To me this indicates that the Forest Service is not fully considering all the possible impacts of F3's proposal.	As noted in Section 3.1 of the Draft EA, some resources were not identified as issues based on project scoping and review of the proposed project in the context of the environmental setting. As such, these resources are not discussed further in the Draft EA. As also noted in Section 3.1 of the Draft EA, a public health and safety assessment was not originally considered, but was added to the issues summary based on scoping comments.
	Cheryl	Leach-Valades		20	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I am writing to request an extension of time to review the the proposed drilling project at Jenny Gulch.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Cheryl	Leach-Valades		20	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This is an extensive proposal (304 pages) and requires study. As you know the diamond core drilling proposal is upstream from Pactola Lake and is directly connected with the Rapid City water supply. People living on the Jenny Gulch land will be immediately and negatively impacted by this project.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Cheryl	Leach-Valades		20	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I live in Spearfish and strongly believe the Black Hills should be kept pristine. The Forest Service should be acting in good faith toward the ecology, including water sources, and history of the Black Hills. Companies proposing exploratory drilling don't have the best interest of our land and water in mind. These companies want a profit for the CEO and shareholders only.	Comment noted.
	Mary	Lucas		21	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I protest strongly this proposed project, for the reasons I stated prior (impacts to water, roads, and wildlife) and having read the Draft EA also protest this project on numerous other impacts I had not previously considered. Given a choice I would request the USFS go with Alternative A-No Action My second choice would be Alternative C- Modified Proposed Action I, in no way, support the full scope of F3's proposal. It is impossible to "return to preexisting conditions." The only way to maintain pre-existing conditions is to not disturb them in the first place.	Comment noted.
	Mary	Lucas		21	2	Other	Project Description	The summary on the EA states the project would last approx. 1 year from initiation through drilling and reclamation, however the F3 Gold LLC web site lists that timeline for drilling only with reclamation taking another 6 months. Again-as a stakeholder in this, I strongly object to this project!	As stated in Section 1.1 of the Draft EA, the Project would last approximately one year from initiation through drilling and reclamation.
	Myrna	Brennick		22	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As you can see by my lease address this project would take place in my back yard. But, even if that were not the case I would still be in support of option A, no exploration now or ever. I have read the project analysis and I think it speaks for itself. The neg impact of drilling in this neighborhood is huge. Could there be anything worth drilling for? Maybe. But at the depth it might be found, not very likely worth the effort or the expense. Any oldtimer in the area can attest to this as does the mute evidence of the many "glory holes" present on my lease and in the proposed drilling area. I think it could be attractive for the Forest Service to think private enterprise could help with repairing roads and clearing timber in the area but I think we both know what a slippery slope that might turn out to be! I have been blessed to share God's creation on my lease for 20 years. I have always tried to improve what is there, not degrade it.	Comment noted.
	Norma	Wilson		23	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 should not be allowed to mine gold in the area.	Comment noted.
	Norma	Wilson		23	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Such exploration as they propose could pollute Rapid Creek which flows into Pactola water supply for Rapid Creek and the surrounding area. Exploratory drilling could also pollute the aquifer beneath this proposed mining operation.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Norma	Wilson		23	3	Outside of Scop	Mining	Too many times mining companies like F3 have made a mess in the Black Hills and left the people of South Dakota to pay for clean up.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Jerry	Wilson		24	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3's application should be denied. Yes, the long antiquated 1872 law authorizes mineral exploration, but NEPA requires resource protection. The only reason for the proposed drilling is eventual gold mining, which should never - under any circumstances - be allowed in this critical watershed habitat!	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Jerry	Wilson		24	2	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	How many times must we witness the rape of the Black Hills by foreign corporations who take their profits and run and have taxpayers to pay for inadequate efforts to mitigate the damage!?	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Jerry	Wilson		24	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Water is life. All life depends on clean water, and Jenny Gulch is among the most vulnerable places in South Dakota. The city of Rapid City and numerous other inhabitants - human and otherwise - depend on this resource - as does tourism and anticipated future growth. Now is the time to stop this ill-conceived project, before it is too late! Please do not approve this application.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of exploratory drilling on tourism are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
				25; included as part of Form Letter 1					
				26; included as part of Form Letter 1					
	Amy	Hook		27	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not proceed with this project. The benefit is not worth the risk to our environment and drinking water. These are the true non-renewal resources.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Crystal	Cole		28	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	This email serves as a request for an extension of time to thoroughly review the Draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project. Because this project is upstream from Pactola Lake and will directly effect Rapid City's water supply, it is imperative that the Forest Service grant a thorough review of the document and the opportunity for the public to make comments.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I ask an extension to comment on the Jenny Gulch mining exploration Jenny Gulch Gold Mining Exploration Project. The proximity to Pactola Lake and potential impacts to the Rapid City's supply via it's watershed make this an important EA and many people will care about it and want to review and comment. Pactola Lake area is also an intensive use/developed recreation area.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose gold mining (or other mining) around Pactola Lake (a dam storing Rapid City's water supply).	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision Mining Act of 1872	I suggest that the Forest Service investigate ways to withdraw the area surrounding Pactola, from mineral entry. This includes asking the Congressional Delegation for a special bill to withdraw area or otherwise provide special protection to the area from the adverse impacts of the 1872 Mining law.	This is outside the scope of this Project. Mineral withdrawals are handed by the Bureau of Land Management.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	4	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision EA vs EIS	I suggest reviewing the Watershed Protection area in the Sante Fe National Forest in New Mexico. I think this was an administrative designation created by the National Forest Service in DC. from the 1930s. Please consider for the Forest Service to create such an administrative designation for the Rapid City watershed. Santa Fe's watershed protection rules might be too strict for the Black Hills - as part of that watershed is in the Pecos Wilderness and our forest has inholdings with real estate development — but something is needed. You could make this an EIS and do a Forest Plan Amendment to create a new Management area and assign it to the area around Pactola (Pactola Watershed Protection Area).	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Developing a forest-wide watershed protection area is outside of the scope of this project.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	5	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The EA or EIS should include a discussion of all options to withdraw the area from mineral entry.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. Mineral withdrawals are administered by the Bureau of Land Management.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	6	Regulatory Process	Water Quality/Water Supply	I request a thorough discussion of how the Clean Water Act and mining law, as administered by South Dakota DANR, would protect Rapid City's watershed. Can the Forest Service require more aggressive protections against pollution than the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, federal waste disposal law or SD mining law?	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision, and the USFS requires compliance with the Clean Water Act prior to approving the Plan of Operations. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	7	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Please review all the beneficial uses assigned to all the streams that could be impacted. It is my experience that both Wyoming and South Dakota collect fisheries data on larger streams, but ignore fisheries data collection in small flow streams. Streams that are labeled as intermittent, can have fish during the flow times and/or have "a string of pearls", by which I mean perennially flowing subsets near springs, so the stream is intermittently dry than wet than dry than wet, but the larger stretch gets classed as intermittent. The smaller perennial sub sets can have fish. Documenting fish in small streams and telling DANR about the fish would increase the protections via a higher water quality standard (if needed FS can petition Water Management Board for rule making). Small or low flow streams don't often support game fish and thus the wildlife departments ignore them. Our native fish were all small/non-game fish and some are at risk, such as the lake chub.	Section 3.2.1.4 of Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report states, "Within the Project area, the only stream that has assigned beneficial uses is Jenny Gulch, with the following beneficial uses: coldwater permanent fish life propagation waters; limited-contact recreation waters; fish and wildlife propagation, recreation, and stock watering waters; and irrigation waters (reference (20))." Petitioning the Water Management Board for rule making is out of the scope of this Project.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Nancy	Hilding		29	8	Other	Reclamation	If you proceed with the project and are looking at reclamation please consider creating beaver dam analog dams. Please discuss any history of beaver in the area and impacts to beavers.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including beavers) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	9	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Please discuss Native American concerns.	See Draft EA Section 3.4.1, which states: "Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements."
	Nancy	Hilding		29	10	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife Botanical Resources	Please review impacts to rare plants and animals.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on rare botanical species are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix C - Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on rare wildlife and fish species are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	11	Other	Recreation	Please discuss impacts to scenery and recreation. Please review the SMS designations for the area. The Forest Plan was done over 25 years ago…the scenic beauty and sensitivity levels may have changed.	Section 3.2 of Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation has been updated to include further discussion on scenery.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	12	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are in opposition to this project.	Comment noted.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	13	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	We hope you will look at ways to withdraw this area from mineral entry and make amendments to the Forest Plan for new Management Area designations to justify such withdrawals. A watershed protection area could be one option (see such an area created in the nineteen thirties on Santa Fe Forest in Santa Fe, New Mexico). Also, some folks have suggested recreation designations for the watershed.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. Mineral withdrawals are administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Developing a forest-wide watershed protection area is outside of the scope of this project.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	14	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	You need another alternative that avoids drilling in wet areas and 8.2, but does not increase roads so much. You need another alternative that changes the area's Forest Plan management area designations to management objectives that protect water quality better.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment at this time. Alternative C also moves drilling sites to avoid potential impacts to the WIZ.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	15	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We object to any drilling in the 8.2 Management Area. This is proposed for Alternative B, with a forest plan amendment.	Comment noted. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment at this time.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	16	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This EA should include an old-fashioned topographical map so we can see the slopes involved and what topography challenges exist for the drill pads, roads and water runoff. Alternative C has more roads – we want to know the slopes those roads are on. We want protection of water quality from runoff on the roads.	Figures 2-1 and 2-2 in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, show topography across the Project area.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	17	Regulatory Process	Land Use	You should disclose the location of the Canyon City Research Natural Area and discuss any potential impacts to that area – such as noise or dust. Impacts to an RNA could justify an EIS. You should disclose the other management areas in other nearby areas. On page 5, you have a map (1-2) which gives numerical codes for management areas without text title of management areas.	The Canyon City Research Natural Area is outside of the Project area; impacts to this RNA are not anticipated from the Project. Management Areas are discussed in the Draft EA Section 1.3.3.1. The Draft EA discloses a narrative of the Management Areas within the project area on pages 3-4.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	18	Other	Project Description	In Figure 2-1 at page 8 - "Laydown areas" are shown in map legends and on the maps but are not defined or discussed in the text – what are they? Are the "project exclusion areas"- private land? The black dot with a small white ring encircling it, needs to be included in the legend. I think it means a drill site in both B and C Alternatives. If it does that should be explained in the legend.	Figure 2-1 does not reference "laydown areas." It does, however, reference "staging areas" which are described in Sections 1.1 and 2.2.1 of the Draft EA. The black and white dots on the figure are different sizes (the black dots are smaller) to better depict areas of overlap between the alternatives.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	19	Other	Botanical Resources	You should provide maps of cover types and pine structural stages, to help us visualize the project area.	This is outside the scope of this project.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	20	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	You should provide a separate map for watersheds and surface water values. It should indicate which streams are perennial, intermittent or ephemeral and give their names. The map or a chart should show what beneficial uses the respective streams are assigned to. Your biologists should inspect all streams to check whether they have fish or not and check that DANR have assigned the correct beneficial uses to the streams. We fear that state agencies don't do a good job of inspecting low flow streams, likely to have only non-game fish during their fish inventories.	Figures 3-1 and 3-2 in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, identify protected, perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams across the Project area. In addition, Section 3.2.1.4 of Appendix E states, "Within the Project area, the only stream that has assigned beneficial uses is Jenny Gulch, with the following beneficial uses: coldwater permanent fish life propagation waters; limited-contact recreation waters; fish and wildlife propagation, recreation, and stock watering waters; and irrigation waters (reference (20))."
	Nancy	Hilding		29	21	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I could not make sense of your verbal description of how Plan C and B behave and are compared when crossing/impacting streams.	This is discussed in Sections 3.3.2.1 and 3.3.3.1 of Appendix E. Under Alternative B or C, none of the drill sites are located within streams. Alternative C moves 3 drill sites to avoid potential impacts to the WIZ. Temporary overland trails for both alternatives would cross streams; however this would occur in the winter to the extent practicable.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	22	Other	Recreation	You need a map of the values assigned by the Scenery Management System. You need a discussion of scenery values and impacts to scenery.	Section 3.2 of Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation has been updated to include further discussion on scenery.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	23	Other	Recreation	You should provide a map of recreation assets in the surrounding area, including trails and camp or picnic grounds.	A recreational resources overview figure is provided in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.2 as Figure 3-1. This figure includes trails, but does not include camp or picnic grounds since, as described in Section 3.2.2 of this appendix, there are none in the Project area.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	24	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	The mandated tribal consultation seems to be incomplete, allegedly due to Covid19. The discussion of cultural resources and the projects potential impacts to them, is very hard to understand. It needs a rewrite. We hope you will respect tribes and work well with them.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	25	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	You should have more timing restrictions in areas around nests of key birds and bats. You should collect more data on leopard frog and perhaps avoid drilling near frog habitat. You should have mitigations for American marten impacts. You should also better protect the bighorn sheep.	Comment noted. These species are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing. F3 will be required to follow applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines for wildlife.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	26	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	You should provide more information on beaver – it is a BHNF MIS. How does the project relate to location of historic beaver dams on Jenny Gulch? If you are having drill pads in streams or roads crossing streams, how does that activity relate to former beaver habitat and could the impacts be converted into beaver habitat friendly building/changes?	As noted in the Draft EA, Section 3.7.3.1 and 3.7.4.1, no drill sites are located in perennial or intermittent streams. Streams would be crossed using existing roads or along overland trails in the winter to the extent practicable. See the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report for relevant Forest Plan standards and guidelines for avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. Project activities would avoid active beaver complexes.

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	Nancy	Hilding		29	27	Other	Reclamation	Reseeding should be done with native seed. Discussion of weed control is needed.	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	28	Other	Public Health and Safety	We want more information about the containment of acid minerals that could come up during drilling.	These impacts are discussed in Sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock would be buried on-site or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. F3's cuttings management program complies with South Dakota state disposal rules. F3's cuttings management program also proposes the use of storage tanks instead of sumps to further minimize potential effect.
	Nancy	Hilding		29	29	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	We would like you to discuss impacts to the frigid amber snail. Could the frigid amber snail be in the area? We are concerned as it was petitioned for listing with the USFWS. USFWS denied the listing petition due to uncertainty over taxonomy. We thus believe this denial to be an uncertainty and want the FS to watch out for it. If it is a unique species, it only exists in Iowa and 8 known locations in the Black Hills.	As noted in Table 5-1 of Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report, suitable habitat (e.g., calcareous formations) for the frigid ambersnail is not present in the Project area.
	Judith	Kennedy		30	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to any mining exploration in the Silver City and Pactola area. This is the main water source for Rapid City, Ellsworth AFB, and surrounding areas. Please do NOT let mining or mining exploration occur anywhere in that area.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Judith	Kennedy		30	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Has there been a tribal consultation?	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Robert	Ripley		31	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	I write to you today to express my deepest concern about F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project and the incomplete and misleadingly vague Environmental Assessment.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Robert	Ripley		31	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Even without an Environmental Impact Statement (which should be done), the project is simply too disruptive.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Robert	Ripley		31	3	Regulatory Process Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Unsatisfactory tribal consultation and incomplete protection of cultural resources.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Robert	Ripley		31	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Negative impact to bighorn sheep migration route and birthing spaces are critical issues this project creates.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Robert	Ripley		31	5	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	The Forest Service, to fulfill its ethical duty, must include and analyze all reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan. It is clear they have not done so. Without that study, there is simply no way to predict the negative impact to the Rapid City water supply.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Robert	Ripley		31	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Because of the above, I oppose F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project and support the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.
	Jane	Beisner		32	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "No Action" alternative. I can't believe you are even thinking of risking contamination to the lake and the water source to Rapid City. This is a bad idea and seems to me that you haven't done your homework on this.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jane	Beisner		32	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	This not only affects human life but also animal life in the area. You need a complete environmental study done on this before even considering it. All potential impacts to the area need to be studied because this could really harm our beautiful Black Hills which is just now trying to recover from our recent pine beetle infestation.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Jane	Beisner		32	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not give this project your stamp of approval. I grew up in this area and want to keep it as a beautiful forest/lake area for my grandchildren.	Comment noted.
	John	Dale		33	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing today to express my opposition to gold exploration in The Black Hills. I am opposed to this because of past mining externalization of costs to the community, and because the risk to our water can't possibly be indemnified. Please do not do any exploration, and seek ways to shut down existing mining operations.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Joy	Rehfeld		34	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am absolutely opposed to this exploration project by F3 Gold. The proposal states the goal is not mining - so why are they drilling 42 holes? I do support the No Action proposal. Please deny this project so we can maintain the pristine condition of the natural forest!!	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Greg	Yahne		35	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I have seen many other proposals like the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch gold project and they all seem to leave the Black Hills in worse shape than they had promised. I want to preserve the Hills and our water at all costs and I oppose the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Greg	Yahne		35	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	An Environmental Impact Statement has not been done.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Greg	Yahne		35	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Native tribes have not been consulted and considered properly.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Greg	Yahne		35	4	Regulatory Process	EA Content	It is inexcusable to proceed with a project like this without carefully considering ALL potential impacts, as has happened so many times before.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Kevin	Ryan		36	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing this to register my objection to the proposed F3 exploratory drilling project near Jenny Gulch and Pactola reservoir. I am a life long resident of the Black Hills and strongly oppose this permit being issued.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Kevin	Ryan		36	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My family and I often use the reservoir and the tailwaters for fishing and fear that possible water contamination from drilling will destroy it. The city of Rapid City, where I live, uses the water from Pactola to support life in the city. Should this water source become contaminated, well, I think you know what could potentially happen. If gold is discovered, then what is the next step? to mine that gold. The water in this area is too valuable to the residents of Silver City, Rapid City and to the people who rely on Pactola for recreation and life in general. I love fishing the waters of Pactola and the connecting streams and fear greatly for their survival should this drilling be allowed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Kevin	Ryan		36	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am a life long resident of the Black Hills and strongly oppose this permit being issued.	Comment noted.
	Ben	Simonds		37	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please allow "No Action" for the search and removal of any gold near our most important waterway for Rapid City and all surrounding cities.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Hans	Stephenson		38	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3 Gold exploration project and ask that you take the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.

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	Hans	Stephenson		38	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content EA vs EIS	The environmental assessment report is too vague and should undergo a full EIS.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Hans	Stephenson		38	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Regardless, the value of the Rapid Creek watershed is much greater than the value of gold. Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir's recreational values alone outweigh the value of any gold operation. The importance of tourism dollars, boat sales, fishing sales, etc is far greater than what a foreign owned gold operation can bring to the table.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Hans	Stephenson		38	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I own a fly fishing shop and guide service. The health of Rapid Creek us a direct impact on my business and the jobs it provides to my employees. The jobs and lifestyles provided by a healthy rapid creek last far longer than mining jobs. As climate change creates more erratic weather patterns, we may become more and more reliant on the water stored in Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek. Given the track record of gold mining at causing large scale pollution, further mining exploration and development on any scale is too much of a risk to the water supply of Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Greenhouse gas emissions from the project would occur from fuel combustion associated construction equipment. However, due to the short-term nature (one year) of the project, there would be a negligible impact to resources from climate change. As such, a climate change analysis is not warranted for this project. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Hans	Stephenson		38	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Given the myriad factors involved and the great risks to our water supply, our tourism economy, and recreational opportunities we must not allow the exploration to continue.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Heikes	Eirik		39	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose any drilling or exploration with the possible intent of mining at our source for drinking water. I support the "no action" plan. This is a key economic area for tourism and recreation in our beautiful black hills. Many of us recall what happened in Whitewood during the Homestake mining and that area is still a "dead zone". I am a fisherman and the Jenny Gulch area is one of my favorite places to flyfish. Please do not ruin it.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources (including tourism) are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Heikes	Eirik		39	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The EA is insufficient. A full EIS is needed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Heikes	Eirik		39	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	That area is a nesting ground for ospreys and other raptors and is a bighorn sheep birthing area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species are likewise outside of the Project area. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Heikes	Eirik		39	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	There are many other negative impacts that need to be analyzed. Better yet, lets just not move forward. Have the F3 folks go mine gold in Minnesota or Wisconsin or wherever is upstream of where they live!	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Rob	Schleiffarth		40	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose allowing mining in this area. The obvious environmental risks do not outweigh any potential benefits.	Comment noted.

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	Michael	Robinson		41	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Despite the EA published by F3, there has been no formal environmental impact study performed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Michael	Robinson		41	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I have lived here for over 10 years and have noted that in wet years, there is considerable water runoff down both Gorman gulch and Sunnyside gulch. This water then enters Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir. Excess traffic during these times could result (by way of oil, diesel fuel, gasoline spill) in contamination of the creek/reservoir which serve as water for drinking/fishing and recreation.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Michael	Robinson		41	3	Other	Access & Transportation	Despite the fact that there is some local traffic up Gorman and Sunnyside, these are not mapped motorized trails by the US Forest Service off road maps. I am concerned about 24/7 traffic on these roads (particularly Gorman since it has no outlet).	Sunnyside Gulch Road (FR 671) is a public highway open to all vehicles year-round. Gorman Gulch Road (FR 141 and 141.2B) is also a public roadway open to highway-legal vehicles year-round. Since they are public roadways, they are not mapped in USFS off-road maps.
	Michael	Robinson		41	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	If F3 is allowed to pursue it's initial project, I am concerned greatly about the effect should valuable minerals be found. That is, what happens to our property value, peaceful setting and tourism should they decide to then proceed with full-scale mining.	The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Michael	Robinson		41	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I would urge the US Forest Service to deny the request for the F3 project. At least request a formal environment impact study.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Michael	Robinson		41	6	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	We also are unaware if there are any prior tribal or cultural areas in the project area that would be disturbed.	See Draft EA Section 3.4.1, which states: "Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements."
	David	Simonds		42	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My concerns as follows: 1) Impact to our area's only water source.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	David	Simonds		42	2	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	2) Lack of an environmental study and results of that study published to the citizens of Pennington and Meade counties.	The Draft EA was made available to the public for a 30-day review and comment period, which concluded on October 22, 2021.
	David	Simonds		42	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	3) Impact to the wildlife habitat that currently is pristine and not developed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	David	Simonds		42	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	4) This is our country's forest and shouldn't be exploited for corporations to profit!	Comment noted.
	Julie	Anderson		43	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to F3 Jenny Gulch project and support the "No Action" alternative. The other two alternatives of allowing 42 drill pads requested by F3 Gold or 47 drill pads avoiding sensitive places are unacceptable.	Comment noted.

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	Julie	Anderson		43	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content EA vs EIS	The Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete and should include an Environmental Impact Statement.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Julie	Anderson		43	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Also, Tribal Consultation and protection of cultural resources is inadequate.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Julie	Anderson		43	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Raptor and bighorn sheep must be given protection for nesting and migratory routes.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish and minimization measures are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Julie	Anderson		43	5	Regulatory Process	EA Content	In other words, the Forest Service must do their job and analyze all potential impacts of the project before approving it.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Mark	Baker		44	1	Incorporate	Access & Transportation	I live in the area in question and the maps presented on page 9 (Figure 1-1), page 12 (Figure 1-2), page 82 (Figure 1-1) & page 113 (Figure 1-1) are at least 30 years out-of-date. I live on Fawn Drive with family history in this area since the 1960s. These maps show that CR261 crosses Rochford Road and goes right down Fawn drive (which is an un-incorporated private drive outside of Forest Service jurisdiction) passing through the middle of my property and on to the Project Area. In the maps pictured on page 9 (Figure 1-1), page 12 (Figure 1-2), page 82 (Figure 1-1) & page 113 (Figure 1-1); roads CR261, Deer Meadow Drive, White Tail Road & Wessel Drive are all positioned at least 1 mile east from their actual locations. Documentation concerning Fawn Drive being released as a Forest Service road can be provided if required. These discrepancies worry me in that F3 Gold LLC is confused about their proposed access into their Project Area as they are using maps that no longer reflect accurate routing.	The USFS roads within the project area and planned to be used by the project were checked and confirmed to be accurate as presented in the Draft EA. All roads not proposed to be used as part of the project have been removed from figures to minimize confusion.
	Mark	Baker		44	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Taking this into account, I believe the Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project should be declined as further research is needed.	Comment noted.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Wildlife in the Sunnyside Gulch vicinity that will be affected by the proposed drilling: deer (of course), mt. lions, coyotes, black bear and elk have recently returned. Just found B.B. tracks again. They are fairly regular visitors to this area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Area ranchers summer their cattle in this area. F3 will probably empty the springs in the area. Don't know the impact on the ranchers, but it can't be good.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Water would not be sources directly from local surface waters.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	3	Other	Access & Transportation	Access: In November 1997 one of the Sunnyside Gulch homeowners received a letter from the forest service stating that his access to private land was illegal and a homeowners association would have to be formed, access point survived and pay $150.00 each year for access across Forest Service land. An association was formed, and a $1700.00 survey was done. We have been paying approximately $150.00 every year since. It makes sense for F3 to survey each site, turn the surveys in to the Forest Service for approval and pay the $150.00 for each drilling site. If they aren't required to abide by the same rules as the landowners then I would naturally assume that we will not have to pay any more fees.	F3 will be required to coordinate access across USFS lands with the agency, as documented in Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	4	Other	Access & Transportation	Road maintenance: Is the company doing the drilling going to maintain Sunnyside Gulch road? When asked, Mr. Tom Campbell said no, they wouldn't repair the roads when they were done. We (the homeowners) have worked hard and spent large sums of money to maintain the roads.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	5	Other	Access & Transportation	Sunnyside Gulch is a hugely popular ATV trail. Several landowners allow access through their property providing the trail riders ride courteously, moving heavy equipment doesn't seem to qualify. The ATVs get a bit annoying, but they cause little damage.	F3 will be required to coordinate access across USFS lands with the agency, as documented in Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. F3 will need to coordinate access across any private lands separately.

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	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	6	Other	Access & Transportation	In the summer of 2021 an environmental group was legally camping near the north end Sunnyside Gulch. They drove in and set up their tents. A forest service law enforcement agent told them they could camp there but not bring their vehicles in. The gold exploration is planning large drilling trucks in the same area and plans to make that their headquarters. How can this be allowed when a totally law abiding group was told they couldn't have vehicles in the same area.	F3 will be required to coordinate access across USFS lands with the agency, as documented in Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	7	Other	Access & Transportation	If the gold exploration group is allowed to cross onto forest service with no special permits and not be required to clean up everything, how can people (atvs and dirt bikes, etc.) not be allowed to do the same thing and be allowed to tear up the National Forest. Think it would be difficult to keep people on the designated trails and to buy permits. This should then apply nation wide.	F3 will be required to coordinate access across USFS lands with the agency, as documented in Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	8	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The drilling process requires water as a lubricant. Several, if not all of the planned drilling sites in Sunnyside Gulch are adjacent to or near private property with homes, cabins, private wells and approved septic systems. They could easily drain the small amounts of water these formations contain, and may make them permanently useless the holes they drill aren't properly sealed. We depend on snow and rain to keep our "aquifers" viable and if they are constantly draining, they'll never fill up again especially with the drought we are currently experiencing. We also have several springs in the area that the wildlife depend on. These will also be destroyed. Along with the water depletion, comes the heavy drilling machinery which could easily become fire hazards.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. F3 is required to seal their drill holes per South Dakota state requirements.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	9	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Last year F3 Gold did extensive seismic studies and so are aware of where the probable sites of water are. There are nearly a dozen sites adjacent to the private land on Sunnyside Gulch, and they are all part of the F3 mining claims.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	10	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My wife and I have lived on Sunnyside Gulch nearly 30 years, and put thousands of hours of work on our property and tried to keep the surrounding forest viable. We have also participated in all the fire programs offered by the forest service and the Silver City Firewise program. In all probability we will lose our home because of lack of water. Any water drainage goes directly into Pactola and Rapid City's water source.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	11	Other	Public Health and Safety	If F3 is allowed into Sunnyside Gulch area there may be as many 15 homes and cabins that will be affected. Possibly more.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on nearby residences are discussed in Section 3.9 of the Draft EA and Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
	Thomas and Diane	Strand		45	12	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 drilling will be catastrophic for this small area. We hope the Forest Service finds F3 incompatible with the Black Hills National Forest. Several peoples lives depend on it.	Comment noted.
	Jeremiah	Davis		46	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I write to express my strong concern about the proposed F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project, and to request that the Forest Service begin a full environmental impact statement (EIS) on this proposal.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Jeremiah	Davis		46	2	Other	Recreation Water Quality/Water Supply	In my view, both "Alternative B" and "Alternative C" pose a serious threat to the recreational resource at Lake Pactola, and to the domestic water supply for Rapid City, Ellsworth AFB, and other communities in the central Black Hills of South Dakota. While Lake Pactola is a man-made reservoir, it has a pristine natural beauty. I have enjoyed swimming there the entire time I have lived in Rapid City, and know it is highly valued for fishing, waterskiing, and all outdoor recreation.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Jeremiah	Davis		46	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Even more important is the fact that the Rapid City metro area, which is growing very rapidly, depends on Rapid Creek, and the watershed, for clean drinking water. We live in a semi-arid region, which is likely to grow drier in future years with climate change. Either Alternative B or Alternative C presents a serious threat to the future quality of our drinking water, and increases the likelihood that we will need to build a very expensive pipeline to the Missouri River.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jeremiah	Davis		46	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The wildlife in the area surrounding the drilling of exploratory holes will also be seriously threatened.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.

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	Jeremiah	Davis		46	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It is worth noting that the economic benefits of gold exploration in Jenny Gulch are fairly limited, while Lake Pactola and Rapid Creek are our lifeblood. This proposal brings serious environmental and economic risks, and questionable benefits.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
				47; included as part of Form Letter 2					
	Suzanne	Iudicello		48	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The Rapid Creek Watershed is a vital source of water to Rapid City, Ellsworth AFB and rural areas. We cannot risk losing that water source to the empty promises of the F3 project proposal. For example, representatives of the company have falsely claimed to West River legislators that the watershed is not the source of our drinking water.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Suzanne	Iudicello		48	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I support the "No Action" alternative and urge you to complete a full Environmental Impact Statement to assess the risk of drilling activity to our water, the forest, wildlife, and recreation (which far outstrips gold mining in potential revenue to West River businesses.)	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Suzanne	Iudicello		48	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	Amending the outdated Forest Management Plan to allow this prohibited activity is akin to building a two-story brick building on a foundation of bamboo. The plan is already 16 years past its last amendment, and does not account for the changes on the Black Hills National Forest brought about by fire, beetle infestation, and unsustainable logging practices. Why would you expose this key natural resource to yet another threat? Especially based on a flimsy EA?	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. As noted in Draft EA Section 2.3, Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Suzanne	Iudicello		48	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Finally, the Forest Service has failed to complete authentic tribal consultation, not only during scoping, but in this constrained 30-day comment period.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Suzanne	Iudicello		48	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The risks posed by the F3 project proposal far outweigh the cursory examination presented in the EA. Our water, our forest, our grazing areas, our wildlife, and the quality of life we enjoy through outdoor recreation are more important than gold. Just say no. NO ACTION Alternative.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Joshua	Herreman		49	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in response to the proposal to explore for gold in Jenny Gulch area. I can't understand why you could even consider damaging the only water source for Rapid City and others in the black hills for profit. I will not stand for this as a resident, taxpayer, and sportsman. I have used Pactola for recreation and water my entire life and it would be a sin to allow this to happen. Please do NOT ALLOW THIS for ANY REASON!!!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Jeannine	Guern		50	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	NO, enough.	Comment noted.
	Lindsay and John	Dunlop		51	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My Husband, John Dunlop and I, Lindsay Dunlop request for you to say NO to granting a permit to a gold exploration company to drill exploratory holes in the area surrounding Jenny Gulch and Silver City. Our family and friends use this area for many recreational activities. One of my favorite activities is paddle boarding early in the morning close to the inlet. The water is so clear you can see the lake weed and abundant fish below, the beautiful terrain surrounding, and wildlife including deer, majestic blue herons, and eagles. The serenity, beauty, and quiet of this area is as it should be. Many fish for recreation and/or to feed their families in Pactola Reservoir as well.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Lindsay and John	Dunlop		51	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	We have significant concerns with drilling so close to the main water source for the Rapid City area. History has shown water contamination is common with drilling practices.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Lindsay and John	Dunlop		51	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please say NO to drilling in this area which we believe says yes to healthy communities and healthy wildlife habitats. Thank you.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Lori	Wood		52	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose the granting of drilling permits. Drilling is a short term exploitive move that will not serve the majority of people who will be affected. Stop selling us short for a few bucks.	Comment noted.

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	Anna	Bruce		53	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing because I love Pactola reservoir. Today I went paddleboarding in Jenney Gulch. I was completely alone. No other boaters, swimmers, etc The solitude and peace that I experienced were unparalleled. That time keeps my mental health balanced and my soul refreshed. To think that this could be contaminated or destroyed by mining exploration is heartbreaking. Please do not let this treasure be destroyed. Clean water is a precious resource that is far more valuable than any gold mine. Water is essential for life, not gold. The Black Hills and Pactola reservoir are an amazing place. The Forest Service is here to protect and preserve our national forests, please continue this mission.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Donna and Richard	Fisher		54	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Our objections to the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration project follow: 1. Water is critical to homeowners, ranchers, wildlife and recreational use of our Jenny Gulch area. In a normal season, two small streams feed into our meadows and provide surface water. The proposed drilling directly endangers surface water. Even more dangerous is the potential for damage to the small water galleries from which our development's wells draw water. Those galleries are slowly charged over years. Once damaged, they cannot be “fixed.” Protecting water is the key issue.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Donna and Richard	Fisher		54	2	other	Statement of Project Opinion	2. Jenny Gulch is a prototype multi-use area. Hunters love our area for its abundance of deer and turkeys and, thankfully, some of this area is off-limits to UTVs so wildlife is relatively undisturbed. Several area rancher lease tracts up here. We personally have good relationships with them and enjoy our seasonal cowcalf visitors. Allowing mining exploration in the Jenny Gulch area with its truck traffic, noise and danger to the calves is not hospitable to historic summer grazing leases. The Jenny Gulch Exploration project will disrupt not only us landowners but also our seasonal neighbors in this multi-use area.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.
	Donna and Richard	Fisher		54	3	Other	Wetlands & Aquatic Resources Fisheries & Wildlife	3. Our meadow is a particularly sensitive wetland. Springs feed the seasonal streams. In early spring and summer and well into the fall in wet years, the meadow south of our house is home a wide variety of birds including ducks, hawks and even a Great Blue Heron or two. We hear resident frogs i the spring. We see garter and bull snakes as well as the elusive Black Hills redbelly snake, S. o. pahasapae, a subspecies of the snake originally considered endemic to the Black Hills. https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsm9_012483.pdf	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources (including wetlands) are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Donna and Richard	Fisher		54	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	4. We and our neighbors choose to live in the Jenny Gulch area because our development sits is diverse habitat for wildlife. All winter, whitetail deer shelter in the meadow and elk can be heard bugling around us during rut. Coyotes den in the mica shist slopes above the meadow. Mountain lions pass through and several game cams have caught an occasional black bear this year.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Donna and Richard	Fisher		54	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Invasive drilling in this gem of the forest risks a sensitive resource for the chance at profit for a few investors. Please consider the long-term interests of those of us who value and protect this multiple use forest over the speculators whose only interest is short term profit from extraction.	Comment noted.
				55; included as part of Form Letter 3					
				56; included as part of Form Letter 4					
	Terry	Skillman		57	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am urging the Forest Service to NOT allow the proposed drilling/exploration in the Jenny Gulch area. Just because the 1872 mining law allows for exploration, that does not mean it should be done in this recreational and water sensitive area. In my opinion, the potential effects of the proposed drilling cannot truly be known for sure particularly with regard to underground water. The Forest Service should work to protect the Black Hills from this potentially destructive exploration.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Terry	Skillman		57	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My property is within 500 feet of one of the proposed drill sites and I am very concerned about contamination of my drinking water well. One of the proposed drill sites in Alternative B (SCP033) near my property is apparently in a sensitive (WIZ) riparian area and I am concerned about the affect the proposed drilling may have on this area. Even if this site were moved as proposed in Alternative C, it is close to my property and causes me to same concerns regarding my drinking water well and it would also apparently be visible from my property with the likely associated equipment/drilling noise and disturbance to the area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential project effects on noise (including nearby residences) are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.

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	Gisela	Schall		58	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Protect Pactola Reservoir, Jenny Gulch, and the entire Rapid Creek watershed for our water, for wildlife habitat, and to preserve sustainable forest resources that fuel our economy and nourish our hearts and souls.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Karah	Haug		59	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "No Action" alternative to F3 Gold's project proposal.	Comment noted.
	Karah	Haug		59	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content EA vs EIS	As a Rapid City resident of 22 years who was born here, I have witnessed many changes to the land surrounding our town and I am concerned that F3 Gold's project will negatively impact the lives of Black Hills residents. The environmental degradation that will be caused by this project has not been accurately defined nor fully assessed. Should the F3 project go forward without an Environmental Impact Statement, the implications would be pollution to the water supply for Rapid City, raptor nesting and bighorn sheep birthing sites degraded, and wildlife migration routes interrupted, to name a few. These environmental factors are integral in the health of the ecosystems surrounding Rapid City and therefore directly impact the health of residents in the Black Hills area.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Karah	Haug		59	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	What is more, the draft of the Environmental Assessment is incomplete and consultations with tribal leaders to protect our cultural resources are incomplete. This is a violation of the human and tribal rights of the Native American community. The Forest Service has failed to fully analyze these elements, the aforementioned environmental impacts, and any other potential repercussions of F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Karah	Haug		59	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	For the health of my community and the environment that supports the lifestyle of myself and so many others, F3 Gold should not move forward with this project. I support the "No Action" alternative to the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch project	Comment noted.
	Bret	Swanson		60	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	My family lives minutes away from this project site. Mining in this sensitive area that is close to where many people live would be a disaster. The effects on wildlife alone are enough to stop it. Please don't allow this to happen. Thank you.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	John	Hauge		61	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my complete opposition to this gold exploration project. This is based on the following: 1. The Black hills have evolved into a major tourist destination, admired by tourists and locals, for its wildlife, its scenic beauty, its hiking, fishing, camping and hunting opportunities. One has to look no further than Terry Peak and Strawberry hill to see the damage and disfigurement that results from the open pit mining. This type of destruction is no longer acceptable to the citizens who are the true owners of our forests.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.

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	John	Hauge		61	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	2. This mine will have a disastrous effect on the watershed quality for all who use these waters for their drinking water. The mines promise no problems, there will be safe drinking water, but they are long gone or go out of business when the ponds leak, when the dams burst, when we have an environmental nightmare. Look at Strawberry Hill. Now the public has to foot the bill for containment, treatment and mitigation.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	John	Hauge		61	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	3. There are additional problems relating to an environmental impact assessment, an out of date Forest Management Plan that does not reflect today's environment and legal requirements to the Tribes.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	John	Hauge		61	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Forest Service holds itself to be the guardian of our nation's forests. They need to meet this responsibility by rejecting this whole proposal. Failure to do so will result in a public outcry, probable congressional intervention and ongoing lawsuits. DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME.	Comment noted.
	Wendy	Luedke		62	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project and support the "No Action" alternative for the following reasons: 1. Its serene beauty cannot be matched. It is my favorite area to kayak. It is a favorite field trip for my students.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Wendy	Luedke		62	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	2. The impact the mining will have on the environment is insurmountable and unrecoverable. 3. The profits from this mining are for the few; its lasting negative impact on the Black Hills is for the many. 4. Long after the mining company leaves taking all their profits with them, the everlasting environmental damage remains. 5. We all know very well the damage mining causes. We in the Hills have constant daily-visual reminders. Why is this EVEN being considered? Has an environmental impact study been done or is greed and short-term profit all that is being considered. Are we seriously going to place our trust that this mining company will make good on its clean-up? When has that EVER been the case? Look at Strawberry Hill - Gilt Edge mine as one of MANY examples where this is not the case. It still remains a toxic dump.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Wendy	Luedke		62	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	6. The Forest Service proposal to amend a Plan that is already 16 years past its last amendment (2005) is unacceptable and negligent. More than a decade of change on the Black Hills National Forest through fire, pine bark beetle infestation, and unsustainable logging practices would be ignored in the proposed “amendment” to allow mineral exploration.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record.
	Wendy	Luedke		62	4	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	How much lobbying money has our government representatives received thus far? This information needs to be made available to the public.	This is outside of the scope of the EA.
	Wendy	Luedke		62	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do the right thing, protect our Black Hills, our wildlife and our water sources.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	1	Other Regulatory Process	Statement of Project Opinion EA Content	As a resident of Silver City, and a Silver City VFD firefighter, I have serious concerns about the F3 Gold Jenney Gulch Exploration Drilling Project and the inadequacy of the draft environmental assessment. I support a No Action ruling or at minimum a full Environmental Impact Statement for the following reasons:	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	1. The exploration drilling area is located in watersheds that drain/feed into Rapid Creek and the Pactola Reservoir (Jenney Gulch, Gorman Gulch, Sunnyside Gulch…). I am concerned this exploratory drilling could impact the surface and ground water quality of local private water wells, and also potentially contaminate the Pactola Reservoir, a major water source for Rapid City and Ellsworth AFB.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	3	Other	Access & Transportation	2. Silver City Road is a narrow two-lane asphalt highway with steep grades and countless sharp curves. This highway has a thin asphalt layer that is old and is barely sustained to meet current light vehicle traffic to Silver City and access to upper Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek. There are areas along this road with obvious subsidence due to current vehicle traffic. Any additional heavy vehicle traffic by F3 Gold drilling apparatus could cause significant damage to the highway or be the cause of an accident due to a road slide at one of the subsidence areas.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	3. There are active Osprey nesting sites in the vicinity of the drilling area. There are also Bald Eagles, numerous owl species, and at least one goshawk nesting site nearby this area. Drilling activity could potentially disrupt raptor nesting and the survival of hatchlings.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bald eagles, owls, and goshawks) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species are likewise outside of the Project area. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.

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	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife	4. Potential water contamination of Pactola Reservoir could impact the aquatic environment and fish populations. This could have secondary impacts on wildlife, such as the osprey, that feed on these fish.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	6	Other	Public Health and Safety Mining	5. Emergency response to any mining/drilling accident would be accomplished by the Silver City VFD. This is a small volunteer fire department that may not have the capacity to adequately provide timely lifesaving medical treatment is the event of a mining/drilling accident. Thereby endangering the F3 workforce or the public if the accident were to occur in a remote area.	Distance to the nearest hospital clinic and emergency medical facilities via the existing roadways is described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report, Section 2.2.5. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	7	Other	Access & Transportation	6. The additional heavy vehicle traffic created by vehicles involved in the drilling project could destroy/degrade the surface and roadbed of Silver City Road.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	8	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Previously, in 2013 when dredging was proposed in the Rapid Creek drainage, the Board of Minerals and Environment, South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources, made a preliminary designation as Special, Exceptional, Critical, and Unique Lands for the lands upstream from Silver City. Based on this previous determination, I strongly appeal to the Black Hills National Forest to require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), or preferably a "No Action" ruling (ban on the exploration drilling project) to protect this area and the water resources of local landowners, Rapid City, and Ellsworth AFB.	Comment noted. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	9	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft environmental assessment is inadequate. It does not critically assess the impact to the surface and ground water quality and water supplies. It does not appear to assess the potential impact to nesting raptor species in the area. It does not recognize the impact to maintenance and safe trafficability of Silver City Road.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jeffrey and Jodi	Sugrue		63	10	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Due to the above potential impacts I request a No Action ruling. If this is not supportable, then I urge you to require the completion of a full-scale EIS prior to any decision/permit that would allow exploratory drilling. The fragile nature of our environment and the potential damage to water quality demands this level of investigation to ensure there will not be irreversible damage caused by the drilling.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Lisa	Maragon		64	1	Other Outside of Scope	Statement of Project Opinion Mining	I am not opposed to the exploration project itself. I am opposed to the possible mining in that area if gold is found. I don't think this project is a good fit in a National Forest with their mission being "to sustain the health and diversity, etc for present and future generations". The Black Hills does not have a good reputation for responsibly mining gold and has contaminated precious drinking water which is becoming more and more an endangered element on our planet Earth.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Jesse	Sanchez		65	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch Gold Project. I am a manager at a local hotel. I can tell you from first hand knowledge such destruction of our black hills natural beauty will adversely affect one of our largest forms of revenue: Tourism. We make plenty of money already for our area. I have seen the number of people from out of state coming to visit and spend money. We do not need this new source of revenue.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources (including tourism) are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
		Monfore		66	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support alternative A. The no action alternative.	Comment noted.

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	Mike	Ray		67	1	Other Regulatory Process	Statement of Project Opinion EA vs EIS	I personally oppose the proposal to allow exploratory drilling for gold in the Rapid Creek Watershed. I support the no action alternative, and believe a full EIS needs to be completed at minimum. Given the sensitive nature of Rapid Creek to pollution and the huge economic benefit the pristine watershed brings to South Dakota mining and mining exploration should not be allowed in this area.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Joel	Ronningen		68	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "no action" alternative. Leave the Black Hills alone.	Comment noted.
	Kristi	Villafuerte		69	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am a local resident who is very concerned about new purposed Gold Exploration. Instead of trying to cashflow the Black Hills how about protect them?	Comment noted.
	Kristi	Villafuerte		69	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS Comment Period	A full Environmental Impact Statement is needed to assess the risk of drilling activity to our water, our forest, wildlife, and recreation. The assessment they have done is insufficient, relies too heavily on promises from the company proposing the drilling, and does not provide adequate time for comment: just 30 days on activity that poses a risk of decades of harm.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Kristi	Villafuerte		69	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This is all about greed and money and not about the welfare of the Black Hills and the people who cherish them.	Comment noted.
	Greg	Sears		70	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not want drilling in the area of Silver City. I am a cabin owner there, and feel that to allow drilling would change the environment and landscape.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Kandy	H.		71	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am completely opposed to the F3 Jenny Gulch project. I strongly support the "No Action" alternative!	Comment noted.
	William and Patricia	Kratochvil		72	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are writing to express our strong opposition to the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch Project. We support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.

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	William and Patricia	Kratochvil		72	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content EA vs EIS	We believe the draft Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete and that an Environmental Impact Statement should be done. This is a sensitive environmental area and all steps must be done to insure that it is protected.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	William and Patricia	Kratochvil		72	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	We believe that adequate consultation with the Native American Tribes has not been done to insure proper protection of their cultural resources in this area.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	William and Patricia	Kratochvil		72	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	We are familiar with the area and are strongly concerned about the impact this proposal will have on raptor nesting and bighorn sheep migration and birthing; both of which could be negatively impacted.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	William and Patricia	Kratochvil		72	5	Regulatory Process	EA Content	We believe the Forest Service must analyze all potential impacts of the project which has not been done. This project could negatively impact the water supply of Rapid City.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	William and Patricia	Kratochvil		72	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Again we strongly oppose this project.	Comment noted.
	Greg	Sears		73	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The thing that scares me the most is the water sources getting contaminated.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Greg	Sears		73	2	Other	Access & Transportation	I do not like the idea of trucks and equipment driving by my cabin and destroying our cabins property.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Greg	Sears		73	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Because if it does turn into a gold company and not just an exploration company it will indeed ruin everything in silver city.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Greg	Sears		73	4	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	One problem you have is that no one feels like they know how the process works no matter how many information meetings you have.	There have been several opportunities for public engagement throughout the USFS NEPA process, as described in the Draft EA, Appendix G - Public Involvement Plan.
	Greg	Sears		73	5	Other	Public Health and Safety Water Quality/Water Quantity	There is not a good track record of trust here and that's part of the reason for backlash. What if the water is contaminated. What's your plan then. What if its such a small amount it's not noticed for 10 years and people have health issues from bad water, cancer, lung problems, you name it!!	Potential project effects on water quality are described in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Draft Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report. Potential project effects on public health and safety are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
	Greg	Sears		73	6	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	What if they file bankruptcy and have "no money" for clean up. Yes, I know it doesn't work like that but yes it does. Does the forest service have the money for clean up ASAP? What if the forest service funds get cut and you don't have money for clean up and it will be on the "honey do list."	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Greg	Sears		73	7	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I am requesting an extension.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.

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	Greg	Sears		73	8	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Request that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Greg	Sears		73	9	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Request that the Forest Service analyze all impacts of the project.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Greg	Sears		73	10	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Request that the Forest Service include and analyze all reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Greg	Sears		73	11	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Greg	Sears		73	12	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Mandated Tribal Consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Greg	Sears		73	13	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Laural	Bidwell		74	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose allowing any company to do exploratory drilling for gold in Jenny Gulch or anywhere else near Pactola Reservoir. While exploring for gold is not permitting gold mining there is no other purpose for it but to set up mines near our water supply should gold be found. So why allow exploration for something that is a threat to Pactola? I vote for the "no action" alternative on this permit request.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Charles	Glood		75	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I own over 100 acres inside this proposed area. I don't understand how this mining request can even be entertained considering they are proposing its operation in the area that provide our entire rapid city area with their clean water.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Charles	Glood		75	2	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	This is completely unacceptable. As a stake holder in this area I'd like to know if it is possible to meet with the forest service about this further to discuss.	There have been several opportunities for public engagement throughout the USFS NEPA process, as described in the Draft EA, Appendix G - Public Involvement Plan.
	Jake	Miller		76	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I've known about this F3 gold mine proposal upstream of pactola lake and the fact that you guys want to just let them mine is an embarrassing to the US forest service. You guys are a joke you don't do a damn thing for the black hills nothing but a bunch of sell outs.	Comment noted.
	Anita	Shearer		77	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I have hunted and fished this area for over 50 years, I am a define no on this idea!!! Life long South Dakota resident.	Comment noted.
	Buddy	Seiner		78	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My name is Buddy Seiner. I have been fishing in the Black Hills since I was two years old. Jenny Gulch, Silver City and the watershed leading into Pactola Reservoir, is a special place to many anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. The last thing we need is exploratory drilling by a mining company based in Minnesota. Please say NO to the Jenny Gulch gold exploration project and leave the Black Hills National Forest to enrich the lives of South Dakotans and the wildlife that call them home.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Blake	Hallert		79	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I wish to voice my objection to any exploratory drilling in Jenny Gulch and Silver City!	Comment noted.

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	Justin	Herreman		80	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Upon reviewing the Draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed gold exploration project by F3 Gold in the Mystic Ranger District it is apparent that a full EIS is the correct course of action for this project.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Justin	Herreman		80	2	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	As an avid user of the Forest for recreation including, hiking, hunting, fishing, and paddlesports I am a strong stakeholder in this project. The F3 project is not compatible with the 16 year old Forest Plan that was published in 1997 which actually prohibits this exploration project. The proposal to amend the plan and allow this exploration without a current Forest Plan is negligent and should not be allowed to proceed.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record.
	Justin	Herreman		80	3	Other Regulatory Process	Fisheries & Wildlife EA vs EIS	Due to the substantial impact to the area that includes bighorn sheep range, elk birthing areas, goshawk nests, and substantial intermittent streams an EA is woefully inadequate from an impact study standpoint and a full EIS is the minimum standard that should be met before this project is permitted.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Justin	Herreman		80	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The best course of action would be for the Forest Service to choose the no action option and not allow this gold exploration project to proceed at this time.	Comment noted.
	Justin	Herreman		80	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	The lack of tribal consultation is deeply concerning as well as this area has historical usage and there are many medicinal plant species in the riparian zone.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Elizabeth	Perkins		81	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed digging of exploratory holes in the Jenny Gulch/Silver City area. The potential environmental impact on the Rapid Creek watershed and Pactola Reservoir is too high a risk. As a nearby resident who depends on these water sources, I must object to this proposal. It is simply not been studied sufficiently to be deemed safe.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Marcus	LaVake		82	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It has come to my attention that there is a permit being requested for exploratory drilling in the Jenny's Gulch to Silver City area. Although I am not what you would call opposed to using natural resources, such as responsible forestry, and mining in areas of little environmental and recreation impact, I am highly opposed to activities that hinder recreation, clean water, and responsible conservation.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Marcus	LaVake		82	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I feel that 30 days is inadequate to properly examine this proposal. There have been proposed mountain biking trails that would benefit the community that have had more opposition than this drastic move, and have been subject to extensive environmental impact studies.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Marcus	LaVake		82	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My family, and extensive friend group enjoy the clean water in Pactola and the surrounding lands that have great bike riding, hiking, camping, hunting etc. it is the very thing that drew us into this area.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.

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	Ben, Christina, Jace, and Avalynn	Ullom		83	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not grant this drilling project. The natural beauty of this area is priceless and my wife and 2 kids take several trips to this area every year from Tea SD. We love hiking, fishing and would love to explore kayaking this area.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Caitilin	Kane		84	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	1. As a South Dakotan, I firmly oppose F3's Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Caitilin	Kane		84	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS Comment Period	2. A full Environmental Impact Statement is needed to assess the risk of drilling activity to our water, our forest, wildlife, and recreation. The assessment done is insufficient, relies too heavily on promises from the company proposing the drilling, and does not provide adequate time for comment; 30 days is far too short a commentary period for on activity that poses a risk of decades of harm.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Caitilin	Kane		84	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	3. The current Forest Management Plan (published in 1997) prohibits this drilling. This proposal to amend a Plan that is already 16 years past its last amendment (2005) is unacceptable and negligent. More than a decade of change on the Black Hills National Forest through fire, pine bark beetle infestation, and unsustainable logging practices is being ignored in the proposed "amendment" to allow mineral exploration.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Caitilin	Kane		84	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	4. The Forest Service has demonstrably not met its legal requirements for Tribal Consultation. Not only has there been a failure to complete mandatory Tribal consultation during the scoping process on this project, but the burden to initiate requests has been placed on Tribal officials on topics of cultural resources, sacred sites, and other issues that are mandated for consultation.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Caitilin	Kane		84	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife	5. Gold exploration just upstream from Pactola Reservoir in the Black Hills will have a direct, negative impact not only on water, but on wildlife such as the bighorn sheep, whose birthing area and migration route will suffer as a result of this pointless and short-sighted project.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS
	Josh	Dailey		85	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please stop this exploration. If allowed to proceed it will destroy a beautiful area as well as impacting the watershed for many people.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Kay	Schwandt		86	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, No, on the mining permit	Comment noted.
	Jake	Titus		87	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm emailing to express my concern and opposition to the proposed F3 Exploration Project.	Comment noted.
	Jake	Titus		87	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My concern is that the initial exploration has a large impact on the local watershed that is directly tied to Rapid City's water source.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jake	Titus		87	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	I also am concerned of the long term impact if the results yield evidence of gold. F3 would only increase their presence to establish a full mining operation with much more environmental impacts than the exploratory drilling.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	River	Junge		88	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE.	Comment noted.
	River	Junge		88	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I demand that the time to make public comments be extended!	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.

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	River	Junge		88	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This area is an area that is important to me as someone who enjoys the quiet and the natural beauty of this wild land as an angler and outdoors woman. So much of the Black Hills is already polluted with tourism and areas where people disrespect the land, water and wildlife… don't let this be another area that gets ruined too, especially for the sake of gold mining. This area is incredible, so beautiful and special, why ruin this treasure for the sake of more earth rape and money?! Please consider the importance and value of the land and water over the destruction and greed of a mine like this.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Jennifer	Kolbeck		89	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	You wouldn't REALLY let this project happen!?! Aren't people done trying to exploit the Black Hills?!? To rape it's ground and continue to let Big Business make$$$$?!?! The Black Hills has always been a special place in South Dakota to go to. I have been going there since I was a child. My husband and I stayed at Silver City before the Pandemic for our 40th anniversary too! Beautiful area. Leave it alone! Along with the rest of the Hills! We have also considered living out there when we retire and we keep marking off places to go because you have already ruined it with mining or logging or having the traffic of big trucks zooming by places like Wikiup, (that is not quiet anymore). Do not let this happen. "NO ACTION"	Comment noted.
	Marla	Cooley		90	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please refrain from allowing this gold exploration to occur. This is not fair to wildlife … there is so little left for their use now! Kindly protect this space for them and the likes of myself, partner, and family as we use this area for hiking, birding, and exploring also. NO GOLD DIGGIN' PLEASE!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Rochelle	Plocek		91	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the No Action Alternative to the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project. Pactola and the Rapid Creek Watershed are too important to all this kind of activity.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Rochelle	Plocek		91	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I also request you extend the comment period for public comment. This is an inappropriately short amount of time for enough people have time to evaluate the options and comment on such a significant action.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Peg	Torness		92	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my opposition to the Jenny Gulch gold mining project. This is irresponsible and negligent. We must protect our water and all natural resources.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Laurence	Pesek		93	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please stop this project, accidents will happen not if! Rapid City and the surrounding area depend on this water and no amount of gold will replace that. Stop drilling in our Black Hills!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Natalie	LaFrance-Slack		94	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As an outdoor enthusiast and Black Hills resident, myself and my three sons use Pactola Reservoir and Jenny Gulch for kayaking, hiking, swimming, and playing in the Hills. We are devastated to hear that, with such short notice, this area of our beautiful Black Hills could be taken from us. We need clean water in Rapid City. We need to keep the wild Black Hills for generations to come.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Kristen	Anderson		95	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The idea of gold exploration in the Black Hills is a travesty.	Comment noted.
	Kristen	Anderson		95	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Poisoning the water is a given if this project goes forward.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Kristen	Anderson		95	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Further concern is the lax oversight and wrong decisions by forestry management that undermines the Number One in goals for creating and protecting national parks and forests. The Number One Goal is protecting the homes of the other species we share this planet with: animals, birds, plants and minerals.	Comment noted.
	Kristen	Anderson		95	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please vote no on any gold exploration.	Comment noted.
		Trilby		96	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Rapid Creek needs protection from mining and other environmental hazards.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Dr. Greg	English		97	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the gold exploration project near Jenny gulch. There is minimal benefit only to those wanting to exploit the resource with huge risk to the downstream ecosystems that so many people benefit from. I have two properties in the black hills that I want my children to be able to enjoy in the future. Please say no to further dangerous gold exploration in the black hills.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

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Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	1	Other	Reclamation	Incomplete analysis within the draft EA results in no estimate of the maximum cuttings volume as either a portion of the disturbed area or for the proposed dispersal. Reclamation (para. 2.2.5) proposes to regrade the drilling pads to pre-project contours and return trails to pre-existing conditions. The cuttings were roughly estimated by us to be over 12 cubic yards per site. The reclamation, as described (Appendix A. Reclamation Plan, Drill Plans and Laydowns Reclamation), doesn't mention cuttings as part of the grading plan. Under the Operations section following Drill Pads and Laydowns Reclamation, cuttings and fines are just going to be dispersed.	The average drill hole depth across the proposed exploratory drilling program is approximately 1,000 feet; approximately 1.5 to 2 cubic yards of cuttings would be expected per hole depending on depth. Cuttings management is addressed in Section 2.2.1 of the EA. Spread drill cutting depth would be dependent on hole depth with most sites resulting in a spread drill cuttings depth of 0.25 inches; however some sites (holes up to 6,000 feet deep) may result in up to approximately 1.50 inches of drill cuttings spread across the drill pad. Although depths up to 6,000 feet would be authorized, very few holes are planned to extend to this depth; most holes would be drilled to a depth of approximately 1,000 feet.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	2	Other	Public Health and Safety	Analysis within the draft EA inadequately addresses mitigation for the release of sulfide and metal bearing deposits (para 3.6.3.2) due to dispersal of cuttings. Paragraph 3.7.3.2 describes the problem exactly as "extracted mineralized cuttings could … release acidity and/or metals to runoff or infiltration water." The EA, including Table 2-1, lists only on-site dispersal for drill cuttings and fines. In addition, paragraph 2.2.1 and Table 2-1 completely ignore the disposal of drilling wastewater (an industrial effluent which also must be characterized and classified for proper disposal). Clean up actions at similar sites, such as Gilt Edge mine, left South Dakota and US EPA with a tremendous and ongoing responsibility for mine waste cleanup and treatment of acidic drainage after closure.	Drill cuttings and used water recovery are described in Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA. Additional text has been added to Section 2.2.1 noting that thin-spreading and burying cuttings beneath the topsoil is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the Western U.S. Burying the cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Should on-site disposal in this method not be feasible, off-site transport and disposal may be required in coordination with the USFS. The text has also been updated noting the role of bentonite in isolating and confiding trace amounts of sulfur-based minerals.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	3	Other	Reclamation	On-site burial with native cover as proposed (Appendix A Reclamation Plan, Operations) is not a feasible or effective water quality protection measure. Burial should require landfill permits, air- and water-impermeable caps and long-term site monitoring. The types and amounts of soil available on location would be unsuitable for use as cover. A feasible and effective measure would be to move the wastes to a burial site that would prevent exposure as described in paragraph 3.7.3.2--as the wastes are generated. This practice would provide a measurable compliance objective, reduce sizing of on-site protective features, reduce reclamation efforts and, ultimately, minimize the migration of pollutants to water resources. Disposal of cuttings needs to be an operational cost, not a reclamation cost.	These impacts are discussed in Sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock would be buried on-site or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. Drill cuttings and used water recovery are described in Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA. Additional text has been added to Section 2.2.1 noting that thin-spreading and burying cuttings beneath the topsoil is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the Western U.S. Burying the cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Should on-site disposal in this method not be feasible, off-site transport and disposal may be required in coordination with the USFS. The text has also been updated noting the role of bentonite in isolating and confiding trace amounts of sulfur-based minerals. F3's cuttings management program complies with South Dakota state disposal rules. F3's cuttings management program also proposes the use of storage tanks instead of sumps to further minimize potential effect.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	4	Other	Reclamation	The Reclamation Plan should provide clear expectations for the appearance of reclaimed sites. The ambiguity of the language used in the Reclamation Plan "as directed by the USFS and State of South Dakota," "as necessary," "regular basis" and "open and regular communication with the State of South Dakota" does not constitute acceptable performance standards. The reclamation needs to cite a cost.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	5	Other	Reclamation Financial Assurance	The draft EA doesn't cite the design and costs for reclamation, or present a discussion on bonds. The reclamation bond is likely to be based upon a percentage of the costs for the designed reclamation. The setting of bonds for the purpose of reclamation must be high enough to provide incentive to recover the bond and, in case of insolvency on the part of the operator, provide USFS with funding to implement the reclamation plan. Cost estimates are complicated by unclear objectives and measures of completion and, in South Dakota, lawful monetary limits. We recommend a bond for 110 percent of the estimated costs of reclamation.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	6	Other	Reclamation Financial Assurance	USFS needs an independent government estimate for the reclamation bond and seek escrow or similarly effective method to guarantee recovery of bonds. System weaknesses for the setting and recovery of bonds subjects USFS to risk for assuming cleanup costs. A recent example involved the abandonment of 40 gas wells at the Spyglass Cedar Creek project in Harding, SD. SD required a bond of $30,000; $20,000 of the bond was liquidated by company officials when Spyglass went bankrupt. State officials estimated it would cost $855,000 of SD funds to close the well field.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	7	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The draft EA lacks the support to make the claim of para. 3.7.3.1 "Project activities are not anticipated to affect [surface waters]." As cited in paragraph 3.7.1.1, the project is proposed within the Pactola basin, a municipal watershed already "functioning at risk," with direct inflow from the project area to the reservoir 0.5 miles south. The activities must implement vigorous measures, throughout the entire project, to protect storm water runoff, surface waters and drinking water sources from acidic drainage, transport of metals and sedimentation. There are good practices mentioned in the draft EA, PoA and Reclamation Plan; however, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is needed to prescribe measures for the site operator.	A SWPPP would be prepared as required by project permitting.

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Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	8	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	A SWPPP is needed for management of all practices, plans and permits during the course of the project. An Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) Plan is needed, to include mapped locations of ESC features. Robust structural controls, storage locations, containment features and Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) practices will be needed to manage materials. Inspection and maintenance of controls will be required. Monitoring, sampling, reporting of monitored results and recordkeeping will be needed. Without requiring a SWPPP, the draft EA fails to provide for the establishment of effective protection practices.	A SWPPP would be prepared as required by project permitting.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	9	Other	Access & Transportation	The extent of disturbance described (Para 1.1, at 0.86 acres) is underestimated by at least 35 percent, apparently having been modeled using an eight foot wide trail over the routes of access. The width of a typical one-ton dually pickup is over eight feet. The wheel track might be less than eight feet, but the vehicle body and mirrors could not pass woody vegetation and boulders—removal of which will increase the earth disturbance. What are the widths of the water truck, the 10,000 gallon water storage tanks cited and the equipment needed to move them? Paragraph 3.2.4 cites 12- foot wide trails; the discontinuity needs resolution and extent revised accordingly.	F3's Plan of Operations requests an 8-foot access corridor for the company's proposed action (Alternative B). A 12-foot wide access corridor is identified for Alternative C to accommodate the more rugged terrain traversed compared to Alternative B, and a 12-foot access corridor width was used for calculating the disturbance area for Alternative C. F3 will be required to adhere to disturbance areas identified by the alternative authorized by the USFS as part of the NEPA process.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Kevin	Goyer	Colonel Brady Vaira	98	10	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Earth disturbance of this extent generally requires coverage and regulation by a state or EPA Surface Water Discharge permit. The draft EA does not mention what type of permit will be needed to regulate site operations. What discharge coverage will be sought to gain approval for and regulate the discharge of drill cutting fluids, dispersal/burial of cuttings, and operation/restoration of the earth disturbance? Coverage under an individual Industrial Storm Water Permit might be most appropriate. Monitoring and sampling at discharge points should be implemented for the purpose of proving the effectiveness of protective measures and the assertion of para 3.7.3.1.	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Terri	Sears		99	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am sending in my support to saying NO to the F3 Gold Project near Silver City, SD. My family and I have had cabins in Silver City for almost 50 years and are concerned about what the mining would do to the landscape and the are and any other negative consequences.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Eileen	Wahlstrom		100	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am very opposed to this project; too many environmental risks. This is not in the interest of the residents of the Black Hills.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Janet	Sohl		101	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The leading photograph is not Pactola, but rather Horsethief Lake near Mt. Rushmore. Facts are facts and that is not Pactola. You should know which photos are about Pactola, which is lovely and wonderful.	Comment noted. The Draft EA does not attribute this picture to the Pactola vicinity; it was taken during bat habitat surveys in the project area.
	Zachariah	Routt		102	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As an avid user and lover of Pactola reservoir, Rapid Creek and many surrounding areas, I completely oppose this project and believe it should be terminated!	Comment noted.
	Mary	Maisey-Ireland		103	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Pactola Reservoir is beloved for its beauty, for the recreational activities it makes possible, for wildlife it supports, and for the water it provides to area residents. It is no place for drilling. Please deny this permit. Let's not let the "camel's nose into the tent".	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Dace	Price		104	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support " NO action" on this drilling exploration project.	Comment noted.
	Dace	Price		104	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I request an extension for public comments.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Dace	Price		104	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Water and the precious Black Hills/Pactola area are too valuable to all of life to mess with. It is NOT ok, to damage our resources for Gold exploration.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Shana	Merchant		105	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The forest service needs to analyze all the effects of this and they have not. They also need ample time to do so. The environmental assessment is very vague and it effects the wildlife and drinking water for everyone in the community.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Shana	Merchant		105	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Just say NO, this is not what our hills should be used for.	Comment noted.
	Roberta	Hilliger		106	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please stop this.	Comment noted.
	Joy	Rehfeld		107	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The purpose of F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch Project is to make a lot of money, while potentially destroying, certainly harming Rapid City's water supply. The pristine forest and wildlife in this rather large area of the BH is invaluable. PLEASE DENY THIS PERMIT!!! So that future generations can reap the benefits that I have had the privilege to experience by living and playing in the beautiful Black Hills all my life.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.

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	Sylvia	Lambert		108	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A draft Environmental Assessment is not an Environmental Impact Statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Sylvia	Lambert		108	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Protection of various aspects of the environment (water, animals, birds, cultural resources with Tribal Consultation) is incomplete in this Assessment. How will Pactola Lake and Rapid City's and the surrounding communities' drinking water be affected? Gold mining uses a lot of water. What is the plan for new and used water? The Forest Service must analyze all potential impacts of F3Gold's Jenny Gulch project in order for the public to be properly informed.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Sylvia	Lambert		108	3	Other Regulatory Process	Statement of Project Opinion Financial Assurance	Because of these concerns, and the fact that mining companies don't take financial responsibility for the problems they create, —leaving us citizens with their impacts,— I oppose F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project, and therefore, ask for the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Susan	Scheirbeck		109	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Really? Mining? I know a lot of people and NO ONE is in favor of this. Please stop this nonsense.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Marcia	Dunsmore		110	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not approve gold exploration in the Jenny Gulch area! I would hate to have the recreation around Pactola marred by industry and I fear the repercussions for my drinking water in Rapid City.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Duane	Claypool		111	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I request that a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be completed as this project would significantly negatively impact Pactola Reservoir, drinking water for the city of Rapid City, recreation in the area, & wildlife.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Duane	Claypool		111	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	If an EIS is not completed then I urge you to select the No Action alternative for the EA as I oppose the project. My family & I have recreated (hiked, fished & boated) in this area numerous times & have a personal stake in seeing that it stays in it's most natural state. This exploration project should not go forward as it will negatively impact the area.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Duane	Claypool		111	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The current Black Hills Forest Management Plan prohibits this drilling. The Forest Service proposal to amend the plan that is already 16 years past it's last amendment is unacceptable & negligent.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Sherri	Struble		112	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	While South Dakota is my home state, I currently reside in Colorado. You're surely aware of past mining-related damage done to the Colorado River ... and all the mining-related threats that remain. Unfortunately for America's taxpayers, the mines that created the threats are no longer in business. Their owners took the money and ran (in effect). That leaves the EPA ... on your dime and mine ... left to clean up the mess. PLEASE don't allow the same danger to inhabit Jenny Gulch, Pactola Reservoir, and Rapid Creek.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.

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	Sherri	Struble		112	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	You have been placed in charge of protecting American assets. By performing due diligence ... > allocating sufficient time and resources for appropriate studies to be completed, < native and other populations encouraged to participate through opinions and partnership, and > applying sufficient weight to all that input you will have performed your duty with an excellence which can't help but benefit all.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Patrick and Anita	Lyden		113	1	Other Regulatory Process	Statement of Project Opinion Comment Period	We support the "No Action" alternative for the project. Think it is only responsible to extend the public comment period. We retired to the Black Hills in order to enjoy the out of doors--the beauty of the landscape and the abundance of wildlife. Hiking is our past time and we'd hate to have that ruined by gold mining.	Comment noted. There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Dallas	Abbott		114	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I would hate to see the place I call home trashed for some people to get gold. If it went through, it would destroy the beautiful creek and national wild life breeding grounds. Keep the hills clean and the gold industry out.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Erika	Olson		115	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to express my opposition to the F3 Jenny Gulch exploration project. I am concerned because of potential impacts to both our Rapid City drinking water supply and recreational resources of this area. We need to move beyond seeing only the extractive value of our forests. This is an important area for hiking, biking, water sports and tourism. This project would impact all of these in addition to those who live in the immediate area.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Peg	Christie		116	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I SUPPORT THE "NO ACTION" ALTERNATIVE.	Comment noted.
	Travis	Snyder		117	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Id ask that you would consider supporting no on the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project. The benefits of going forward with the project seem to benefit the few at the expense of the many. The potential for damaging our drinking water appears too high. The ecological benefits appear devastating in areas where this has happened and so much of our economy thrives on the Hills natural beauty. Please consider supporting no.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jane	Roseland		118	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly support the “No action alternate”. Please do not open up the possibility of mining in the Jenny Gulch and Silver City area. Let’s not spoil our own nest.	Comment noted.
	Richard	Waters		119	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It appears it would threaten Lake Pactola, the drinking water from Rapid Creek, and wildlife from the surrounding area.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Richard	Waters		119	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS EA Content	An Environmental Impact Statement must be completed. The Forest Service needs to analyze all impacts of the project.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3’s proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3’s proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in ‘determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact’ (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Richard	Waters		119	3	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Please keep me and all concerned taxpayers informed on these issues along with any decision on this F3 Gold Project.	An announcement of the USFS's Decision Notice on the project will be published in the Rapid City Journal, posted to the project website, and a postcard notification will be mailed to all members of the project mailing list.
	Dan	Schneider		120	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow this exploration it will destroy the habitat in the area. It will also possibly (probably) pollute the water supply for anyone along rapid creek drainage. A few bucks profit for a small percentage of people will have lasting damage for do many more. Please, do not allow this to happen.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Peggy Anne	Detmers		121	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We implore you to declare the NO ACTION alternative to the Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project.	Comment noted.
	Charles	Christie		122	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am greatly concerned about mining and the impact that will have on the water quality and environment.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Charles	Christie		122	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose F3’s Jenny Gulch gold project and support the “No-action” alternative.	Comment noted.

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	Charles	Christie		122	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The proposal to amend a Plan that is already 16 years past its last amendment (2005) is unacceptable and negligent. More than a decade of change on the Black Hills National Forest through fire, pine bark beetle infestation, and unsustainable logging practices would be ignored in the proposed "amendment" to allow mineral exploration.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Patricia	Braun		123	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please do not allow any mining around or close to any water source! Please do not allow this horrific, water using, water polluting, destructive industry into the hills anymore! That industry has done enough damage, please stop them.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Sammi	Kenzy		124	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do what's right and stop this craziness now before it's too late and the damage is done.	Comment noted.
	Cindy	Ireland		125	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in support of the No Action Alternative.	Comment noted.
	Cindy	Ireland		125	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I demand an extension of time for the public to be made aware of this project because I love our Black Hills and I see what projects like this have done to other parts of our beautiful country and how it upsets the whole ecosystem of the area.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Fred	Dieken		126	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As such, any resulting contamination from this activity threatens to impact the quality of the water in Rapid City since much of the city's water comes from Pactola Reservoir.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Fred	Dieken		126	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Additionally, the recreation and fishing activities provided by the lake risk being negatively impacted by mining activity in the watershed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Fred	Dieken		126	3	Other	Recreation	The National Forest is supposed to be a multi-use environment. This area is used for simple recreation such as hiking, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and related activities. It is also a favorite for hunters for a number of wild game species such as deer, elk, turkey, and mountain lion, to name a few. The traffic, general activity, and the disturbance of the forest to accommodate drilling will negatively impact all of these activities.	Potential project effects on recreation are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.3.
	Fred	Dieken		126	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Again, the traffic, general activity, noise, and forest disturbance would cause the sheep to look for new areas to inhabit, further stressing the population and lessening the number of lambs birthed yearly.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Fred	Dieken		126	5	Other	Access & Transportation	The road is not currently built to handle the heavy trucks and their traffic the drilling activity would entail. The peace of their homes would be impacted. The road would have to be reconstructed for the drilling and/or mining activity which also results in more unnecessary inconvenience for these residents.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Kim	Kenzy		127	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow this permit to go through!	Comment noted.
	Phil and vicki	Schlief		128	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are writing again to ask that a NO Action ruling is given to F-3 Gold for their exploratory drilling near Silver City.	Comment noted.

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	Phil and vicki	Schlief		128	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS EA Content	As we stated in our previous letter a full Environmental Impact statement should be done if a No Action is not permissible. For the following reasons: The Draft Environmental assessment is not thorough enough. This would directly impact Ospreys, Owls and Goshawks. I did not even see Ospreys listed on the EA. This would directly impact Elk and Deer. This would directly impact Big Horn Sheep. Not just on Sunnyside but Gorman as well. This could Impact private wells in and around Silver City. This could impact aquifers in the areas included in the drilling. This could Impact water in Rapid Creek and Lake Pactola, which provide water and recreation to thousands. Silver City road has many hills and curves that are already dangerous, adding heavy truck traffic will only make it worse. The road is in poor shape now. It will be difficult for the local Volunteer Fire Department to respond to additional calls for help relating to drilling activities.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources (including wildlife, water resources, and public health and safety) discussed in the EA. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species are likewise outside of the Project area. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Phil and vicki	Schlief		128	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We still have a real concern of a Minneapolis MN company that wants to explore for Gold hiring a Minneapolis Company to do the Environmental Assessment.	Comment noted. The US Forest Service vetted and approved the NEPA contractor for this project based on a review of qualifications.
	Mary Kay	Buum		129	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not even consider this project to permit gold exploration in the Jenny Gulch area!!! This is my favorite go to places for hiking, biking, fishing, camping and finding peace. The current Forest Management Plan (written in 1997) prohibits drilling and this is for good reason!!!. Whenever drinking water is involved mining and drilling should be avoided. You cannot put a price on the value of water. You cannot put a price on the beauty of this area either. I have been going there to renew and recharge my soul and spirit for 55 years. Please use the "No Action Alternative".	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	David	Ireland		130	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	The proposed exploration of a sensitive landscape for the purpose of gold mining is a travesty. First, it is economically nonsensical. As one who makes a living guiding visitors to the Black Hills, I see how much our natural beauty and wonder creates many jobs and brings in much revenue. This revenue stream is one that can last for generations if it is protected and valued. Gold mining irrevocably ruins the natural order visitors come to see. Secondly the proposal has the real potential of creating an environmental disaster for all life (including human habitation) downstream of this critical watershed. Former and current mining operations have been fraught with ecological misfortunes. And lastly, the project will benefit only the smallest percentage of people living in this area. Most of the proceeds of gold mining do not stay with the inhabitants of the area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	David	Ireland		130	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please refuse the permit for the F3 Jenny Bulch Gold Exploration Project.	Comment noted.
		Gmaenterprises		131	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	No to this!!	Comment noted.
	Katherine	Lauer		132	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow any gold company to have access to the Black hills.	Comment noted. The USFS administers exploration and development on the National Forest System lands under mining regulations defined in 36 CFR 228, Subpart A. USFS mining regulations state that, "operations shall be conducted so as, where feasible, to minimize adverse impacts on National Forest System surface resources (36 CFR 228.8). These regulations do not allow the USFS to deny entry or preempt the miner's statutory rights granted under the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 USC 21-54).
	Lisa	Carr		133	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support NO ACTION for the blacks hills gold project.	Comment noted.
	Lisa	Carr		133	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Please extend the time for others to comment on this.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Jolie	McCoy		134	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As long time resident in the Black Hills and avid hiker I would like to add my protest to gold mining and exploration in the Jenny Gulch area and Rapid Creek watershed. This area is a beautiful quiet area that is crucial environmentally for the Rapid City water supply as well as bird and animal habitat. Gold drilling operations would disturb that as well as take away the reason people love to visit the Black Hills — trees, clean streams, animals. Please support the no action alternative and give more time for public comment and environmental impact study.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Karen	Doom		135	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Why would we want to destroy or endanger the natural beauty of the Black Hills for corporate profits? Pollute our water? Destroy our wildlife? Deny the permit for the gold mining company! Protect our resources!	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	John	Gomez		136	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	In my opinion, the draft environmental assessment did not address the issues that were raised by concerned individuals in open houses and written comments.	As noted in Section 3.1 of the Draft EA, some resources were not identified as issues based on project scoping and review of the proposed project in the context of the environmental setting. As such, these resources are not discussed further in the Draft EA. As also noted in Section 3.1 of the Draft EA, a public health and safety assessment was not originally considered, but was added to the issues summary based on scoping comments.
	John	Gomez		136	2	Other Regulatory Process	Statement of Project Opinion EA vs EIS	I support a No Action decision or at a minimum a full Environmental Impact Statement.	Comment noted. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	John	Gomez		136	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	I have questions about the quantity and quality of water and air that may be caused by drilling holes that could reach depths of 6,000 feet. The private wells in our community draw from pockets of water at different depths which get replenished by water movement from long and unpredictable distances. The unique geology makes it so that adjoining neighbors may tap different water sources. By drilling a deep column, the water movement will likely be affected leaving previous voids filled with water while diminishing the output of other wells. This may compromise the quantity of water that households can rely on. Similarly, heavy metals and other unwanted contaminants may travel through this water column and affect the quality of the water.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	John	Gomez		136	4	Other	Public Health and Safety	Silver City and its surroundings have one of the highest concentrations of radon in the state and the country. Radon gets released from underground sources. As a gas, it can travel freely through the drill holes. Similarly to water, the gas can find fissures in the rock and travel to water or soil where it can enter homes. I suggest that the environmental impact statement studies this problem to determine the risk factors involved with the drill holes.	Radon can be a concern if it enters basements, crawlspaces, or other confined spaces; however, environmental radon typically does not pose an issue. Exploratory drilling is not designed to create new fractures or enhance existing rock fractures such that new sources of environmental radon would be introduced.
	John	Gomez		136	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The exploration drilling area is located in the large watershed that drains into Rapid Creek and the Pactola Reservoir. Exploratory drilling could impact the surface and ground water quality of local private water wells, and also potentially contaminate Pactola Reservoir.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	John	Gomez		136	6	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	If the USFS decides to proceed then I urge you to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement prior to any decision that would allow exploratory drilling.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Jerry	Munson		137	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Having toured the Gilt Edge Mine (as you know, a superfund site), I've concluded that peer-reviewed science doesn't support the notion that gold can be located and extracted safely in such a sensitive area as that watershed. The geologic formations are not dissimilar, and, therefore, risks are high for contamination of Ellsworth Air force Base's water, and for the City of Rapid City as well. To sacrifice a pristine water supply that our entire area depends upon for the foreseeable future (perpetuity if we play our cards right), in exchange for a limited and finite gold extraction scheme would, in my view, be foolhardy and shortsighted.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Jerry	Munson		137	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	To require anything less than a full-blown EIS would be, in my opinion, an invitation to disaster that your agency and the people of Western South Dakota can ill afford at this time.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their
	Justin	Almond		138	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "No Action" alternative for the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project for the Jenny Gulch and Pactola area.	Comment noted.
	Justin	Almond		138	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Having property in this area with a well, as well as downstream in Rapid City, this project could very well jeopardize our fresh water supply. This is the water source we all rely on and need for daily use. If this supply gets contaminated we would all be at a loss for fresh water supply.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Brennan	Ireland		139	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly support Option A - "No action" in this draft environmental assessment, denying F3's PO for exploratory drilling. Though this would not fulfill the scope of F3's project, this alternative is the only acceptable course of action to me, given the impacts listed in the EA, section 3.	Comment noted.
	Brennan	Ireland		139	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	From the issue statement in table 3-1 - "The project would require subsurface drilling which could indirectly affect private wells and quality of the water supply. The project could affect water quality in local surface waters through ground disturbing activities associated with access and drilling." This is an unacceptable risk to me, given the lackluster proposed impact minimization measures put forward by F3.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. F3 will be required to comply with all environmental commitments and stipulations that may be issued in the other permits with the State they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Brennan	Ireland		139	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Furthermore, this is a recreational area for many local South Dakotans and tourists, and the impact of mining operations in the area would negatively impact the quality of recreational activities in the area, which could have a negative impact on the tourism revenue, which is a key sector of economic growth for the black hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources (including tourism) are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Brennan	Ireland		139	4	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	The 30 day comment period is also ludicrously short for such a project proposal, and the method of dissemination in the Rapid City Journal is a dated and incomplete way to get the information to the public.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Brennan	Ireland		139	5	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	I hope that the Forest Service Mystic Ranger Station gives thought to this suggestion, and extends the deadline for public comment, along with alternate methods of engaging with the public, such as social media, and additional public information and commentary meetings.	Comment noted.
	Teryl	Cruse		140	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing as a South Dakota resident asking you to please not permit F3 Gold to do exploration in our beautiful Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Teryl	Cruse		140	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	This type of exploration would lead to disturbing Bighorn Sheep breeding and birthing grounds at the same time.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Teryl	Cruse		140	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Pactola Reservoir, which empties into Rapid Creek, is also THE main water supply for the state's second-largest community as well as many smaller communities along the way. Jenny Gulch is one of our most beloved areas for paddlesports, hiking, and fishing on Pactola.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Stephen	Farghali		141	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS Comment Period	I hope that the USFS will, at a minimum, complete a full EIS and extend the period for public review and comments by 30 days.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Susan	Ripple		142	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I want to register my opposition to any kind of mining in this area which impacts Rapid City's water supply. I repeat: No Mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Alice	Van Deusen		143	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	It is my understanding that there has not been a full environmental impact statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Alice	Van Deusen		143	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Requirements for Tribal consultation have not been fully met.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Alice	Van Deusen		143	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose this project and support the "no action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Bruce	Pengra		144	1	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	If I am not mistaken, this is prohibited by the current Forest Management Plan and would require that the plan which is in place be changed to accommodate the company which wants to do the exploration. Why have a Forest Management Plan and all the process that goes with it if all it takes to violate that plan is for some company to ask that it be changed?	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Bruce	Pengra		144	2	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Not to mention that there has been limited publicity and very inadequate time for the public to review the Draft Environmental Assessment and voice their concerns about this project.	There have been several opportunities for public engagement throughout the USFS NEPA process, as described in the Draft EA, Appendix G - Public Involvement Plan.
	Bruce	Pengra		144	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	At the VERY minimum there needs to be an extension for public comment and a better effort made to get full public input.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Mary	Gibson		145	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project, specifically because of water contamination.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Mary	Gibson		145	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I want to see an Environmental Impact Statement for the Gulch project.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
				146; included as part of Form Letter 2					
	David	Heikes		147	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed primarily because hard rock mineral mining and clean water do not go together.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	David	Heikes		147	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	I believe the project so far is just to explore and so these impacts may be minimal, but what is the purpose in exploring if not to locate minerals to extract and then to sell this information to a mining company? Why look unless you plan on allowing mining?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	David	Heikes		147	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Another issue has to do with habitat for osprey, big horns, and other species. Exploration may be disruptive and again the actual mining will be.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species are likewise outside of the Project area. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	David	Heikes		147	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Why in God's name, would you even consider a mining project in the watershed that feeds directly into Pactola and the drinking water for what, 100,000 plus people? The star of western SD. Why would you take the chance of ruining not only the water supply but also the beauty of the area as well as the loss of tourism? Why would you and the agency take such a risk? Just stop.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Pat	Shermer		148	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am very concerned over what I've been hearing about new gold mining in the Pactola Lake and Silver City area and the devastation it could do to our Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Pat	Shermer		148	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	It would be appreciated if you would extend the time for the public to know more about F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold project.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Pat	Shermer		148	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.
	Pat	Shermer		148	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	It certainly would be a huge negative for the bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Pat	Shermer		148	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	We also need an Environmental Impact Statement as to what happens following this project by F3 Gold, we do not want another Gilt Edge Mine!	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Jeffrey	LaRive		149	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This project, like every other extraction project in the Black Hills will leave a toxic blight that will never be reclaimed. It will leave long-lasting damage to the Hills. Clean drinking water is far more precious than gold. We can live without gold, we cannot live without water.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Jeffrey	LaRive		149	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	There is no rush to approve this project. The public should be granted more than 30 days to review the Environmental Assessment document.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Jeffrey	LaRive		149	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Service has yet to analyze the full impact of this project. This includes the almost certain negative impact on drinking water for a large area, the impact on cultural resources in the proposed area, and the potential disruption of the native bighorn sheep population. And last but least is the damage to recreation in the area. Lake Pactola and Rapid Creek in particular.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources (including water resources, cultural resources, wildlife and fish, and recreation) discussed in the EA. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Jeffrey	LaRive		149	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In conclusion I want to say that I support the No Action Alternative.	Comment noted.
	Carole	Risdall		150	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly feel the area around Rapid Creek near Silver City needs to be protected from gold exploration and potential mining.	Comment noted.
	Carole	Risdall		150	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow exploratory mining in Rapid Creek.	Comment noted.
	Larry	Lehr		151	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I would like to protect Rapid Creek watershed and the central Black Hills from damaging gold exploration. I move to have it designated a recreation area.	Comment noted.
	Linda	LeBoutillier		152	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I urge you to "take no action" on this project.	Comment noted.
	Allen and Vicki	Nord		153	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Jenny Gulch area has been a prized recreational area for me and my family for years. What the world needs now is to preserve these natural areas for future generations. What we don’t need is more gold!	Comment noted.
	Connie	Ryan		154	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I firmly oppose this gold project. I ask that you please protect Pactola Reservoir, Jenny Gulch and the entire Rapid Creek Watershed for our water, for wildlife habitat, and to preserve sustainable forest resources that fuel our economy and nourish our hearts and souls.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling to these resources are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Connie	Ryan		154	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	It is my understanding that the Forest Service has not met its legal requirements for Tribal Consultation.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Connie	Ryan		154	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The current Forest Management plan prohibits this drilling, which was last amended in 2005.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Eileen	Ohlinger		155	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not support this action. No action I feel is the only option.	Comment noted.
	Eileen	Ohlinger		155	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Putting Ellsworth Air Force bases water at risk along with Rapid City water supply is crazy. There is a long history of gold mining damage here along with established superfund sites. Why risk our pristine water for some individuals wants? With Ellsworth's expansion this should not even be an issue. How will this area support al the new people's needs? How??	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Eileen	Ohlinger		155	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	We have too much to risk with various wildlife habitat destruction etc.. The amazing big horn sheep here deserve our protection. They live and breed and have their babies in this area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Eileen	Ohlinger		155	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	There is enough scientific information out there about the hazards of precious metal mining to support no action.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Paul	Sauser		156	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	From the vantage point of an average citizen, it seems like big corporations can do anything they want with the resources we need. You are the people who can stand up for us and against their greed. Please stop them.	Comment noted.
	Lyn and Ray	Tysdal		157	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We definitely OPPOSE for all of the reasons previously stated!	Comment noted.
	Diane	Chamberlin		158	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please vote against any gold exploration by the F3 group in our Black Hills. We all know why this is unnecessary and puts our Black Hills watershed at risk.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Mary	Christen		159	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please stop with all the greed. Water is one of out most valuable resources. Clean water is the gold of all life on the earth. It is shameful that big business has carte blanche in South Dakota. Do not lose our most precious resource for the allure of gold mining in the sacred Paha Sapa.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jodi	Sugrue		160	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Allowing F3 Gold to drill in the Silver City/Pactola area would begin the destruction of all that is unique and irreplaceable about the area. I vehemently stand in opposition to ANY drilling/exploration/mining in this watershed area citing negative impact on wildlife breeding and habitat; negative impact on water quality; negative impact on community/tourism.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources (including tourism) are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Jodi	Sugrue		160	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Mineral exploration/mining has NEVER resulted in safe drinking water - ever.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jodi	Sugrue		160	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Lastly, the esthetics of the Pactola/Jenny Gulch/Silver City area would be forever altered with the presence and activities proposed by F3 Gold.	Comment noted. The Project would be temporary, as it is anticipated to last one year from start-up through reclamation. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Elizabeth	Zieglmeier		161	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My vote remains an emphatic NO, for all the reasons I raised in my earlier letter. I continue to be horrified that we are considering exploratory drilling in a major watershed that supports a growing population of tens of thousands of citizens.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Elizabeth	Zieglmeier		161	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Now, we understand that F3's activities could disrupt an important breeding ground for big horned sheep, a species we want to thrive in the Hills. Disrupting a breeding area and migration route would certainly undermine those efforts.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Elizabeth	Zieglmeier		161	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The draft EA is incomplete, making it difficult to render an informed opinion. It seems not to have evaluated all of the potential impacts of the F3 activities, nor has it adequately taken into account the input of indigenous interests.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Elizabeth	Zieglmeier		161	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Certainly a Environmental Impact Statement should be completed, and the USFS should analyze all reasonable activities to F3's proposed plans.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	name not provided	name not provided		162	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please don't let this destruction happen.	Comment noted.
	Caryn	Lerman		163	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose this project!	Comment noted.

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	Caryn	Lerman		163	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Peer-reviewed science does not support the notion that gold can be located and extracted safely in such a sensitive watershed. The geologic formations are not dissimilar, and, therefore, risks are high for contamination to Rapid City's water. To sacrifice a pristine water supply that the entire area depends upon for the foreseeable future, in exchange for a limited and finite gold extraction scheme to profit a small number of people is irresponsible!	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Caryn	Lerman		163	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	You hold Rapid City's, EAFB's, and all who use the Madison aquifer's and Rapid Creek's exceptionally clean water in your hands. That is why I am asking you to do the right thing & at least require a full-blown EIS. But ultimately deny any threats to our clean water for the people of Western South Dakota!	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Joyce	Sugrue		164	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Why should we go backward and allow industrial equipment, in these now pristine areas, which took so long to recover from prior abuse? Please say NO to the mining exploration project near Silver City, SD.	Comment noted.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am in extreme opposition to the F3 Jenny Gulch Exploration Project.	Comment noted.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	2	Other	Public Health and Safety	Going by the very poor map published (which I believe to be inaccurate as to where the boundaries lie) it shows the mining as close or closer than 2000 feet from our home.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on nearby residences are discussed in Section 3.9 of the Draft EA and Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The needs of one company do not outweigh the needs of the many: the forest, wildlife, flora and fauna, Pactola and PEOPLE in our area.	Comment noted.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	4	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	This company does not have a published history of clean up nor financial stability. If they go bankrupt, everything gets abandoned and the forest, wildlife, our water and more suffers.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	5	Other	Access & Transportation	The documents state all of the temporary road will be "brought back to pre- existing conditions." Take a look at the old forest service road off Fawn Drive. That has been closed for decades and it is not "back to the forest;" take a look at the USFS logging road on the east side of our property. Same. The damage that vehicles do will not magically go back to the forest once this company exits.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	6	Other	Public Health and Safety	Noise: in one of the published documents the company states it will be running 24/7 and the noise will be that of a refrigerator running. Baloney. When my husband plays an acoustic guitar on our deck, our neighbors 300 ft and further away can hear it. When I hike on the Forest Service Road and am talking in a normal voice, my neighbor on the corner of Deer Meadow Dr and White Tail Road can hear my voice (est 1000+ feet away). And even IF the drilling equipment could actually be that level of noise, what about the workers talking and yelling over the sounds of their machines/equipment? Their vehicles coming and going? Doors slamming? The back up beep of each of the machinery? The water pump will be noisy!	Potential project effects on public health and safety, including noise, are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	7	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	This constant noise will drive away the elk herd that is present. The deer also will be disrupted as well as the fox, coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, birds and so much more. When the ATV trail to the east of our house was opened without proper assessment, then closed in 2017, these animals lost their habitat for years, even after the trail was closed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	8	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	Will anything be mixed with the water when drilling? If so, the used water then is contaminated and the plan is to reuse it and eventually dump it.	In addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. Table 2-1 and Section 2.2.1 have been updated to more accurately depict this.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	9	Other	Botanical Resources Fisheries & Wildlife	The Mining Company states there are no threatened or endangered species affected in this area. During the process of getting this trail closed, there was an endangered frog, flora and fauna that were identified in the meadow by us. That should be in the documents from those meetings.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on rare botanical species are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix C - Botany Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on rare wildlife and fish species are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	10	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	In ND, farmers had well failures after oil exploration. We could certainly have similar issues. What about our quality of water?	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	11	Other	Recreation	With the planned "temporary" roads, we can expect an increase of recreational ATVs using them, too. We already have ATVs using chainsaws to dismantle the log berms; they ignore closed gates and "No motorized vehicles" signs; they not only ignore no motorized vehicles signs, but go off road and mow down trees (reported to USFS ~ no action taken after many contacts); they terrorize the grazing cattle.	Comment noted.

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	Jeannie	Bush		165	12	Other	Access & Transportation	Who is paying for the additional damage to Rochford Road? Who is paying to repair Jenny Gulch in order for these trucks to travel it? It is in horrible condition.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	13	Other	Reclamation	And who pays for restoration after the Mining Company exits?	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	14	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service has not met its legal requirements for Tribal Consultation. As I read, it seems the burden was placed on Tribal officials to initiate requests on topics of cultural resources, sacred sites, and other issues that are mandated for consultation.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	15	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Where is the Environmental Impact Study?	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	16	Regulatory Process	Project Description	Who will be the watchdog and protect our forest? USFS has three enforcement officers for over 1 million acres of land. They are not able to respond effectively now, what will they do with this project?	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental commitments issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental commitments and stipulations that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	17	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It is irresponsible to give this company a permit to drill, to allow all these issues to affect the forest, our water, our wildlife, etc, for a POSSIBLE 3% chance of finding gold.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Jeannie	Bush		165	18	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The current Forest Management Plan (published in 1997) prohibits this drilling. Why is this even under consideration?	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Eilan	DuToit		166	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I think we need to preserve the nature and water that makes the Black Hills the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Christine	McCurdy		167	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to comment on and oppose the proposed F3 Gold Mine exploration and potential mining activities. I also commented during the scoping phase of the project and have included those comments in the file attached to this email. While my previous comments stand, I would just like to reiterate my opposition to this speculative exploration activity. This kind of private gain done at public cost is destroying so much of what we Americans have enjoyed and held dear for generations. Regardless of what the F3 Gold Mine speculators claim, we all know that this activity will cause irreparable harm to our environment. And, if the past is prologue, the perpetrators will have no accountability for that harm. When F3 Gold is finished with its profit driven exploits, the American taxpayers and inhabitants of the Black Hills will once again be left holding the bag. Again, please reject and stop the F3 Gold Mine proposal.	Comment noted. Comments submitted during scoping were addressed as part of the EA; see appendix H in the EA.
	Christy	Tidwell		168	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose this project because of the threat it poses to Rapid City's drinking water, wildlife (including a bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route), tribal and rural communities, and recreation (for both locals and tourists). Local lives and economies are at stake and should be valued more highly than the profits of a private company from elsewhere.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources (including wildlife, cultural resources, and recreation) discussed in the EA. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Christy	Tidwell		168	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Short of denying this project altogether, I would request an extension to give the public more time to review the environmental assessment and to respond.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Christy	Tidwell		168	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS EA Content Alternatives Analysis Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Along with time to read this document, other steps must be completed, including an environmental impact statement and tribal consultation on this project. In addition, the Forest Service still needs to complete an analysis of all impacts of the project and of all reasonable alternatives.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Daniel	Heikes		169	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to you to ask you to not explore the option of gold mining in the Black Hills. This process is extremely harmful to the environment, those who use the drinking water in the area as it is usually NOT safe to drink when mining processes are involved nearby. Not only this, but it is sure to harm the tourist market, which is becoming a large part of the area.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources (including water resources and recreation) discussed in the EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Colleen	Wetteland		170	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	NO WAY!!! Please save Pactola Reservoir and Jenny Gulch! I live in CO now but I grew up in SD and lived in the Black Hills for over 20 years! We need to save these pristine areas for the wildlife and people's outdoor experiences, not to mention drinking water!!!	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources (including wildlife and fish, recreation, and water resource) discussed in the EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action.
	Janelle	Smith		171	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The beautiful Black Hills we live in are so special. There are very few places like this left in the entire world. The is minimal pollution, unbelievable wildlife, great fishing, hiking… the list goes on. Keep the hills beautiful. Please don't invade this land. Keep the waters clean!	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources (including wildlife and fish, recreation, and water resource) discussed in the EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action.
	Jace	DeCory		172	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to ask that you please protect the Rapid Creek watershed and the central Black Hills from damaging gold exploration. Do NOT grant a permit for any gold exploration or exploratory holes in the area surrounding Jenny Gulch and Silver City. This area is important for all seasons of recreation, tourism, agriculture and especially our drinking water.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources (including recreation and water resource) discussed in the EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action.
	Jace	DeCory		172	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Most importantly, this area is part of the Pactola Reservoir that provides the main source of drinking water to Rapid City, Pennington County and Ellsworth AFB. It is imperative that you decision-makers have the opportunity and responsibility to say NO to the potential pollution of this sacred resource. Water is life.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Dr. Liz and Harvey	Fayer		173	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My husband and I support the no action alternative.	Comment noted.
	Dr. Liz and Harvey	Fayer		173	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	We feel more time is needed for public comments.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Bob	Bush		174	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Once again I am greatly saddened by the attempt to exploit my Black Hills for the unacceptable, unproven benefit of a few greedy corporate profiteers.	Comment noted.
	Bob	Bush		174	2	Other	Reclamation	Any research into the past closed ATV trails, logging roads, etc. will show that NO reclamation efforts will restore the forest back to the original condition. Case in point, look at the "reclamation" of the Homestake Mine in Lead, SD and convince me that it's "back to original" condition.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Bob	Bush		174	3	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	What happens to the forest and forest dwellers when the company pulls out or goes bankrupt and leaves the landowners and Forest Service to pay for the cleanup?	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Bob	Bush		174	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	BUT, as a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe, my BIGGEST OBJECTION, my BIGGEST perceived INSULT is yet another violation of my Spiritual Sanctuary. These Black Hills are my place of worship, my church, the place I come to for finding peace and harmony and I find it EXTREMELY violating to have another attempt at exploitation while turning a blind eye to the sanctity of the area.	Details of religious use sites and historic properties are confidential and cannot be disclosed. See Draft EA Section 3.4.1, which states: "Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements." Details of all historic properties and religious use sites were fully disclosed to Tribal representatives during formal government-to-government consultation.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	John	Newland		175	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I have not a had enough time to adequately digest all of the 304 page Environmental Assessment and would ask that you please make an Extension so more people can review it properly.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	John	Newland		175	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Of primary concern is the impact this mining would make on the drinking water for our area as it abuts Pactola reservoir and Rapid Creek the main source.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	John	Newland		175	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	It is also my understanding that this area is vital to Bighorn Sheep as a birthing area and migration route. Bighorn Sheep have had a difficult time surviving of late and this would be even more detrimental.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	John	Newland		175	4	Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Tribal issues are also of concern with this project and haven't been adequately addressed.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	John	Newland		175	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS EA Content	Please at the least have an Environmental Impact Statement drawn up and have the Forest Service analyze all impacts this project will have on this area for generations to come.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	John	Newland		175	6	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	If there are any alternatives to the F3 Gold plan I am not aware of them but I cant see this project going forward without making negative impacts here.	The EA identified three alternatives: Alternative A, the No Action; Alternative B, the Proposed Action; and Alternative C, the Modified Proposed Action.
	Andrea	Stahl		176	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose F3's Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Patrick	Breen		177	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Patrick	Breen		177	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	At a minimum, an Environmental Impact Statement should be done.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Bert	Corwin		178	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	No to F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold project.	Comment noted.
	Gena	Parkhurst		179	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Christopher	Roth		180	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	First and foremost, these proposed areas are too close to Pactola Reservoir and Rapid Creek, water sources to many in the area, which should be reason enough to exercise more discernment on the issue.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Christopher	Roth		180	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I have read the Draft Environmental Assessment and feel it is not thorough enough. I would like to see an Environmental Impact Statement where:	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Christopher	Roth		180	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	1) more attention is given to the effects this mining would have on the area (the water, plants and wildlife, the trees that will be removed and the roads created to carry this project out) even in best-case scenarios;	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Christopher	Roth		180	4	Other	Project Description	2) locals can see a more clear and detailed map of exactly where F3 plans to drill;	Maps showing drilling locations are shown throughout the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Christopher	Roth		180	5	Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	3) the Forest Service and F3 can show they have consulted with Indigenous Native tribes in the Black Hills, and the results of those dialogues.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Christopher	Roth		180	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am asking the Forest Service to please recommend the "No Action" option to F3's proposal. I believe it is the right thing to do.	Comment noted.
	Mary	Stutz		181	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I want to state that I oppose the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project. I support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Mary	Stutz		181	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Please make an extension to allow time for the public to review the draft Environmental Assessment.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Mary	Stutz		181	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS EA Content	Please make sure that an Environmental Impact Statement is completed, and that the Forest Service thoroughly looks at all impacts of this project before making a decision.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Mary	Stutz		181	4	Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Consult tribes that should be consulted, and make all efforts to protect cultural resources in the area.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Kathy	Holliday		182	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I say NO to "F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project"	Comment noted.
	Kathy	Holliday		182	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	30 Days is not adequate time for the public to review the 304 page draft Environmental Assessment document. There must be an extension for this!	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Kathy	Holliday		182	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete making it impossible for the public to be informed.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Kathy	Holliday		182	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Request that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Kathy	Holliday		182	5	Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Mandated Tribal Consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Kathy	Holliday		182	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	A unique bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route would be negatively impacted.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Kathy	Holliday		182	7	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Service must analyze all impacts of the project. It has not done this.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Kathy	Holliday		182	8	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	The Forest Service must include and analyze all reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan. It has not done this.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Danielle	Downey		183	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly object to exploration and development for this Jenny Gulch Gold project without a complete and thorough assessment of the potential impacts.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Danielle	Downey		183	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	In short, the Forest Service has not analyzed all potential impacts of this project, therefore I support the No Action alternative for this project.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Kenneth	Hargens		184	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	There has been much excitement and mis-information caused by an organization concerned with the Rapid Creek watershed. I have sent them an e-mail informing them of the 'modern' methods of core drilling for mineral exploration. Methods that do not harm the environment and leave little or no footprint.	Comment noted.
	Mary	Hertz		185	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support NO ACTION on the Jenny Gulch gold mining permit.	Comment noted.
	Mary	Hertz		185	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	The Black Hills are a unique area worthy of complete preservation. The impact of such activity on big horn sheep, water quality and tribal sanctity needs to be fully studied and considered before issuing any kind of mining permits.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices; potential effects on water quality and bighorn sheep are both discussed.
	Michael and Charlotte	Marek		186	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Because of the possible long-term future impact, should this project lead to actual mining, we strongly recommend Alternative A, "No Action," as presented in the draft Environmental Assessment.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Michael and Charlotte	Marek		186	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Alternatively, a full environmental impact statement is needed to address the more limited assessment.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Michael and Charlotte	Marek		186	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As property owners and owners of a private well that we use for drinking water, we are concerned about the short-term plans for drilling. The proposed drilling depth of 500 to 6,000 feet has considerable potential to penetrate and contaminate aquifers underlying the project area and interrupt our water source and that of an estimated 80 private wells in the watershed. The only other water source in the area is a community spring available at "the schoolhouse" from a source ¾ of a mile up Sunnyside Gulch, which drilling or mining could also easily contaminate.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Michael and Charlotte	Marek		186	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	But beyond the current proposed exploratory drilling project lies the prospect of long-term mining development.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Ethan	Hudson		187	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	You must not allow this exploratory drilling project to continue due to the potential for severe impacts on people's recreation and well being. To do so would be terribly misguided and reckless.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Joyce	Payton		188	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Let's put the brakes on this proposal, we feel the best option would be to implement the No Action, alternative.	Comment noted.
	Joyce	Payton		188	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	If you need to have more discussion… please extend the time allowing for more public comments.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Edward	Martley		189	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Edward	Martley		189	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Do not grant this permit without further analysis and time for citizens to understand the potential effects of the exploration activities.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Taylor	Sperlich		190	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold exploration project.	Comment noted.
	Wayne	Hansen		191	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do not spoil our beautiful free flowing wonderful stream! Promises that there will be no impact are just empty words.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Heath	Ruml		192	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Against 100 %	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Bybee		193	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the proposed mining project. I am an avid outdoorsman and believe any mining in this area will have a decades long negative affect on our beloved Black Hills.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Donna	Robinson		194	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	USDA Forest Service, I strongly oppose granting permission to expand gold mining in the Black Hills. Water is more precious than gold.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Donna	Robinson		194	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS Alternatives Analysis	The Environmental Assessment Impact Statement is not even completed. When it is completed, it needs sot be specific and take in consideration all the shareholders. All reasonable and alternatives must be researched and considered before proceeding.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Rand	Schleusener		195	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please protect this area and reject the F3 Jenny Gulch gold exploration project.	Comment noted.
	Steve	Paula		196	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I would ask you to deny the request for this explorative project.	Comment noted.
	Steve	Paula		196	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining projects can and generally do affect the mentioned items.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Steve	Paula		196	3	Other	Reclamation	Mining companies have a long history of declaring their intention to remediate the land and watersheds, but in reality they fall short on this effort.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.

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	Kathy	Durrum		197	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The assessment is a step toward possible gold exploration just upstream from Pactola Reservoir in the Black Hills and a direct impact on not only water, but wildlife, such as the Bighorn Sheep birthing grounds	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	S.	Olson		198	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to exploration mining project.	Comment noted.
	Darrel	Sauder		199	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Why would you allow a Gold Mining operation in any watershed in the Black Hills? There is no way that an operation such as this is not going to negatively affect the downstream water shed. I am absolutely opposed to this proposal.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Sybille	Hanson		200	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I urge you to decline permission to allow exploratory mining near Rapid City's main water source.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jack and Linda	Antolic		201	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We feel a responsibility to our communities and to future generations to prevent this drilling in the Jenny Gulch area, which will impact our water, our wildlife, our livelihoods, and our communities.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jack and Linda	Antolic		201	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full Environmental Impact Statement is needed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Jack and Linda	Antolic		201	3	Other	Recreation	It is also imperative that a study of the economic impact this would create for recreation and tourism in the Black Hills be included.	Potential project effects on recreation are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.3.
	Jack and Linda	Antolic		201	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We oppose the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Scott	Ashley		202	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content Alternatives Analysis	I ask that the forest service analyze all impacts of this project and any reasonable alternatives.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Scott	Ashley		202	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I request that a full Environmental Impact Statement be completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Eric	Perrenoud		203	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Carolyn	Paluch		204	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My concern for our Black Hills is why I am strongly opposed to the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Project. I support the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Carolyn	Paluch		204	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content EA vs EIS	I believe the impacts of this project have not been fully completed.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Carolyn	Paluch		204	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	There has not been enough time for the public to review and submit comments on the document.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Cherlyn	Leach-Valades		205	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "no action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Cherlyn	Leach-Valades		205	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	The citizens of the Black Hills and this state need an extension to make comments.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Cherlyn	Leach-Valades		205	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining will create toxic waste.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Pat	Francis		206	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I have concerns about the effects of mining on the Black Hills. Unchecked, could another open cut be made in the name of short term economic gains?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Pat	Francis		206	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I believe that a complete environmental impact statement needs to be conducted.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Hannah	Francis		207	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I 100% oppose.	Comment noted.
	Hannah	Francis		207	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Hannah	Francis		207	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Hannah	Francis		207	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Would ruin a raptor nesting site/harmful to drinking water.	Comment noted. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jeff	Francis		208	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project and support the "No Action" Alternative.	Comment noted.

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	Jeff	Francis		208	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A complete Environmental Impact Statement needs to be conducted.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Martha	Leech		209	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am deeply concerned about the possibility of large scale gold mining exploration in the Black Hills.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Martha	Leech		209	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I think it is important that and Environmental Impact Statement be initiated immediately.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Lois	Facer		210	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold exploration project and support the "no action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Nancy	Smidt		211	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not grant a permit to drill exploratory holes in the area of Jenny Gulch and Silver City.	Comment noted.
	Tonya	Gomez		212	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I read the proposed project plan. Unfortunately, it doesn't address the concerns my neighbors and I have about water quality. Exploratory holes at that depth may have a negative impact on water quality. Please, conduct an environmental assessment prior to allowing this project to proceed. Doing so would instill confidence in those that live here that our reliance on groundwater is an interest that is also being considered by the federal government.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Suzanne	Stratford	Chuck Parkinson	213	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are writing to express our support for the "NO ACTION" alternative to the current Environmental Assessment document.	Comment noted.
	Suzanne	Stratford	Chuck Parkinson	213	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We are in support of conducting and completing a more thorough Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as well as other reviews.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Suzanne	Stratford	Chuck Parkinson	213	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The current Environment Assessment document is both incomplete and vague and does not allow ample time for public review.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Suzanne	Stratford	Chuck Parkinson	213	4	Regulatory Process	Comment Period EA Content	The current Environment Assessment document is both incomplete and vague and does not allow ample time for public review.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Suzanne	Stratford	Chuck Parkinson	213	5	Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	We request the following: The mandated Tribal Consultation; Review of how cultural resources will be protected	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Suzanne	Stratford	Chuck Parkinson	213	6	Regulatory Process	EA Content Alternatives Analysis	Forest Service analysis of project's impact and reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	We Request an Extension! – 30 DAYS is not adequate time for the public to review the 304 page draft Environmental Assessment document.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete making it impossible for the public to be informed.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This project threatens recreation, Lake Pactola, wildlife, and the drinking water for Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base, and tribal and rural communities.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We Request that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	5	Other	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Mandated Tribal Consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	A unique bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route would be negatively impacted.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	7	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Service must analyze all impacts of the project. It has not done this.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	8	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	The Forest Service must include and analyze all reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan. It has not done this.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Bita	Zahedi-Watson		214	9	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	WE SAY "NO" TO F3 GOLD'S PROJECT!	Comment noted.
	Robert	Koski		215	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Jenny Gulch needs to remain unaffected by mining period. Do not screw up the black hills with any more mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Pat	Fahey		216	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose the project proposed by F3 Gold, LLC and any representatives or affiliates and respectfully request a "No Action" be taken by your agency.	Comment noted.
	Pat	Fahey		216	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	If any gold or other mineable minerals are discovered, how will they be mined – Underground or surface? If mining operations are undertaken, where will the tons of trailing's removed in the process be placed/deposited?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.

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	Pat	Fahey		216	3	Other	Project Description	It states the Maximum footprint of each drill site is 2500 Sq/ft (50 feet by 50 feet). How will this be enforced to ensure it is not exceeded? I question their ability to get the stated amount of equipment in that space.	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project. F3's Plan of Operations would be administered by a USFS Minerals Specialist, and other governmental entities with permitting authority will be responsible for enforcing their permit conditions as they deem appropriate.
	Pat	Fahey		216	4	Other	Project Description	The letter states that all noted drill sites may not be required. What if F3 thinks they need additional drill sites in any particular location than what is noted on the enclosed map?	F3 would not be authorized to drill in any locations not evaluated in the Draft EA. Should F3 choose to add drilling sites in the future, it would need to be coordinated with and authorized by the USFS and may be subject to additional review under the National Environmental Policy Act.
	Pat	Fahey		216	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	It states "No mining, milling, or processing is proposed as part of this project." What are they drilling for then?	The project is a mineral exploration project. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Pat	Fahey		216	6	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	It also states that "no water would be sourced from Rapid Creek or other local SURFACE waters. "What about sub-surface waters that feed all the residences in the area? What "approved municipal or industrial source" are they referring to?	This has been clarified in the section 3.7 of the Final EA and Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Pat	Fahey		216	7	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There are a number of springs, streams, protected streams, and water impoundments within and adjacent to the proposed project boundaries. What assurances do the numerous property owners in the area have that all water sources will be safeguarded and protected from immediate or long-term effects from their drilling, trailing's, pollution from vehicles, etc throughout this projects duration? What about any and all negative pollutant sources entering the water sources for wildlife?	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Pat	Fahey		216	8	Other	Access & Transportation	They are proposing to use some trails that are currently restricted to 62" or less. Will they be required to comply with this restriction? If not, are they going to be allowed to widen these trails to accommodate their oversized vehicles? They should not be given any privileges beyond what is extended to recreational users.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. F3 will be required to coordinate access across USFS lands with the agency, as documented in Appendix B.
	Pat	Fahey		216	9	Other	Access & Transportation	They further state, "In addition approximately 4700 linear feet of 8-foot-wide temporary overland trails may be constructed....". Where will these trails be allowed? What does "APPROXIMATELY" indicate or allow? They also claim these trails will be "obliterated and returned to natural conditions after project completion". When is the completion date? How do you return land to its natural condition after removing large well-established trees and clearing the land for a road?	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Pat	Fahey		216	10	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The proposed area is a high traffic and use area for wildlife. How will the increased volume of traffic and disturbance of the wildlife be managed?	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Pat	Fahey		216	11	Outside of Scope Other	Mining Access & Transportation	Many residences are located to the immediate north and south of the proposed area to be mined. Our road district has to pay the Forest Service an annual fee for an easement of a very minor distance, approximately 100 feet that we constructed and maintain, to cross NFS property. Will F3 Gold be required to do the same for the miles of roads and trails they will be using?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. F3 will be required to coordinate access across USFS lands with the agency, as documented in Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report.
	Pat	Fahey		216	12	Other	Access & Transportation	Will F3 Gold be required to repair any and all damage or wear to roads and trails they will be using?	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Pat	Fahey		216	13	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	If the aquifer that feeds all the properties to the north or south is disrupted or contaminated as a result of the drilling or future mining, who will be responsible for that?	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Pat	Fahey		216	14	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	Is F3 Gold, LLC., willing to sign an agreement, prior to any drilling, exploration, or mining, that they will be responsible for and provide reimbursement to all upstream and downstream properties should they experience any negative fall-out from the proposed project? If they are not, then their motives and claims for no impact should be highly scrutinized.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	Pat	Fahey		216	15	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	For the above stated reasons, I implore you to move with a "No Action" and stop the proposed mining exploration of F3 Gold, LLC.	Comment noted.
	Sherry	Oswald		217	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	PLEASE don't allow the same danger to inhabit Jenny Gulch, Pactola Reservoir, and Rapid Creek.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Bradee	Beard		218	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, please do not approve this project!	Comment noted.
	Ross	Sailor		219	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to comment against the F3 gold project.	Comment noted.
	Brett	Gartner		220	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in opposition to the proposed Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project.	Comment noted.

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	Brett	Gartner		220	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS Comment Period	Is the USDA willing to accept that risk again today? I implore you to deny this request or, at the very least provide sufficient time for a complete environmental study and public review.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Carol and Kenn	Duncan		221	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are opposed to the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project because of its potential impact on wildlife, habitat, and our water supply.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Carol and Kenn	Duncan		221	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Exploration will lead either lead to more exploration in other vulnerable areas or to the implementation of mining plans that bring powerful chemicals and geological disturbances to the land.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Kerry	Greear		222	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Recreation in this beautiful area will be negatively impacted by mining. Our beautiful watershed may be seriously damaged and our water contaminated. Our family hikes, bikes, rides horses, camps and utilizes Pactola and Rapid Creek for water recreation. Gold mining would be disastrous in this area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Stan	Mueller		223	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	The mining industry does not have a history of improving or minimizing the impact to areas it extracts raw materials from.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Cindy	Skillman		224	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am urging the Forest Service to not allow the proposed drilling/exploration in the Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Cindy	Skillman		224	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife	In my opinion, the potential effects of the proposed drilling cannot really be known, particularly with regard to underground water. The impact that this exploration could have on drinking water for the local area residents and Rapid City is unknown. It also threatens recreation in the Pactola Reservoir area and may have an adverse impact on wildlife, particularly the potential impact on Bighorn Sheep birthing areas.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Cindy	Skillman		224	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation and the potential impact on cultural resources appear to be incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Cindy	Skillman		224	4	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft environmental assessment appears to be ambiguous and incomplete and as such the public cannot be fully informed about the potential impact of this exploration.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Cindy	Skillman		224	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	An Environmental Impact Statement should be done.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.

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	Cindy	Skillman		224	6	Other	Access & Transportation	I am also concerned about the potential for damage to the roadways and trails. The heavy equipment required for this exploration may worsen the condition of the roads and trails. The road expansion and use of existing trails needed for the proposed project will likely create more erosion and surface damage.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Cindy	Skillman		224	7	Regulatory Process	EA Content Alternatives Analysis	The Forest Service should analyze all potential impacts of this project and analyze and include all reasonable alternatives to this planned exploration.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Kris	Dahl		225	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow any more mineral (gold) exploration, drilling, nor mining in the Black Hills.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Jim	Rankin		226	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing in support of F3 Gold's proposed mineral exploration project in the Jenny Gulch/Silver City area, and in support of the findings of the draft EA conducted by USFS.	Comment noted.
	Jim	Rankin		226	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The draft EA has provided an exceptionally thorough review of a small-scale exploration drilling project and has helped identify low-level, temporary impacts associated with exploration activities, as well as ways in which to minimize potential impacts. For this reason, I am happy to support the findings of this draft EA.	Comment noted.
	Jim	Rankin		226	3	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	While temporary disturbance and effects were identified for several issue areas in the draft EA, three were no significant or long-term impacts identified for Alternative C. Furthermore, Alternative C includes specific project adaptations to minimize the potential impacts which were identified.	Comment noted. NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Carol	Panerio		227	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support no action on the Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project. The public needs to have opportunity for input on this, as most people want to protect our water and the beauty of the Black Hills, and in particular this lovely area. Let's allow the public's desire for long term good to weigh in on this decision.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. There have been several opportunities for public engagement throughout the USFS NEPA process, as described in the Draft EA, Appendix G - Public Involvement Plan.
	Trudy	Severson		228	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We oppose F3's Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Shawn	Walters		229	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow the drilling. It will degrade our watershed.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jeff	Willett		230	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a resident of the Black Hills, I find absolutely no positive value in allowing further mineral exploration in the Black Hills and only potential degradation of the environment (with the Forest Service seems to disregard). I strongly request the No Action decision on the pending permit application.	Comment noted. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Barbara	Morris		231	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am adamantly against mining in the Black Hills.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Mary	Burrows		232	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Given the potential hazards to local waters created by gold mining in the Black Hills, I support the NO ACTION alternative to this permit.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Joanna	Whitehat		233	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "No Action" alternative!	Comment noted.
	Naidine	Adams		234	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, no more mining exploration in the Black Hills. I support the "No Action" alternative to the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project. The water quality locally is already compromised enough.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Keith	Bartels		235	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am extremely concerned with the proposed mining activity in the Jenny Gulch area, and with the US Forest Service's draft Environmental Assessment thereof.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Keith	Bartels		235	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Under the Forest Service's Plan Direction, Goal 3, it states it is to "provide for sustained commodity uses, including mineral resources, in an environmentally acceptable manner". I submit to you that there is NO mining activity that has ever been done or ever will be done in an environmentally acceptable manner".	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Keith	Bartels		235	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In summary, I wish to register my objections to the proposed activity, and I urge the United States Forest Service, which is supposed to represent all of the citizens of the US, to reject this proposal, and issue a "No Action" ruling.	Comment noted.
	Suzan	Nolan		236	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I would like to register my strong objection to the proposed mining by a Canadian company in and around Jenny Gulch and Silver City, This is a travesty to the Black Hills and especially this delicate eco-system upon which we in Rapid City and along the creek rely for our water. Please do what you can to stop this dangerous mining plan. It is ill conceived with money as the only motive and it is dangerous to the lives of people who rely on this water as well as the Black Hills, its animals, it as a recreation place and the beauty of this area that will be affected by this mining. Please do not let this happen.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Jan	Dietrich		237	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Just a note to say no to this proposal. We need our fresh water they can get along without the gold they might recover. So no no no.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Royce and Lana	Huber		238	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are writing to express our opposition to granting the mining exploration permit requested by F3 Gold.	Comment noted.

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	Karla	Deuter		239	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The Environmental Impact Statement isn't complete.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Karla	Deuter		239	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm supporting the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.
	Kathy	Rick		240	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against the F3 Gold project.	Comment noted.
	Kathy	Rick		240	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The Environmental Impact Study is not completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Brian	Olson		241	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I humbly request a "No Action" determination on the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Drilling Project.	Comment noted.
	Brian	Olson		241	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Once exploratory drilling is complete it will be next to impossible to stop mining development in the Central Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Brian	Olson		241	3	Other	Public Health and Safety	As a First Responder with the Silver City VFD I can guarantee increased medical and fire calls with drilling operations in the area. The increase in large vehicles, traffic congestion and accidents will sadly translate into more injuries, fatalities and forest fires.	Comment noted. Potential project effects on public health and safety, including emergency response, are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
	Brian	Olson		241	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	I worry about historical sites and artifacts being destroyed by drilling operations. If active mining operations begin, based on exploratory drilling, local historical sites and artifacts will be lost forever.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. See Draft EA Section 3.4.1, which states: "Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements."
	Brian	Olson		241	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	We need a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) done! Mining operations always affect the local water supply.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.

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	Brian	Olson		241	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The life of deer, elk, big horn sheep, Osprey, turkey and many other animals would be completely disrupted as there, and our, environment is changed forever.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species are likewise outside of the Project area. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Tim	Deuter		242	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to add my voice to the many that oppose the F3 Gold Project.	Comment noted.
	Tim	Deuter		242	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content EA vs EIS	In addition to an incomplete and vague Environmental Impact Statement, the fact that not all potential impacts of the project have been looked at and analyzed is concern enough to support the "No Action" alternative.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Julie	Emerson		243	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I believe nothing should be allowed in the area without a full environmental impact statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Christy	Heacock		244		Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the Jenny Gulch exploratory mining project.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Richard	Emerson		245	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	After reviewing the Draft EA, I am against the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project and support Alternative A – No Action.	Comment noted.
	Richard	Emerson		245	2	Other	Project Description	Alternative B should not be approved, as it conflicts with not only specific uses of land under the Management Areas, but also F3's estimates seem inaccurate. Alternative B claims a maximum footprint of 2500 square feet for each drill site. This equates to a 25 foot by 25 foot pad – hardly realistic – considering this is "where the drilling rig, rod tray, support vehicles, portable cutting tank, and water truck will be placed". The drilling rig alone is likely at least 25 feet long… When sizes of the proposed equipment are extrapolated, F3's footprint calculations appear misleading.	A 25' by 25' drill pad would result in a 625 square foot pad area. F3's drill pads are proposed to occupy a 2,500 square foot area, which is sufficient for the proposed work. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project. F3's Plan of Operations would be administered by a USFS Minerals Specialist, and other governmental entities with permitting authority will be responsible for enforcing their permit conditions as they deem appropriate.
	Richard	Emerson		245	3	Other	Access & Transportation	Also, a number of the access "roads" do not appear to be existing USFS roads, but old tracks and/or trails not for MVUM all vehicle use. F3 states the temporary overland trails and/or temporary access routes will be 12-feet wide. This access road maintenance would necessitate considerable impact and should be incorporated in F3 Gold's total footprint calculations. These true footprints would create additional environmental effects.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Richard	Emerson		245	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The Fisheries and Wildlife section does not appear to be inclusive, as nesting for Osprey and the like are not addressed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Osprey are not considered a MIS, SOLC or R2 Sensitive species, so the osprey is not specifically discussed in Appendix D. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Richard	Emerson		245	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The impact on Water Influence Zones seems to be a much greater risk than presented. Please see comment earlier about 12-foot wide roads. Also, the comment "the WIZ may be crossed during frozen conditions" does not provide much assurance that it will be nor is it necessarily enforceable.	Comment noted. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.

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	Richard	Emerson		245	6	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Many of the same arguments against Alternative B apply to Alternative C. While Alternative C shares it added additional minimization measures, it in fact tweaks or moves the impacts – not alleviates the impacts. Access roads in WIZ are improved, drilling sites border WIZ, and five more drilling sites are added.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Richard	Emerson		245	7	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	If the project is to go forward, I believe an Environmental Impact Statement is warranted to fully address the project's impact on all resources.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	John and Arnis	Knutson		246	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We are definitely AGAINST the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch project and any possible mining that may follow.	Comment noted.
	John and Arnis	Knutson		246	2	Regulatory Process	Land Use	As land owners on Sunnyside Gulch, we are concerned about: 1. property values going down.	Comment noted. The Project is temporary in nature and is anticipated to last one year from start-up through reclamation. As such, effects to property values were not analyzed in detail.
	John and Arnis	Knutson		246	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Access & Transportation	As land owners on Sunnyside Gulch, we are concerned about: 2. water quality and loss of flow in our private wells and 3. the diminished condition of our roads.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Priscilla	Massey		247	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to voice my strong and most sincere opposition to F3 Gold's mining proposal in the Silver City area.	Comment noted.
	Priscilla	Massey		247	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	It is unconscionable to me that the US Forest Service, whose mission is "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forest and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations", would allow this to proceed without doing an Environmental Impact Study.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Traci, Dave, and Chance	Leliaert		248	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We support the "no action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Cheryl and Roger	Rowe		249	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Since the F3 exploratory drilling will be done within our watershed we strongly oppose this project.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Cheryl and Roger	Rowe		249	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Besides just drilling the thought of having a large gold mine operation at the headwaters to our watershed is unnerving.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Cheryl and Roger	Rowe		249	3	Other	Project Description	We are concerned for whether the project will be monitored and by whom? Who pays for the monitoring of the project, while it is being executed, and after? And for how long?	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project. F3 is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service. F3's Plan of Operations would be administered by a USFS Minerals Specialist, and other governmental entities with permitting authority will be responsible for enforcing their permit conditions as they deem appropriate. Sites will be monitored for a minimum of three years after reclamation.
	Cheryl and Roger	Rowe		249	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Since there are other heavy metals contained within gold deposits and in the Black Hills in general, the concern is also, how the water that is used, will be contained and processed. Will it be left to evaporate? Later leaching heavy metals into the waterway?	As stated in Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA, drill cuttings and used water would be recovered and collected in tanks at the drill site. Settlement would be used to separate the cuttings, allowing the water to be reused in the drilling process. Upon completion of a drill hole, the cuttings would be either buried beneath the topsoil or transported off-site to an approved disposal location.
	Cheryl and Roger	Rowe		249	5	Other	Access & Transportation	Who will pay for the roads to lead to the F3 project, and who will pay for the maintenance after F3 abandons the project?	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.

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	Cheryl and Roger	Rowe		249	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	How will it disrupt the wildlife? What is the cost for the additional monitoring of wildlife in the area?	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Marilyn	Limaster		250	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am deeply concerned about the possibility of large scale gold mining exploration in the Black Hills.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Marilyn	Limaster		250	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	As the Forest Service is aware of this impeding action, I think it is imperative that an Environmental Impact Statement be initiated immediately.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Marilyn	Limaster		250	3	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	If the F3 Gold project is permitted to pursue their gold exploration, it would definitely have a negative and permanent affect on the precious water in Pactola dam, and that certainly is a chance we do not want to take.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jakob	Alonzo		251	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I feel that mining would muddy the waters, destroy fish habitat, and could destabilize the quality of water put out. I vote no on allowing any mining on our lakes.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Anthony	Fresquez		252	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, do not approve drilling of the Jenny Gulch area for gold exploration.	Comment noted.
	Anthony	Fresquez		252	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Water is a vital resource for all living essences-human, mammals, fish, birds, plants, etc. The resource is limited and diminishing at a rapid rate. The drilling process appears to be benign, but is deceiving. Almost any impact on potable water is critical based on the reality that some potential damaging results may never be repairable to the detriment of a limited necessary life essential, water.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Kelsey	Chaloupka		253	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Water is life. We need to keep it as pure as we can. We need rapid creek an pactola for our life.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Nicole	Niemann		254	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Here is an example of an area where they allowed exploratory drilling, and now that precious metals have been found, have a larger problem on their hands. Why open a Pandora's box? I support the no action F3 gold.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Cathy	Thrash		255	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I think we all know what an "exploration project" would turn into: mining, or fracking, or more crazy desecration of our beautiful Black Hills. And I'm not even talking about what it would do to the water!	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Cathy	Thrash		255	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please consider this my formal request for NO ACTION in regards to this project.	Comment noted.
	Cathy	Thrash		255	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	And at the same time, a request for MORE TIME for public comment.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Joan	M		256	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This is our water supply at risk…NO	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Michael	wheaton		257	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please block this effort that would risk the future of the Rapid Creek watershed. Pactola and Rapid Creek are priceless and the thousands of people who will be affected now and into the future if this all goes wrong should not have to pay the price in lost opportunity and destruction of such a special place.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Kerry	Papendick		258	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I feel a full environment impact study needs to be completed and reported to the public prior to the approval process even beginning.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Kerry	Papendick		258	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	The Jenny Gulch area is crucial to the water supply of the Black Hills population. Gold mining would be detrimental to keeping our water pure and available to the region.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Mary	Braley		259	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Performing drill holes have one goal: to locate precious metals. Which in turn leads to the desire to mine these metals. Pactola reservoir, Rapid Creek watershed and local resident water wells would be at risk of mining pollutants. Mining historically creates significant risk of water contamination.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Debbie	Renner		260	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to the Jenny Gulch Gold Project that will threaten our water supply, wildlife, and recreation.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Debbie	Renner		260	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We also need a full environmental impact statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Debbie	Renner		260	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	At the very least please extend the comment period, 30 days is not enough to review the draft.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Aaron	Ashley		261	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I've read the articles regarding this mining operation, and it seems to me there is too much risk associated to make any potential revenue for the forest service worth it.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Aaron	Ashley		261	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please do not allow mining operations to start up in our backyard, the risks are too great and the potential failures too numerous.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Emily	Ashley		262	1	Outside of	Mining	I am opposed to mining for gold in this area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Francis	Effenberger		263	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	NO	Comment noted.
	William	Young		264	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing today in vehement opposition to any mining activity in the Rapid Creek watershed.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Chastity	Jewett		265	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Please protect the water in the Black hills by proactively analyzing all impacts of this project. You have not done that yet.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Chastity	Jewett		265	2	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	The FS must include and analyze all reasonable alternatives? You have not done it.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.

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	Chastity	Jewett		265	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Is there an EIS? No? Then do one!	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Chastity	Jewett		265	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The project impacts recreation, wildlife, and drinking water. Don't do it.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jan	Humphrey		266	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please STOP this advance on the water quality of the Black Hills. Water is Life and we all need a resource that is untouched or contaminated. Is the price of gold so important to the advancement of humankind? It is not and our water supplies do not need to be assaulted. I am against anything that even looks like it could harm our supplies.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Helen	Tjader		267	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing regarding the Jenny Gulch Gold Project to express my preference for the No Action Alternative.	Comment noted.
	Helen	Tjader		267	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	There should be a full Environmental Impact Statement should an option to move forward be approved.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Sherry	Oyler		268	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	This project at the very least demands extensive environmental studies which have not been completed!	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Sherry	Oyler		268	2	Other	Public Health and Safety	Also, several private homes and landowners live adjacent to this area and built here to enjoy the peaceful, quiet surroundings of the Black Hills, not to have drilling for gold in their backyards and all that would come with this type of activity.	Comment noted.
	Sherry	Oyler		268	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm supporting the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.
	Doyle	Stern	Arlene Stern	269	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We oppose any drilling in the Pactola, Jenny Gulch area.	Comment noted.
	Michael	Brand		270	1	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	It is my recommendation that consideration of the application for gold exploration by F3 Gold, LLC, should be deferred until such time as the Black Hills National Forest Management Plan revision is completed.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Michael	Brand		270	2	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The application by F3 Gold, LLC, is premature and appears to be an attempt to complete their exploration application process/exploration before the Forest Plan enters the revision process. Approving their application at this time would only add a level of confusion to the future of gold mining and exploration under the Revised Forest Plan.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Michael	Brand		270	3	Other	Project Description	Exploration drilling as proposed up to 6,000 feet will require drilling fluids. What is the chemical composition of the drilling fluids?	It is acknowledged that, in addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. Table 2-1 and Section 2.2.1 have been updated to more accurately depict this.
	Michael	Brand		270	4	Other	Project Description	Will the exploration wells be cased and if so, how will the casing be sealed to prevent migration of fluids?	See Table 2-1 of the Draft EA, where this is discussed.
	Michael	Brand		270	5	Other	Project Description	Will a closed loop system be used for drilling (i.e. no on-site ponds or disposal of fluids or cuttings)?	See Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA where this is discussed.
	Michael	Brand		270	6	Other	Project Description	Drilling up to 100 holes on 47 drill pads will create a large amount of drill cuttings. What is the plan for offsite disposal of the drill cuttings?	See Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA where this is discussed.

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	Michael	Brand		270	7	Other	Reclamation	Has "due diligence" been completed on the company itself? If so, what were the results of the "due diligence" review? Since F3 Gold is an LLC, who would be liable for plugging and reclamation if F3 Gold were to default?	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Michael	Brand		270	8	Other	Reclamation	The $20,000 bond offered to the State of South Dakota for plugging and reclamation is only in the amount that would be needed to plug and reclaim a single well pad. If F3 Gold, LLC, were to abandon more than a single well pad without reclamation, how has the liability for plugging and reclamation been addressed?	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Michael	Brand		270	9	Other	Project Description	Will plugging and reclamation be required sequentially as new exploration wells are drilled? Plugging and reclamation should occur sequentially and not be delayed until the entire exploratory project is completed.	See Section 2.2.5, Table 2-1, and Table 2-2 of the Draft EA, where this is discussed.
	Michael	Brand		270	10	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	In light of the Forest Plan Revision process that is being initiated I feel strongly that consideration of this application should be delayed to allow the Plan Revision process to proceed unencumbered by the obvious intent of F3 Gold, LLC, to find and mine gold in the Jenny Gulch area.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Michael	Brand		270	11	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	At a minimum, the complexity of this project should require an Environmental Impact Statement so that the implications of the entire project to the surrounding area and future impacts can be addressed. To only conduct the short term Environmental Assessment without looking at broader scope of the project is short sighted.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Andrea	Fountain		271	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As someone who drinks water, baths with water, relies on water for my livelihood and identifies as a recreationist, conservationist, and naturalist, I am STRONGLY against exploratory drilling in the Rapid Creek watershed for these reasons:	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Andrea	Fountain		271	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Hardrock mining is a source of toxic pollution. There is a strong chance that ALL of the drinking water for the Black Hills region's most populated area (Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base, etc) WILL BE AFFECTED.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Andrea	Fountain		271	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	The Black Hills National Forest is already heavily impacted due to logging, motorized vehicle use, and new housing developments. Wildlife are left with fragments of habitats, mining will only increase that. It will not be shocking if populations of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish, and plants will decline in the region, and potentially become endangered or worst if we continue to overuse their HOME. Yes, they say there are no endangered species in that area as of now. That could all change if mining was allowed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Andrea	Fountain		271	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Black Hills are sacred to MANY native tribes who are the original caretakers. White settlers have moved in and have decimated, raped, and pillaged the Black Hills with mining and logging. This is an opportunity for the Forest Service to act as land stewards and make up for many years of mismanagement.	Comment noted.
	Andrea	Fountain		271	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	The economic benefits do not outweigh the potential negative environmental risks if the exploratory project does find gold to mine.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Andrea	Fountain		271	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Sincerely and passionately please do not allow exploratory drilling in Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Steven	Gilliland		272	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	This project at the very least demands extensive environmental studies which have not been completed!	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Steven	Gilliland		272	2	Other	Public Health and Safety	Also, several private homes and landowners live adjacent to this area and built here to enjoy the peaceful, quiet surroundings of the Black Hills, not to have drilling for gold in their backyards and all that would come with this type of activity.	Comment noted.
	Steven	Gilliland		272	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I'm supporting the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.
	JT	Fischman		273	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please note my opposition to this proposal for exploration.	Comment noted.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	1	Other	Project Description	The Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project Draft Environmental Assessment (hereinafter referred to as "Project EA") summary excludes critical information about the overall size of the Project area. While several sections make mention of Management Areas (MA) in terms of the number of acres included in the Project area, there is no clear indication of the total acreage or size of the Project.	The Project area, as shown on Draft EA figures, is approximately 1,737 acres in size; impacts associated with each alternative are significantly smaller than this acreage.

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Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	2	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need	In Section 1.2, the Purpose of the Project ("…to identify the geological resources located with the Project area.") is clearly stated but far too narrowly defined. Clearly, the Purpose of the Project is to identify mineral resources for potential extraction (mining) and sale—not simply to determine if the resources are there. The "Need" for the Project is not directly addressed. Instead, the EA indicates that the Need "relates to F3's statutory right to access its mineral lease areas for exploration purposes."	Comment Noted. The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	3	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need	DRA contends that the existence of statutory rights of mineral lease holders do not, in themselves, constitute a need to exercise those rights in specific ways or at specific times. Therefore, we conclude that Need for the Project has not been stated or demonstrated in the Project EA.	Comment Noted. The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	4	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	DRA contends that given the current Forest Plan revision underway, this Project should not be considered, much less allowed to progress, until that revision process is completed.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	5	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Additionally, the Project EA identifies Alternatives which would require amendment to the current, outdated Forest Plan—a path that should not be considered or implemented during an ongoing Forest Plan Revision process.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	6	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need	DRA contends that, considering the more fully realized Purpose of the project considered above—that is, not only the identification, but the extraction and sale of minerals from the Project Area—that the Project is in direct conflict with the stated objective.	The purpose of the EA is to analyze the potential effects associated with exploratory drilling for each of the three alternatives. What F3 does with the material they extract is outside of the scope of the EA.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	7	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Jenny Gulch, a direct tributary of Pactola Reservoir and of Rapid Creek, is a critical watershed area not only for the economic growth of South Dakota's second-largest city (Rapid City) as well as surrounding communities, but also for Ellsworth Air Force Base, east of Rapid City. As such, exploration and production of mineral resources in this critical and sensitive watershed area, due to its potential for ecological harm (including contamination of water supplies our communities depend upon) as well as disruption of a well-known tourism and recreation area, presents a direct threat not only to the economic growth of the region, but also to the national defense.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	8	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	In the case of MA 8.2, mineral extraction is not an identified "opportunity/activity." However, the Project EA identifies 123 acres of the Project area falling within this MA despite the fact that the activities described within the EA are prohibited from occurring within that area.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	9	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	DRA contends that the Project EA does not demonstrate that the Project adheres to the laws and regulations listed in this Section, including, but not limited to those related to protection of cultural and spiritual resources. Specifically, DRA contends that the Project requires a formal process of consultation and cultural resource surveys with impacted Tribal Governments, and the free, prior, and informed consent of impacted Tribes.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	10	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Discussion in Section 3.3.4 holds that, "An overall determination of no adverse effect to historic properties has been made for Alternative C. THPOs were forwarded a copy of the cultural resources report on July 2, 2021 with a request for comments on the determination of effect." DRA strongly contends that forwarding a copy of a cultural resources report to Tribal Historic Preservation Officers does not constitute free, prior, and informed consent, nor does it suffice as a substitute for on-the-ground cultural resource surveys conducted by THPOs themselves.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	11	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	DRA contends that Alternative A does not necessarily negate altogether F3's statutory right to access its mineral lease areas. Instead, an Alternative A decision could point to any number of other known problems with the Project, the Project EA, the other Alternatives presented in the Project EA, and/or the failure of those Alternatives to prevent or eliminate damage to the environment, to cultural resources, and/or to other established aims of the Management Areas contained within the Project boundaries.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	12	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Further, although Project EA indicates that the Agency does not appear to consider Alternative A an actual alternative, "A No Action Alternative is carried forward for further analysis in this document to serve as a basis to compare other alternatives against." DRA contends that no "basis" can be formed where the baseline of "no action" is not an actual choice or action the Agency is willing or able to make. If the Alternative exists and is outlined in the Project EA (as it is here), it is one that can be acted upon.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
Dakota Rural Action	Rebecca	Terk		274	13	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Dakota Rural Action contends that Alternative A, the "No Action" Alternative is a credible action for the Agency to take, and one that is well-supported by law, by the issues raised herein, and by our members and the community as a whole. Further, DRA contends that Alternative A presents the only acceptable alternative, and we respectfully request the Agency make a "No Action" determination on the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Rosebud Sioux Tribe - Water Resources	Syed	Huq		275	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Having reviewed all information on the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold project, Rosebud Sioux Tribe is opposed to the drilling and other associated aspects of the project due to the fact contaminants from the drilling and other associated aspects can move to the Rapid Creek that flows into the Cheynne River that flows into the Missouri River upgradient from the intake of the Mni Wiconi Rural Water system. The intake is located near Fort Pierre in the Missouri River that is supplying domestic drinking water to Rosebud Reservation among others like Pine Ridge and Lower Brule Reservations and West River and Lyman- Jones counties. The contaminants from the Jenny Gulch gold project can jeopardize drinking water for fifty percent of tribal population on Rosebud Sioux Tribe Reservation.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe - Water Resources	Syed	Huq		275	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We want to be on record with our opposition.	Comment noted.
	Kyla	Wright		276	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Kyla	Wright		276	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content EA vs EIS	The draft Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete. An Environmental Impact Statement should be done.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Kyla	Wright		276	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Kyla	Wright		276	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Raptor nests and a bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route would be negatively impacted., and we already have enough negative impact from irresponsible recreation users, especially in the last few years with the large increase in tourism and ATV/side by side users.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species are likewise outside of the Project area. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report
	Kyla	Wright		276	5	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Service must analyze all impacts of the project. This has not been done.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Barbara	Patterson		277	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please stop the gold mining in the Black Hills of South Dakota. We can't afford to poison our water especially in drought times.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Sean	Fahey	Amy Fahey	278	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to voice my objection to the proposed gold exploration in the Rapid Creek watershed above Pactola Lake.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Sean	Fahey	Amy Fahey	278	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period EA Content	Only 30 DAYS is not adequate time to review this Draft Environmental Assessment, which is vague and incomplete, making it impossible for the Public to be informed.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Sean	Fahey	Amy Fahey	278	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full Environmental Impact Statement is needed to assess the risk of drilling activity to our water, our forest, wildlife, and recreation. The assessment they have done is insufficient, relies too heavily on promises from the company proposing the drilling, and does not provide adequate time for comment: just 30 days on activity that poses a risk of decades of harm.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Sean	Fahey	Amy Fahey	278	4	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The current Forest Management Plan (published in 1997) prohibits this drilling. The Forest Service proposal to amend a Plan this is already 16 years past its last amendment (2005) is unacceptable and negligent.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Sean	Fahey	Amy Fahey	278	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service has not met its legal requirements for Tribal Consultation. Not only did the agency fail to complete mandatory Tribal consultation during the scoping process on this project, they put the burden on Tribal officials to initiate requests on topics of cultural resources, sacred sites, and other issues that are mandated for consultation.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Sean	Fahey	Amy Fahey	278	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply Fisheries & Wildlife	Gold exploration just upstream from Pactola Reservoir in the Black Hills will have a direct impact not only on water, but wildlife such as unique bighorn sheep birthing area and their migration route would be negatively impacted.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Andrea	Fay		279	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project and support the "NO ACTION" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Andrea	Fay		279	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Andrea	Fay		279	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Service must analyze all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the project. It has not done this!	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within each technical report appendix that is included as part of the EA.
	Carla	Marshall		280	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose the "Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling Project." I support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Carla	Marshall		280	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I request an extension for Public Comment of this EA due to the fact that the Mystic Ranger District Office closed early on Tuesday, Oct. 12 at approximately 2:00 PM. This prevented the public from the option to hand deliver comments to your physical office, and as provided on the Forest Service Comment Form for this project as such.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. The legal notice for the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was published in the Rapid City Journal on September 22, 2021, and serves the exclusive means for calculating the 30-day comment period. These regulations are found at 36 CFR 218.25, and prohibit the extension of the formal comment period on an Environmental Assessment (EA). Emailed and faxed comments had to be received by 11:59pm on October 22, 2021; and mailed comments had to be post marked by October 22, 2021. In addition, hand delivered comments needed to be received by 4:30pm, October 22, 2021. It is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt.
	Carla	Marshall		280	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Forest Service has not held, as mandated by government rules and regulations, meaningful and thorough Government to Government Tribal Consultation in accordance with Executive Order No. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Carla	Marshall		280	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The Forest Service must provide a thorough and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement for the "Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project, or for any mining project in the Black Hills Forest Service area.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Carla	Marshall		280	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	F3 Gold's project's "disturbance area" will have negative impact on the Bighorn sheep birthing ground. Other native wildlife in the area will also be negatively impacted from the mining activity.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Dylan	Brings Plenty		281	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I do not approve gold mining in the area due to the fact that most gold mining actions often damage the land and pollute the water as well as their inability to take responsibility for the cleanup of the damage that they have cost so I support the no action alternative.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Dylan	Brings Plenty		281	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold	Rob	Bergmann		282	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	F3 Gold supports the NEPA process and would encourage USFS to limit its focus to the actual project proposed when reviewing public comments. a. USFS has done a thorough analysis of F3 Gold's proposed project in the Environmental Assessment. b. Many of the concerns highlighted in public comments during the scoping phase, as well as in published media accounts during this public comment period, are focused on impacts for work that is outside of the scope of F3 Gold's request. c. F3 Gold would encourage the USFS to remain focused on the impacts identified in the draft EA for the project we have proposed and not be sidetracked or delayed in processing comments that are outside the scope of our project.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold	Rob	Bergmann		282	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	F3 Gold has been an active participant in the NEPA process, working cooperatively with USFS on concessions and adjustments to the project to further enhance environmental safeguards and protections while also maintaining the scientific viability of our project from an exploration data collection standpoint.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold	Rob	Bergmann		282	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	F3 Gold agreed to an EA in lieu of a CE, but the process has not been conducted on a reasonable timeline and care should be taken to not add unnecessary delay. a. A categorical exclusion exists for projects like that which F3 Gold originally proposed – projects with less than 5 acres of surface disturbance, and/or for projects completed within 12 months, for example. Despite the availability of such exclusions, USFS requested – and F3 Gold agreed to – a more thorough and costly review through an EA process. b. The timeline of F3 Gold's application for this project dates to 2018, and it has been an almost four-year-long process to get through this EA for what amounts to a simple, compact drilling program. The project is equivalent – both in terms of impact and in equipment and procedures used – to drilling water wells, which is conducted with some frequency in the Black Hills without extensive environmental analysis.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
F3 Gold	Rob	Bergmann		282	4	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	F3 Gold opposes any attempts to extend the comment period for the draft EA beyond 30 days.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
F3 Gold	Rob	Bergmann		282	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 Gold supports the draft EA findings and Alternative C a. While temporary disturbance and effects were identified for several issues areas in the draft EA, there were no significant or long-term impacts identified for Alternative C. Furthermore, Alternative C includes specific project adaptations to minimize the potential impacts which were identified during scoping. b. We have reached the point of a draft EA, and in review of that document and the analysis of F3 Gold's project therein, I am writing to express support for Alternative C to move forward based on the findings of the draft EA.	Comment noted.
F3 Gold	Rob	Bergmann		282	6	Incorporate	Project Description	F3 Gold would like USFS to clarify language in the draft EA as it pertains to use of industry standard drilling fluids. a. In the "Summary of Impact Mitigation Measures" section Table 2.1 (page 11 of the document), USFS notes "drilling would require water only" and "only fluids used for the project would be water, oil, fuel." b. We think this language could be read to preclude the use of industry-standard drilling fluids such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, which are used to more efficiently and safely drill boreholes. (Similar fluids are also used in the drilling of water wells.) c. This language was not present in our submitted plan of operations. d. F3 Gold would like this language adjusted to accommodate industry standard natural and/or biodegradable drilling additives, to match the language in Section 3.7.3.2.	Comment noted. Table 2-1 and Section 2.2.1 have been updated to more accurately depict this.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Brian	Lentz		283	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 Gold's proposed work plan doesn't pose a threat to anything. They've been patient and gone through an exhaustive process that is supposed to be 12 months or less and has taken almost four years. The draft EA shows there are no potential harmful long-term impacts from F3 Gold's project. Alternative C is an excellent example of how the process can work and demonstrates that F3 Gold has been patient and cooperative with the USFS in working to achieve the best possible outcome. Any continued delay is politically motivated and not based on science or fact. I hope that the USFS can follow the process, stick to the facts, and stand up for the science.	Comment noted.
	David	Holland		284	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	The F3 Gold Jenny Gulch project is proposing exploratory drilling that, if successful, would develop a gold mine within the watershed that supplies water to Rapid City.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	David	Holland		284	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	F3 Gold, LLC is not a mining company. They are an exploration and prospecting company. If and when gold is discovered, F3 Gold, LLC would pass the project off to another mining company. Therefore, we can't verify the track record of the mining company at this point. For example, does the mining company have a history of mining accidents or spills? It seems shady to me that the eventual mining company is not willing to put their name on the project during the development stages. Is it because they have a history of accidents and spills that would prevent the project from being approved?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	David	Holland		284	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	The city relies on both ground and surface water from this watershed for its water supply. One spill and the entire water supply could be contaminated. Is it really worth the risk? Can the mining company guarantee that they will never have an accident and will never contaminate the water supply? Of course its impossible to guarantee that accidents will never happen. The benefits of this project are not worth risking the safety of our public water supply.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	David	Holland		284	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	The aquifers that supply water to Rapid City are primarily rock with little to no filtering capacity. Therefore, a single accident by a mine could contaminate the aquifer and that contamination could reach the city water supply within a matter of months or even hours. And once contaminated it could take years to clean up or develop an alternative water supply.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	David	Holland		284	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining should be allowed under the right circumstances. But it should not be allowed in this situation where it could threaten the water supply of Rapid City, the second largest city in South Dakota. It just isn't worth the risk to approve this application by F3 Gold, LLC.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	David	Heikes		285	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I did send in a written response a few days ago, but would like to add that I request the Forest Service pick the No Action option.	Comment noted.
	Brad	Schneck		286	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We oppose the permitting of any mining or exploratory surveys that would threaten this area for economic gain of a few.	Comment noted.
	Brad	Schneck		286	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Furthermore, I do not believe that the draft Environmental Impact Assessment was sufficient and a full Environmental Impact Survey is necessary before writing a blank check for a mining company to rip apart the Black Hills.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Brad	Schneck		286	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please take no action on this and effectively shut down the exploration for gold in Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Michelle	O'Toole		287	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	NO WAY NO HOW to the proposed exploring in the Jenny Gulch area!	Comment noted.
	Richard	Morrison		288	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The idea that we would risk the clean water needed for this entire area, not to mention the impact to the ecosystem up in the Jenny Gulch area, for potential profit and digging gold out of the ground boggles the mind. I am categorically opposed to this project and urge you with all my heart and intellect to please stop it now.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Michael	Miller	Marcia Miller	289	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please stop F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch Project!!!!	Comment noted.
	Sandra	Kassen		290	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This project threatens drinking water for Rapid City Ellsworth tribal and Rural communities.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Sandra	Kassen		290	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The tribal consultation and protection of cultural resources are not done.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Sandra	Kassen		290	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	A bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route would be harmed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Sandra	Kassen		290	4	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The forest service must analyze all impacts of this project. It has not done this.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Sandra	Kassen		290	5	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Forest Service must include and analyze all alternatives to F3 gold's plan. It has not done this.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines “reasonable alternatives” as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Laura	Armstrong		291	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	A hard no to the proposed Jenny Gulch Gold Project.	Comment noted.
	Jordan	Ekkelson		292	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	First off I would like to request an extension to fully review the project proposal. the 30-day was insufficient for the 304 page document please.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Jordan	Ekkelson		292	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Next, I would like to know that what I have read in the environmental assessment is very vague and seems incomplete.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Jordan	Ekkelson		292	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I don't believe that the mandated THPO requirements have been fully addressed.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Jordan	Ekkelson		292	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	If gold was found here The project would likely have an effect on the migrating populations [of bighorn sheep].	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Jordan	Ekkelson		292	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As our federal representatives for the region I hope that you see the common sense in denying a gold permit to explore directly around one of our Central sources of water.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Robert	Bickett	James Bickett	293	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	As the owners of properties in Rapid City and in Silver City, I, Robert W Bickett, and I, James G Bickett, are strongly opposed to any mining in the Rapid Creek area above Pactola reservoir without first completing the necessary thorough studies of the impacts of full-scale gold mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Robert	Bickett	James Bickett	293	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	As an example, a thorough environmental impact study addressing the impact of full-scale mining must be completed before any exploration is allowed. If the environmental impact of full-scale mining would indicate that the mining should not go forward, there would be no reason to do any exploration.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Robert	Bickett	James Bickett	293	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	There are many areas where we should thoroughly understand the impact of full-scale mining and not just the impact of exploration. What would be the impact of full-scale mining on risk of water contamination in Pactola reservoir? What would the impact of full-scale mining on the wildlife in this and neighboring areas? What would be the impact of full-scale mining on the risk of forest fires?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Robert	Bickett	James Bickett	293	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please say "no" to F3 Gold's Project.	Comment noted.
	William	Hayford		294	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a resident living in part of the proposed mining exploration I am writing in opposition of any kind of mining or exploration that could potentially lead to mining in this area.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	William	Hayford		294	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	This area is home to many native species of wildlife that would be harmed or displaced if this exploration was allowed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	William	Hayford		294	3	Other	Recreation	The economic ramifications this could have on tourism is potentially devastating.	Potential project effects on recreation are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.3.
	William	Hayford		294	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The contamination of water and soil. Most, if not all, the residents rely on wells for drinking water. We don't Need a poisoning of the water table.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water and soil resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report.
	Tim	Frost		295	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	My water comes from the aquifer that is drained by that area and I am very concerned for any leaching that could happen from any potential mining in that area that could also affect the entire water supply for Rapid City. Nobody would put that much money into exploration without the intent of mining if there are adequate precious metals to be mined. The best way to stop mining from happening is to keep them from drilling.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Anna	Ball		296	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Request an Extension! – 30 DAYS is not adequate time for the public to review the 304 page draft Environmental Assessment document.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Anna	Ball		296	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete making it impossible for the public to be informed.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Anna	Ball		296	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This project threatens recreation, Lake Pactola, wildlife, and the drinking water for Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base, and tribal and rural communities.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Anna	Ball		296	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Request that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Anna	Ball		296	5	Other	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Mandated Tribal Consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Anna	Ball		296	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	A unique bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route would be negatively impacted.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Anna	Ball		296	7	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Forest Service must analyze all impacts of the project. It has not done this.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Anna	Ball		296	8	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	The Forest Service must include and analyze all reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan. It has not done this.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Anna	Ball		296	9	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please say NO to this proposal.	Comment noted.
	Celia	Carlson		297	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Why does an EIS have to be requested? An EIS should be required for any mining in the Black Hills that effects the watershed, the National Forest, the animals and any religious land rights the indigenous peoples have.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Celia	Carlson		297	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Thirty days for the public to review a 304 page document? Are you kidding? Did you not notice the utter crap we received when Congress couldn't be bothered to read in its entirety the Medical Insurance Acts they were voting into law? The public review should be at the least six months long and advertised heavily on all forms of media.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Celia	Carlson		297	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project and I support the 'No Action' alternative.	Comment noted.

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	S. Ann	Harjes		298	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Honestly we are beyond concerned, we are literally disturbed about the projected gold exploration project here in the Jenny Gulch area. We are vehemently opposed to it as well.	Comment noted.
	Ann	Eads		299	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Supporting "No Action" on the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Exploration Project!	Comment noted.
	Ann	Eads		299	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Requesting Extension for public to review the 304 page EA documents.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Ann	Eads		299	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Forest Service, please complete the EIS.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Elvin	Hirchert		300	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I beg you please DON NOT let this drilling exploration to happen.	Comment noted.
	Kathryn	McDeed		301	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I stand in solidarity with the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance and support the NO ACTION alternative.	Comment noted.
	Kathryn	McDeed		301	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	The public needs more than 30 days to adequately review this project, not for just exploration but for full-blown mineral extraction as well.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Kathryn	McDeed		301	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	I understand the EA is vague and incomplete. The public needs a complete picture that includes the details and specifics regarding this project, not for just exploration but full-blown mineral extraction as well.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Kathryn	McDeed		301	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I understand the mandated Tribal Consultation is not complete. This needs to be completed and documented, thoroughly, before proceeding with exploration.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Kathryn	McDeed		301	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Given the severe destruction of natural habitat that accompanies mining projects, an EIS needs to be completed that considers the cumulative and probable negative impacts to cultural resources, bighorn sheep birthing grounds, other wildlife, Lake Pactola, recreation and the tourist industry as a whole.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. The draft Environmental Assessment contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA (including wildlife and fish, water resources, and recreation). Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within each technical report appendix that is included as part of the EA. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Gabriel	Sweet		302	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Generally, Big Rock Exploration strongly supports the expedient approval of the proposed project through Alternative C. Big Rock believes that the efforts put forth by F3 Gold to adjust project parameters to accommodate concerns related to the original proposed project represent an utmost good faith effort towards transparency, flexibility and environmental stewardship.	Comment noted.
Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Gabriel	Sweet		302	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The permitting vehicles used to evaluate and regulate disparate exploration and mining actions must be commensurate to the action being proposed. Preliminary exploratory drilling should be evaluated as a temporary limited impact activity, and not conflated with the larger impacts of mineral extraction and mining. The permitting framework for each distinct action should reflect the anticipated physical, biological, hydrological and cultural impacts of that action only. This distinction is borne out in the acknowledgement of actions related to limited mineral exploration as categorically excluded from analysis under an EA or EIS in Section 32.2(8) of FSH 1909.15 - NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT HANDBOOK, CHAPTER 30 - CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION FROM DOCUMENTATION.	Comment noted.
Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Gabriel	Sweet		302	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Though not immediately discussed in the EA, Big Rock questions whether an EA was necessary in this case, especially as the EA showed no potential negative effect on biological, hydrological and/or cultural resources within the project area to justify the preclusion of a CE designation (36 CFR 220.6(b)).	Comment noted.
Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Gabriel	Sweet		302	4	Regulatory Process	EA Content	There are many examples of both large (advanced) and small (investigative early stage) exploration drilling programs throughout the United States that have been reviewed under an EA. In nearly all of these cases, the determination of impact from the proposed drilling was found to be negligeable and resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact. This should be considered precedent in the context of the continuation of the same or similar action of drilling a borehole. Available NEPA documentation shows that when state and federal guidelines are met, there is no significant impact to this process.	Comment noted.
Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Gabriel	Sweet		302	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	F3 and its contractors have made every good faith effort to provide the flexibility and communicability in the design and proposed execution of this project to avoid conflict with sensitive areas and features of the region.	Comment noted.
Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Gabriel	Sweet		302	6	Incorporate	Project Description	Summary of Impact Mitigation Measures – Alternative B – Table 2.1, doc pg. 11 - "Drilling would require water only"; "Only fluids used for the project would be water, oil, fuel" - This language is in direct conflict with Section 3.7.3.2, and could be read to preclude the use of industry-standard drilling fluids to more efficiently and safely complete boreholes. Such common fluids include bentonite clays and muds, and other natural and/or biodegradable additives that are used in the drilling of water wells. The origin of this exclusionary language in the draft EA is not clear and is not present in the submitted Plan of Operations. - Big Rock Exploration requests that this specific language be adjusted to accommodate industry standard natural and/or biodegradable drilling additives, to match the language in Section 3.7.3.2, noting downhole activities to include "drilling, drilling fluid, abandonment, etc."	It is acknowledged that, in addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. Table 2-1 and Section 2.2.1 have been updated to more accurately depict this.
Big Rock Exploration, LLC	Gabriel	Sweet		302	7	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	Discussion of Alternative B (and C) impacts on ground and surface waters – doc pg. 29 - Speculation on the potential for oxygenated water used for drilling (e.g., municipal) to drive oxidation of sulfides in mineralized zones, yielding pH changes of ground water and release of arsenic, iron and manganese. - Big Rock Exploration requests cited examples and/or studies of this type of event occurring within timeframes similar to the proposed drill program (e.g., drill hole open for less than a month prior to abandonment) as well as on physical scales similar to borehole diameters.	Text and associated references were added to Section 3.3.2.2 in Appendix E.
	Mason	Stansberry		303	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Allowing gold exploration around Jenny Gulch and Silver City poses a severe threat to the water quality and beauty of the area. Mining ALWAYS destroys the water quality in the surrounding areas, and Jenny gulch is a great recreation area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Lori	Borella		304	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please do not approve this mining project. Please protect the Paha Sapa--It's our most precious local resource.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	TaShaun	BadBear		305	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please do not allow any more mining in the Rapid Creek Watershed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	TaShaun	BadBear		305	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Please extend the public comment period so that all Black Hills residents can voice their concerns and feedback.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Rochelle	Hagel		306	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Maybe I SHOULD ask why a project that stands a very real chance of poisoning the water that locals AND visitors rely on, that could very well create an environmental disaster in a beautiful recreation area, and that presents virtually no possibility of replacing the income streams that it could destroy, should be approved. Frankly, everyone, who knows anything about how this stuff works, knows that the profits from any mining in this area will flow out to corporate owners and stockholders, not to Black Hills residents or even the larger body of South Dakotans who stand to lose quality of life and pay vastly more for water if this source of water is rendered unusable.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Rochelle	Hagel		306	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Please extend the public comment window	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Rochelle	Hagel		306	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	MORE IMPORTANTLY, consider rejecting this proposal entirely.	Comment noted.
	Ken	Anderson		307	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a lifelong resident, landowner, taxpayer, and lover of the Black Hills, I strongly ask you to deny allowing gold exploration or mining in the Jenny Gulch watershed. Our sacred hills are threatened enough already, and running the risk of water contamination from these activities is just plain not worth it.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Richard	Bell		308	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Section 1.3.4 lists the laws and regulations that apply to the proposed project. But the EA does not demonstrate that it adheres to the laws and regulations listed in this Section, especially those related to protection of cultural and spiritual resources. The token attempt by the USFS to "consult" with the Tribes about it cannot be considered any kind of true "Government-to-Government" consultation as required by NEPA.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Richard	Bell		308	2	Other	Project Description	In Section 1.3.3.1, the EA identifies Management Areas (MA's) falling within the Project area and their various acreages within the Project boundaries. But I cannot find anywhere the total acreage of the proposed project.	The Project area, as shown on Draft EA figures, is approximately 1,737 acres in size; impacts associated with each alternative are significantly smaller than this acreage.
	Richard	Bell		308	3	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	However, the EA identifies 123 acres of the Project area falling within this particular MA despite the fact that the activities described within the EA are prohibited from occurring within that area.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Richard	Bell		308	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	In my opinion, if the USFS were to require anything less than a full-blown EIS, it would be an invitation to disaster, which your agency and the people of Western South Dakota cannot afford.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Wade	Ellett		309	1	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	For the safety of those that work, play, and live in the area — and all of those who rely on Pactola for water, I would urge the Forest Service to complete a full Environmental Impact Statement in order to fully assess the risk of drilling to the forest, wildlife, recreation, and most importantly to our water. With the potential of years, or possibly decades, of harm should things go wrong, I believe it is worth the extra time and effort to complete the full Environmental Impact Statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. The draft Environmental Assessment contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.

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	Wade	Ellett		309	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	For these reasons, I oppose F3's Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Wade	Ellett		309	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	I appreciate you taking the time to consider my objection — and I urge you to extend the amount of time available for public comment. The assessment is not a small document, and I believe that it is important for people to have the opportunity to be informed about what is going on in the area.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Stacy	Sillasen		310	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am completely opposed to this project due to the potential impact on ground water, the inevitable impact on the terrain in the area should the project take place, and the fact that the public will not have access to the area while a private company violates it for profit. Therefore I respectfully request that this project, and any like it, not be permitted to commence.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
South Dakota School of Mines	Mark	Bowron		311	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Draft EA is a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the potential impacts on public land	Comment noted.
South Dakota School of Mines	Mark	Bowron		311	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	It [the Draft EA] has addressed all of the relevant issues as required by law.	Comment noted.
South Dakota School of Mines	Mark	Bowron		311	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	It [the Draft EA] has examined 3 alternatives to issues raised in the first public comment period.	Comment noted.
South Dakota School of Mines	Mark	Bowron		311	4	Regulatory Process	Mining Act of 1872	Mineral exploration is an accepted use in the USFS doctrine of multiple use	Comment noted.
South Dakota School of Mines	Mark	Bowron		311	5	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Requiring the applicant to elevate the analysis for a simple drilling exploration as proposed, to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), is entirely unwarranted	Comment noted.
South Dakota School of Mines	Mark	Bowron		311	6	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The bottom line, no significant impacts have been identified which are not addressed and mitigated by the suggested alternatives.	Comment noted.
South Dakota School of Mines	Mark	Bowron		311	7	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Alternative C appears to provide the most reasonable and comprehensive measures to address the concerns of this temporary disturbance on the land.	Comment noted.
	Mark	Tilson		312	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I understand the current applications are for exploration. But I also understand that this is a pre-work requisite for full scale mining. possible even open pit mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Mark	Tilson		312	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Is it true that there still been no tribal Consultations to date on this project? I abject to the approval, of any exploration permits with out A formal nation to nation tribal consultation. It is long past due that the tribes be included in these important decision	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Mark	Tilson		312	3	Other	Reclamation	In 100% of cases Just like in the Black Hills cost of reclamation and cleaning up hazardous contamination ends up in the hands of the local, state and national governments meaning that we the taxpayers have to subsidize these businesses in order to protect the livability of our communities. This socialistic practice of transferring cost of business from the private sector to the taxpayer is Unacceptable. The insufficient insurance requirement amounts to another tax payer liability.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Mark	Tilson		312	4	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	This is a threat to our water. both surface and the aquifer	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Mark	Tilson		312	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly urge you to reject the current exploration permits for the Jenny Gulch area and all further exploration.	Comment noted.
	Lynn	Arnold		313	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We simply CANNOT allow drilling anywhere near our watershed.	Comment noted.
	Evelyn	Griesse		314	1	Other	Reclamation	Accessing the project site(s) will disrupt ground cover, soil permeability/compaction, local wildlife habitat/movement/life patterns. Adequate reclamation/renewal can take years to accomplish.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water and soil resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Evelyn	Griesse		314	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Water consumption (possible contamination &/or disruption of natural flow) will be impacted at the project site/s & probably throughout the Jenny Gulch area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Evelyn	Griesse		314	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please reject the exploration project.	Comment noted.
	Bill	Barber		315	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I have great concern over the potential for a gold mining operation near Silver City, in the watershed basin. My concerns include the potential to damage or negatively impact water resources in Rapid Creek and/or Pactola reservoir , loss of habitat land for wildlife and loss of a stunning natural area for recreation and enjoyment.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.

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	Bill	Barber		315	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	The potential impact on these resources may be minimal for prospective drilling operations, however in the event that a mining permit might be issued to another entity, everything would change. I feel it is imperative that the first stages Of this project(exploration) must be held to the highest standards to protect and maintain the natural resources in this area. Any commitments made by F3 in exploration may not pass on to future development for mining operations, or simply may not be adequate.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Bill	Barber		315	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	I have great concern for the impacts on the surrounding areas based on the need to develop roads and infrastructure to support a mining operation.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Mike	Trier		316	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The threat of irreparable damage outweighs any possible benefit.	Comment noted.
	Debra	Robertson		317	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I believe thus puts our water supply at risk.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Debra	Robertson		317	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My input on this matter is a simple NO.	Comment noted.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Here in Dark Canyon, our well supplies water from the Minnelusa aquifer fed by Rapid Creek, and the USGS Atlas of Water Resources in the Black Hills Area, South Dakota clearly indicates that interplay between Rapid Creek and the Minnelusa aquifer. That interplay means that contamination of the surface waters of Pactola Reservoir, upstream tributaries, and/or Rapid Creek, including by exploration and mining-related activities such as those proposed in this Project EA creates a contamination risk for my water supply, as well as that which supplies other residents of this canyon and the larger community of Rapid City.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	2	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need	In reviewing the Project EA, I am struck by a lack of clear definition of the Project in terms of total acreage, as well as a lack of clarity in terms of the Purpose and Need for the Project. While the purpose is stated as investigatory and for the identification of minerals present, it seems clear that the actual intent or purpose is to locate those minerals for the purpose of extraction and sale. Narrowly defining the purpose in this way suggests a desire to block public participation and input on the issues that this project rather obviously represents—including, but not limited to the very real potential for mining in a critical watershed in the central Black Hills.	Comment noted. The Project area, as shown on Draft EA figures, is approximately 1,737 acres in size; impacts associated with each alternative are significantly smaller than this acreage. The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40
	Rebecca	Terk		318	3	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need	Further, the stated need for the project is said to be in "relation" to the (too narrowly defined) purpose, but the need itself is never clearly stated.	Comment noted.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	4	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	Under Forest Plan Direction, the Project EA fails to account for the fact that the BHNF Forest Plan is currently under revision (and is long overdue for that revision).	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Economic growth of this region is dependent not only on the quantity, but also the quality of water available for use, and as well is dependent on our scenic and natural beauty, wildlife habitat, and access to recreational areas—all of which are threatened rather than supported by this Project and the activities it may lead to.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	6	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Additionally, Ellsworth Air Force Base is similarly dependent on water supplied by Pactola Reservoir and the aquifers fed by Rapid Creek—suggesting that the national defense is undermined rather than supported by this Project.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	7	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	In particular, references to NAGPRA and American Indian Religious Freedom Act would suggest that Tribal Consultation is warranted, and that Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) have made a full cultural resource survey of the site. However, Project EA later indicates that THPOs have received only a letter and invitation to comment, which does not in any way fulfill the need for Consultation or a comprehensive cultural survey of the site.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	8	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Alternatives spelled out for the Project in Chapter 2 are far too limited. Project EA seems to indicate that Alternative A is not, in fact, a valid option for the USFS to select because "Alternative A does not meet the Project's purpose and need as it would negate F3's statutory right under the Mining Act of 1872 to access its mineral lease areas for exploration purposes." However, as stated previously, the Project's purpose is too narrowly defined, and its need is altogether undefined. Put simply, a Forest Service non-approval of this Project at this time with the limited alternatives offered in the EA does not constitute an absolute negation of F3's statutory rights.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives. The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40
	Rebecca	Terk		318	9	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	I would also add that, the fact that Alternative A is included herein and is considered to be a baseline for comparison means that it is a viable alternative. If it is not a viable alternative, then it cannot serve as a basis for comparison, and it is misleading in the extreme to include it in the Project EA at all.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.

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	Rebecca	Terk		318	10	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Alternatives B (F3's plan) and C (slight mitigation) are, as previously stated, severely limiting, and fail to fully consider or mitigate the worst of this Project's impacts. Neither Alternative B nor C represent viable options that protect and provide for economic growth or national defense.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	11	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	One crucial issue that is discussed in the Project EA but is not mitigated by Alternative B or C is the impact on Bighorn Sheep breeding and birthing grounds that overlap this Project area.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish and potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	12	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Any proposal that shows potential to undermine this struggling population [of bighorn sheep] should be rejected.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife (including bighorn sheep) and fish and potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	13	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In conclusion, I ask that the USFS choose Alternative A for the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project.	Comment noted.
	Rebecca	Terk		318	14	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I also strongly encourage the Forest Service to consider the fact of the ongoing Forest Plan revision and the identification of the Rapid Creek Watershed as a critical and threatened resource that heavily outweighs any urgency on behalf of F3 to identify and prove up claims in this area of the watershed.	Comment noted. The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Karen	McGregor		319	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	We have a limited amount of clean water and past experience shows us that mining operations pollute bodies of water, kill fish and make an area just plain ugly.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Karen	McGregor		319	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not approve the permits.	Comment noted. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Levi	Butts		320	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	As I am sure you have heard many times merely allowing the investigation of gold in this area is tantamount to ensuring that as an inevitability these nonlocal gold mining corporations will come in with nigh on total disregard for the wellbeing of the environment as well as the local populations. There are, to date, no examples of any metallic sulfide mine that has been operated and closed in the Black Hills without substation measurable impacts to the quality of the water supply as wekk as the surrounding environment.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Levi	Butts		320	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I was recently informed that the Environmental Impact Statement that was submitted relies heavily on promises made by the company proposing the drilling, who has no stake in the area once their exploration is complete.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental commitments issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Levi	Butts		320	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Additionally I think the public comment period being a mere 30 days for activity that will have decades of impact on the area is at best negligent and irresponsible and at worst malicious and disingenuous.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Levi	Butts		320	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Lastly I am greatly concerned by the poor job done by the Forest Service in regards to its legal requirement for Tribal Consultation by putting the onus for initiating these actions on the Tribal officials instead of being proactive about it.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Levi	Butts		320	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It is for all of the above reasons that I feel compelled to reach out and say that I am in direct vocal opposition to F3's Jenny Gulch gold project and I wholeheartedly support the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.
	Britton	Vidal		321	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I understand that mining tactics have changed over the years, but any sort of mining near a main water source does not make any sense.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Britton	Vidal		321	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please be a source of protection for our entire community and for future generations to come by not allowing any exploration near our vital sources of water.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Robin	Englehart-Bagley		322	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	I have many concerns about this project, not least that it impacts the water quality of Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir, which is the source of drinking water for Rapid City and Ellsworth AFB.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Robin	Englehart-Bagley		322	2	Other	Recreation	I have further concerns about the harm this exploration could bring to the forest's wildlife and recreation opportunities as well.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Robin	Englehart-Bagley		322	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I don't believe that adding mineral exploration is something we are prepared for at this time. For these reasons, I'm asking that the forest take the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.

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	Jake	Kammerer		323	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	To screw around, drilling so many 2 inch holes so deep thru various rock formations in the area proposed; no matter how confident the company is to prevent damage to underlying water basins being pictured and drained, will only cause local wells problems-then what?!	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jake	Kammerer		323	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	A complete Federal Environmental Assessment is needed here in this case, along with necessary input from Indigenous tribes to whom this proposed area was deeded to by the "Supreme Law of the Land-OUR CONSTITUTION" by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868!	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
	Leif	Johnson		324	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This letter is in support of F3 Gold's exploration drilling project in Jenny Gulch. As detailed in the 300+ page Environmental Assessment (EA), this project will have a minimal amount of disturbance on the local environment. The process of preparing the EA has taken over three years and provided an exhaustive amount of detail. Exploration drilling in Jenny Gulch will not have long term impacts on the environment.	Comment noted.
	Leif	Johnson		324	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The geology of the Black Hills is incredibly complex, and largely misunderstood. From an educational and scientific standpoint, it is exciting that F3 Gold is seeking to test a new theory with its exploration efforts. If they prove to be correct, it will represent a significant shift in the understanding of how gold mineralization occurred in the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Leif	Johnson		324	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In addition to gold resources, it is believed that the Black Hills is home to significant deposits of other critical and strategic metals that our country needs for high-tech manufacturing and national defense purposes.	Comment noted.
	Leif	Johnson		324	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This draft EA represents an important opportunity to pave the way for responsible and careful mineral exploration on BHNF lands.	Comment noted.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	To begin, it is clear from F3's Plan of Operations (Plan), that its proposed exploration is a prelude to planned mining in the same area, submitting the Plan on a form entitled "MINING ACTIVITES" on National Forest Lands. To ignore exploration's role as part of planned mining in conducting an environmental analysis of what could go wrong, is to forsake the responsibility of the FS to protect the Black Hills for more interests than just the large-scale foreign for profit ventures and pretend that it has no authority to impose the strictest conditions to protect the area, even if F3 were to say too much, not going to explore and mine then. The EA fails to assess the impact of not only the pre-mining exploratory activities proposed here as simply a part of but cannot be separated from then resulting mining activities in the Rapid Creek Watershed. To fail to look at the voluminous potential impacts on the human and non-human environment likely from the overall plans of F3 to mine this area represents a serious deficiency and the draft EA should be redone to reflect analysis of the expected and potential impacts of the reality of exploration being part of mining major gold and minerals in the central Black Hills, particularly in and through the Rapid Creek Watershed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	2	Other	Project Description	There is no explanation or analysis of any need by F3 to have the number of drill pads or directional drill holes in its Plan or the F3 alternative C, or how Alternative C satisfies the unidentified need for the number of holes.	See Section 2.3 of the Draft EA, where this is discussed.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	3	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	There is no analysis of potential impacts of drilling holes to lengths of 600 to 6000 feet through various geological strata.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on geology are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 2.3.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	4	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	There is no discussion of impacts on expected and potential worst case scenario impacts on yet to be identified underground water resources including the crystalline rock formations.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on groundwater are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	There is no discussion of presence and potential worst case scenario impacts on the subsurface hydrological conduits between the proposed Project area and lower parts of Rapid Creek, Spring Creek, and Elk Creek. What would be the impact if a vast underground cavern is pierced during drilling after (or before a pressurized) water resource strata is pierced and the water resource(s) drains into the cavern? Instead there are promises by F3 and hoped for compliance with any permit conditions and federal law and regulation to protect the Watershed. Thus, the draft EA fails to address any worst case scenarios of the impact to any part of the Watershed of aquifer and/or underground water resources intermixing or draining due to drilling factors, errors or surprises.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	6	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement Purpose and Need	By narrowly defining the federal action and the purpose and need, the draft EA fails to satisfy NEPA's requirements of public participation and informed decision-making.	The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40.

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	Bruce	Ellison		325	7	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need Alternatives Analysis	Due to the narrowed scope of the analysis taken in the draft EA, it tainted other areas of required NEPA analysis as well. Specifically, this narrowly defined "federal action" and "purpose and need" precluded detailed analysis of any other alternatives other than to accept F3's Plan of Operations, or alternatively, a slightly modified one, and thereby foreclosed reasonable consideration of alternatives, including the "no action" alternative or an exploration scheme substantially more limited in scope, location, sequence, with substantially greater environmental protection requirements and oversight.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives. The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	8	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need	The "purpose and need' statement avoids the stated purpose of the exploration, which is to approve a Plan of Operations for development of federal minerals by a private developer.	The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	9	Outside of Scope	Mining	Viewed objectively, the purpose and need of the private proposal is to remove gold or other minerals from public lands for sale in the global commodity market.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	10	Other	Project Description	The draft EA fails to conduct any sort of balancing of F3's proposed number of drill pads and/or number of drilling holes, or incremental drilling permitted from each pad with potential environmental impacts.	The Draft EA and associated technical appendices disclose the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of all proposed alternatives.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	11	Regulatory Process	Purpose and Need	The draft EA seems to assert that the "Need" for the Project is the same as the "Purpose" due to a statute authorizing the FS to approve exploration and mining activities. This causes the FS to incorrectly conclude that a "no action" alternative to the Project does not exist. However, the draft EA fails to explain how, if the FS has to "authorize" the Project and establish all kinds of conditions on F3's Plan, then it can say "no," especially when doing would dramatically fail to protect the human and non-human environment and safety.	The purpose and need identified in the Draft EA meets 40 CFR 1500 and FSH 1909.15_40.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	12	Regulatory Process	Project Description	The stated plan of F3 to conduct operations in compliance with FS regulations is to really set no identifiable standards. Does F3 or the FS set the standards? The draft EA further fails to describe how the FS will ensure that no impacts or only "minimal" impacts will occur.	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental commitments issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental commitments and stipulations that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	13	Regulatory Process	EA Content	And what constitutes a "minimal" impact? Does F3 or the FS or the BLM get to determine what constitutes a "minimal" impact? There is no standard of "baseline" conditions set forth in the EA which would constitute a prohibited threshold.	The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The FONSI evaluates the significance of an effect in the context of the setting and based on 10 intensity factors. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Baseline conditions "affected environment" are discussed in the Draft EA and described in detail in the technical appendices to the Draft EA.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	14	Regulatory Process	Project Description	There does not appear to be discussion of an enforcement mechanism to ensure that no more than a "minimal" impact occurs for any part of F3's wishlist for exploration which is ultimately approved.	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental commitments issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental commitments and stipulations that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	15	Regulatory Process	EA Content	No analysis was conducted of potential environmental impact for which minimizing damage would create too much damage or risk of damage resulting from the Project as to create a significant impact to the environment which should be prohibited.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. The FONSI evaluates the significance of an effect in the context of the setting and based on 10 intensity factors. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	16	Outside of Scope	Mining	In addition to NEPA, the draft EA lists but seems to largely ignore the other statutory and regulatory requirements under which the FS must also operate as well in its obligations to protect the Black Hills National Forest for other uses of the BHNF which will end with mining the Jenny Gulch area, as well as the impact on employment through devastation of the tourism industry in the Black Hills, as well as the agricultural community which depends on water flowing east of the proposed project area, and the residents and wildlife who depend on the health and safety of the Rapid Creek Watershed.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	17	Regulatory Process	EA Content	While the draft EA recommends that current conditions of the land, air, and water resources in the proposed exploration area be used as a "baseline" for evaluating impacts, the EA fails to establish what the detailed conditions for the respective parts of the area to be impacted are, yet also fails to consider a no impact or "no action" alternative.	Baseline conditions "affected environment" are discussed in the Draft EA and described in detail in the technical appendices to the Draft EA.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	18	Other	Project Description	The EA fails to address the potential impact of toxic and carcinogenic heavy metals and arsenic brought to the surface or intermixed with subsurface water during the drilling process.	These impacts are discussed in Section 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, impacts would be minor, localized, and short-term due to the limited quantity of drilling water.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	19	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The F3 proposal being a major federal project, the FS insufficiently conducted consultation with the 16 Tribes which the FS is required by federal regulation to do.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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	Bruce	Ellison		325	20	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	Federal law states that the FS is responsible for managing and protecting the surface of the Black Hills National Forest. However, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for managing and protecting the mineral rights under the surface of "public lands" including the National Forest. The draft EA does not reference any involvement of the BLM in the analysis conducted for the F3 project nor any effort by F3 to seek BLM approval to explore the mineral rights under the authority of the BLM, not the FS.	The BLM has jurisdiction over the ownership of mining claims below the surface, while the USFS manages surface rights. The BLM was included in the project scoping mailing, was invited to the interagency scoping meeting in January 2020 and received notice of availability of the Draft EA.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	21	Other	Recreation	The draft EA fails to include a serious analysis of the substantial interference closing off the drilling areas will have on recreational use of the area.	Potential project effects on recreation are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.3.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	22	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	It further fails to sufficiently analyze and provide restrictions to operations to prevent substantial disruption of Big Horned sheep herds, as well as other essential wildlife habitat throughout the area.	Potential effects to wildlife (including bighorn sheep) are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Draft Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	23	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The draft EA fails to reference how the current FS plan has been under review and revision for a number of years and getting closer to fruition. There is no discussion of the revisions being contemplated and how or whether they would also have to be amended by or ignored by the FS to ensure F3 gets to do all or most of what it wants in most locations it wants to explore as a prelude to large scale mining of this critical Watershed area.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Bruce	Ellison		325	24	Regulatory Process	EA Content	In short, the draft EA is legally and factually deficient in each of the areas it addresses. A new EA should be required following a more serious and sufficient NEPA analysis of the potential or likely impact of each part of F3's proposed pre-mining project as a prelude to large scale destructive mining operations on the short and long-term human and other environment.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Tom	Whillock		326	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	To whom it may concern, I'm writing this note in opposition of the gold exploration in Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
	Tom	Whillock		326	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	There's no way they can mine this area without adversely affecting the immediate Jenny Gulch area as well as everything downstream through Rapid City and out onto the prairie.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Bonnie	Zebroski		327	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Our Black Hills have so many abandoned mines. I love to visit them in my area, but Please don't authorize any new gold mining.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Ray	Greff		328	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The wise conservation of resources is under attack from preservationism. Everything begins with mining. If it isn't grown, it must be mined. If F3 has passed legal muster, explore away.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Sage	Nichols		329	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am a local resident of Rapid City, South Dakota and I am writing here today to oppose the F3 "Jenny Gulch Exploration Project" and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.
	Sage	Nichols		329	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	As a citizen here, 30 days is not enough time to fully review this proposal, and the rushed nature by F3 indicates that they do not care what the residents—who will undoubtedly be negatively impacted by their project—think or feel about it.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Sage	Nichols		329	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	By introducing drilling into the sacred Black Hills, not only does it disrespect the history of this land and benefit from the broken Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Forest Service has neglected to complete the mandatory Tribal consultation. Ultimately forcing the Tribal Council to initiate these meetings.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
	Sage	Nichols		329	4	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	Finally, it is also important to note that the current Forest Management Plan that was published in 1997, prohibits this drilling. The Forest Service's proposal to amend this Plan that is already 16 years past its last amendment, is terribly negligent and wholly unacceptable.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Frank	DiCesare		330	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I wish to state that I am opposed to any gold exploration int he Black hills of South Dakota.	Comment noted.
	Rebecca	Fisher		331	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing today to say NO to the F3 Gold Project.	Comment noted.
	Rebecca	Fisher		331	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Please, please do not let the mining companies pollute our water and even use our water which is scare and scar the beautiful Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Eric	Zimmer		332	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I am writing to strongly oppose prospective gold mining projects and explorations in or near Jenny Gulch -- or, for that matter -- in any area that risks the quality of the water in Rapid Creek.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Deonne	Taylor		333	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am totally against this project.	Comment noted.
	Mike	Olander		334	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	If gold is found it will change from an exploratory operation to a mining operation. This is unacceptable and will leave a scar on the Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Mike	Olander		334	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a native South Dakotan I am adamantly opposed to this project.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Leah	Bomesberger		335	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a local Rapid City Citizen, a nurse, a public health advocate, avid recreationalist, soon-to-be mom, and just as a human being living on planet earth, I am greatly concerned about the idea of gold exploration or allowing any kind of privatized group to breach the sacred waters around Pactola Reservoir.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Leah	Bomesberger		335	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	This is jeopardizing the health and well-being, not only physically in the event of mining and it's toxic by-products, but emotionally and mentally in the loss of recreation and nature in the Pactola area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Leah	Bomesberger		335	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do the right thing. DO NOT ALLOW MINING OR EXPLORATION.	Comment noted.
	Brad	Evans		336	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	"Exploratory" drilling only leads to ONE THING = more mining. Plz don't even consider it - especially near the headwaters of our drinking water supply. NO NO NO. I'm a 5th generation BH resident. We don't need more polluting mining jobs. Give our mother (EARTH) a break!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The F3 Gold Mining 'Jenny Gulch' exploration drilling project area is on 1851 and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty territory, without consent of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation needs to be held with the Oglala Sioux Tribe.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The DRAFT - Environmental Assessment (EA) does not address Tribal concerns fully, (Cultural, Water and Land issues) and is beyond the scope of the EA.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	The US Forest Service needs to perform a DRAFT - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) not a DRAFT Environmental Assessment (EA) due to narrow scope of Tribal concerns.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The DRAFT (EA) is not fully informing the public on Tribal lands.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	6	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	NHPA, NAGPRA and Executive Order 13007 on Protection of Indian Sacred Sites, because impacts to cultural sites, a ceremonial site and Native burials are not being properly evaluated and protected.	See Draft EA Section 3.4.1, which states: "Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements." Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4; the Project is in compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	7	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The proposed Draft EA has too narrow of a scope. There must be a comprehensive evaluation of impacts to Treaty rights, cumulative impacts, and impacts to medicinal plants and species of concern to the Lakota.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	8	Other Regulatory Process	Water Quality/Water Supply EA vs EIS	The potential for groundwater and surface water contamination is too great for a DRAFT - Environmental Assessment (EA) and needs a DRAFT Environmental Impact Statement in the NEPA Process.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	9	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The proximity of proposed drilling pads to Pe' Sla and nearby public lands threatens indigenous cultural resources.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	10	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The trust responsibility of the federal agency must be met in accordance to the Treaty's and Applicable Laws.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Water Resources Department	Reno	Red Cloud Sr.		337	11	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We recommend a DRAFT Environmental Impact Statement to address our Tribal concerns.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation, which is ongoing, will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Allen	Orville		338	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to any and all exploratory drilling around Silver City.	Comment noted.
	Greg	Olson		339	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not believe that it is accurate to refer to this project as only an exploratory activity. The fact that there will be no activity directly related to mining does not reassure me at all.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Timothy	Moran		340	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to add my voice to the many that oppose the F3 Gold Project.	Comment noted.

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	Timothy	Moran		340	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	In addition to an incomplete and vague Environmental Impact Statement, the fact that not all potential impacts of the project have been looked at and analyzed is concern enough to support the "No Action" alternative.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Mann Strategies	Larry	Mann		341	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	I believe it is important that a decision on the F3 Gold environmental assessment consider the obligations the U.S. Forest Service must address: First, as clearly stated in the draft EA, current federal mining law establishes a statutory right to access its mineral lease areas for exploration purposes. The EA was conducted by independent third party contractor to provide an unbiased assessment of potential impacts from a wide range of resources within the Jenny Gulch Project boundaries. The recommendations reflected in Alternative C, the preferred alternative, have been endorsed by F3 Gold in cooperation with USFS. The Jenny Gulch Project is NOT a mining proposal, and hysterical public statements to the contrary, are not relevant to a finding of no significant impact.	Comment noted.
Mann Strategies	Larry	Mann		341	2	Other	Project Description	The Black Hills area has been explored for decades. Very few individuals could find previous mineral exploration sites within the forest, and after F3 Gold's activities, very few will be able to identify evidence of such efforts.	Comment noted.
Mann Strategies	Larry	Mann		341	3	Other	Project Description	F3 Gold has cooperatively participated with the Forest Service to reach a science and engineering based conclusion to approve a thoughtful and effective plan of operation for exploration. The process has reached this stage of consideration after three years and significant cost. The opponents strategy of denial by delay, undermines long standing patterns of statutory interpretation and best practice standards.	Comment noted.
Mann Strategies	Larry	Mann		341	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As with many business proposals, time is of the essence. I urge the USFS to issue a FONZI in a timely manner.	Comment noted.
	Bruce	Evans		342	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am against further mining in the Black Hills. We have already had enough environmental catastrophes such as water contamination, superfund sites, acidic rock drainage problems etc. The Rapid Creek drainage basin should definitely be off limits for this kind of activity.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The potential effects of exploratory drilling are discussed in the Draft EA and associated appendices.
	Andy	Thorstenson		343	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	In all of the decisions that the Forest Service makes regarding land use this should be one of the simplest. Deny this permit request. The Jenny Gulch area and the Rapid Creek watershed are critical for wildlife, recreation and public drinking water.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Andy	Thorstenson		343	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	To allow a gold mine in this sensitive area is a tremendously bad idea. It runs counter to the Forest Service vision of Multiple Use and would convert that area into single use.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Cheryl	Schreier		344	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose the F3's Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted.

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	Cheryl	Schreier		344	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full Environmental Impact Statement is needed to assess the risk of drilling activity to our water, our forest, wildlife, and recreation. I believe the assessment they have done is insufficient, relies too heavily on promises from the company proposing the drilling...	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Potential effects of all project alternatives on wildlife and fish are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Cheryl	Schreier		344	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Time for comment, only 30 days on activity that poses a risk of decades of harm.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Cheryl	Schreier		344	4	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The current Forest Management Plan (published in 1997) prohibits this drilling. More than a decade of change on the Black Hills National Forest through fire, pine bark beetle infestation, and unsustainable logging practices would be ignored in the proposed "amendment" to allow mineral exploration.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record. See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.
	Cheryl	Schreier		344	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service has not met its legal requirements for Tribal Consultation. Not only did the agency fail to complete consultation during the scoping process on this project, they put the burden on Tribal officials to initiate requests on topics of cultural resources, sacred sites, and other issues that are mandated for consultation.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Luke	Krueger		345	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Pactola is an invaluable resource to our community. I strongly support No Action on this.	Comment noted.
	Ben	Wudtke		346	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Black Hills Regional Multiple Use Coalition (BHRMUC) is writing in support of F3 Gold's proposed exploration project in the Jenny Gulch/Silver City area, and in support of the findings of the draft EA conducted by USFS. The BHRMUC supports Alternative C as outlined by USFS in the draft EA.	Comment noted.
	Ben	Wudtke		346	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft EA demonstrates that Alternative C does not pose a significant threat to the environmental or cultural/heritage resources of the Hills, and we support F3 Gold accessing its mineral lease areas for the purpose of exploring and identifying geological resources.	Comment noted.
	Ben	Wudtke		346	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The NEPA process provides environmental protection by creating a process through which the applicant and the government work together to ensure that projects proposed and conducted in the forest are properly planned, meet the environmental safety standards, and are right-sized and designed to avoid longterm impacts, minimize short-term impacts, and allow for resource utilization.	Comment noted.
	Ben	Wudtke		346	4	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A categorical exclusion exists for projects like what F3 Gold originally proposed – projects with less than 5 acres of surface disturbance, and/or for projects completed within 12 months. Despite the availability of such an exclusion, USFS requested – and F3 Gold agreed to – a more thorough and costly review through an EA process. We believe the draft EA exceeds the obligations for analysis by the USFS.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.

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	Ben	Wudtke		346	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Now that the findings of the draft EA are here, we would encourage USFS to be expedient in their efforts to finalize the EA and publish a decision upon completion of public input.	Comment noted.
	Ben	Wudtke		346	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	While temporary disturbance and effects were identified for some areas in the draft EA, there were no significant or long-term impacts identified for Alternative C. Furthermore, Alternative C includes specific project adaptations to minimize the potential impacts which were identified during scoping.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Eilbeck		347	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am, as is my family, firmly opposed any such drilling and or potential mining project in the Jenny gulch, Silver City area.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Eilbeck		347	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	At the very very least, this should be studied via an Environmental Impact Statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Katherine	Jaschke		348	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to any and all exploratory drilling in the Black Hills area. Keeping your drinking water as clean as possible needs to be one of the highest priorities. All environmental considerations need to be based on 2021 standards.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	1	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has concerns that the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project (project) Draft EA, "Alternative C - Modified Proposed Action" permits avoidable impacts to bighorn sheep. Specifically, implementing the Proposed Minimization Measures, only after bighorn sheep lambs are observed, potentially disturbs the lambing activity the measure seeks to protect. Disturbance can be avoided by restricting exploration activities near the bighorn sheep area during the lambing period. We request BHNF develop new Minimization Measures that include: exploration activity buffers for the bighorn sheep lambing area in the southern portion of the project area, considerations of bighorn sheep sensitivity to disturbance during lamb parturition and breeding, and practical bighorn sheep restrictions easily conveyed to everyone associated with the project.	The USFS relies on data from South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department (SDGF&P) who is responsible for bighorn sheep management state-wide. Lambing areas were delineated by the SDGF&P, provided in a ArcGIS shapefile in 2012 that included data from radio telemetry collar locations and professional expertise of bighorn sheep managers that track sheep locations. Neither alternative has drill sites located in the SDGF&P defined lambing area. However, additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	2	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The EA, Alternative C - Modified Proposed Action adopts the applicant's Proposed Minimization Measures (Wildlife - Table 2-1, page 11); applying exploration restrictions from April 15 to August 31, but only when bighorn sheep lambs are observed. Alternative C falls short in recognizing bighorn sheep migration and parturition data, and bighorn sheep sensitivity to human interactions during lambing.	Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	GFP recommends review of bighorn sheep information provided at the end of this letter to aid in development of a new alternative that will be protective of both the lambing area and lambing activity. We recommend a new alternative that restricts all exploration activities in the lambing area during the April 15 to August 31 lambing period. Restricted activities include drill pad development, drilling, and project related road use (regulatory, drilling crews, water, and fuel handlers, etc.).	Neither alternative has drill sites located in the SDGF&P defined lambing area. However, additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	BHNF should note, implementation of the Applicants Proposed Minimization Measure for bighorn sheep may burden BHNF, the operator and contractors when ongoing exploration activities are abruptly curtailed by the observation of bighorn sheep returning to their existing lambing area.	Comment noted. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	5	Incorporate	Editorial	Abbreviations (page vi): Add GFP to this page.	These edits are incorporated in the Final EA.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	6	Incorporate	Editorial	Section 1.3.4 Other Applicable Laws/Regulations (page 6): List South Dakota Codified Law (SDCL), Administrative Rules of South Dakota (ARSD), Pennington County Natural Resources Conservation Service as applicable laws, regulations, and policies guiding project operating, monitoring, reporting and reclamation parameters.	These edits are incorporated in the Final EA.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	7	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Table 2-1 (page 11): Drilling activity restrictions meant to avoid bighorn sheep disturbance between April 15 to August 31st should not be based on sheep observation. Drilling activity restrictions should occur from April 15 to August 31st within the identified lambing area and an adequate buffer.	Neither alternative has drill sites located in the SDGF&P defined lambing area. However, additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	8	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Drilling within 500-feet of a known bat roost location should occur outside the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31). Please identify how roost sites are identified.	As noted in Table 2-1 of the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report, drilling and associated tree clearing within 150 feet of a known bat maternity roost location would occur outside the pup-rearing season (June 1 through July 31). Roost locations were identified during US Forest Service surveys. Clearing of any vegetation would not occur within 500 feet of a cave or abandoned mine that serves as a nursery or hibernacula per USFS standards.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	9	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	The EA does not address how bat hibernaculum use is determined and protected.	This information is provided in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Bat hibernaculum were identified by field surveys by US Forest Service and Barr.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	10	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	Issue: Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils. Upon completion of a drill hole, the drill cuttings and fines would be dispersed in the disturbed area. The EA suggests sulfide minerals in the bedrock is potentially acid generating. In response, the EA should contain a new alternative to minimize and mitigate potential project related impacts from acid generating materials in drill cuttings. A new alternative shall require protocols for drill cutting characterization to identify materials that have acid generating potential segregates acid generating materials, and allows for final deposition of reactive rock to be isolated from air and water.	Potential for drill cuttings to effect soil and water resources is discussed in Section 3.3.2.2 of the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock would be buried on-site or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. Additional text has been added to Section 2.2.1 noting that thin-spreading and burying cuttings beneath the topsoil is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the Western U.S. Burying the cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Should on-site disposal in this method not be feasible, off-site transport and disposal may be required in coordination with the USFS. The text has also been updated noting the role of bentonite in isolating and confiding trace amounts of sulfur-based minerals. F3's cuttings management program complies with South Dakota state disposal rules. F3's cuttings management program also proposes the use of storage tanks instead of sumps to further minimize potential effect.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	11	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	Table 3-1: The EA 'Evaluation Criteria' includes drilling processes, materials used, and well sealing plans. Include the evaluation of all drill cuttings for the potential to alter soil and water resources.	Potential for drill cuttings to effect soil and water resources is discussed in Section 3.3.2.2 of the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	12	Other	Geology, Geohydrology, Geochemistry & Soils	3.6.3.2 Geology (page 25): The EA suggests sulfide minerals in the bedrock is potentially acid generating. Develop a new alternative requiring accepted protocols to characterize drill cuttings for acidity generation potential. Require segregation and isolation plans for potentially acid generation materials. 3.6.4.2 Geology (page 26): Develop a new alternative requiring accepted protocols for drill cuttings characterization to identify the potential for acidity generation. Require segregations and isolation of potentially generating materials.	These impacts are discussed in Sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock would be buried on-site or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. F3's cuttings management program complies with South Dakota state disposal rules. F3's cuttings management program also proposes the use of storage tanks instead of sumps to further minimize potential effect.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	13	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	3.7.1.2 Groundwater (page 27): The EA identifies Deadwood, Madison, Minnelusa, Minnekahta, and Inyan Kara as crystalline core bedrock aquifers in the Black Hills and surrounding area. These are not crystalline core aquifers.	Section 3.7.1.2 of the EA has been updated to clarify that that the aquifers are not crystalline.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	14	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Appendix D: Forest planning should provide bighorn sheep, a Region 2 sensitive species, full consideration in achieving a 'no effect' determination by altering both Alternative C and the Applicants Mitigation Measures to maintain the viability of the bighorn sheep lambing area identified in the southern project area. GFP suggests restricting project access and other exploration activities in the southern project area during the lambing period between April 15 to august 31st.	See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing. Bighorn sheep are known to travel between different herds on the forest, especially Rams during a foray. The bighorn sheep herd at Silver City is not isolated by geographic or other barriers and is free to move to other areas within the Black Hills National Forest. Therefore, a determination of "May adversely impact individuals, but not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Planning Area, nor cause a trend toward federal listing" was made in the project BA/BE document. This determination indicates that bighorn sheep will be affected by project activities short-term (Appendix D, page 22-25) so a "no impact" determination cannot be made for Alternative C modified. These minimization measures should be adequate to minimize effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
SD Game, Fish, and Parks	Stan	Michals		349	15	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Table 4-1: Potential for Effect Rationale - The EA identifies a bighorn sheep summer use lambing area is present in the southern part of Project area. A 'USFS Bighorn Sheep Range shapefile' and 'USFS Wildlife Timing Restrictions shapefile' are cited. Please describe contents of the USFS Wildlife Timing Restrictions shapefile.	The USFS relies on bighorn sheep data from South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department (SDGF&P) who is responsible for bighorn sheep management state-wide. The forest wide bighorn use area shapefile was clipped to within 1.0 mile of the project area boundary into two shapefiles: the Bighorn Sheep Range shapefile and the Wildlife Timing Restrictions shapefile. The bighorn summer use area is identified in the Bighorn Sheep Range shapefile and the lambing area is identified in the Wildlife Timing Restrictions shapefile. A figure (Figure 2-2) identifying the bighorn sheep summer use area and the lambing area has been added to Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Yoko	Sugawara		350	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Our drinking water is too essential for a private company to mess with in search of gold. I oppose the exploration project.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Christopher	Smith		351	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly urge you to stop/prevent further destruction of the Black Hills through mining operations of any kind. Already the location of at least one superfund site, the threat from environmental impact of mining far outweighs any benefits to the beautiful resource.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Jaime			352	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I STRONGLY oppose to drilling or any mining at, in, or near Jenny Gulch! Or Pactola for that matter.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Joan	Howard		353	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I have no big issue with the exploration - seems benign.	Comment noted.
	Joan	Howard		353	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	But the actual mine is high risk. Please let the company know that folks will come out of the woodwork to fight this and it will be litigated for years.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Randy	Fisher		354	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the "NO ACTION' alternative.	Comment noted.
	Randy	Fisher		354	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Let's keep mining operations away from our critical watersheds. Mining in this area has too much risk to Pactola Reservoir and the Rapid City area water supply.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Renee	Raisanen		355	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a lifelong resident of the Black Hills and business owner, I strongly oppose F3's Jenny Gulch gold project. Not only will this project impose unavoidable harm to our region's only source for clean, safe drinking water but it will also negatively impact our tourism industry through the destruction of wildlife habitat and recreational use areas and trails.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Renee	Raisanen		355	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	For a project that will have such dramatic, long-lasting, and detrimental ripple effects an extension should be granted so more community members can be informed and allowed to comment on the matter. 30 days is not adequate time unless slipping it through and under the radar is the plan.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Renee	Raisanen		355	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Also, a Full Impact Statement is needed to assess the risk of drilling.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Monica	Hartnett		356	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I intensely oppose this happening when I found out.	Comment noted.
	Monica	Hartnett		356	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	This could lead to mining, why else would you do an exploration project? And mining I am absolutely against in that area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Jeanne	Roach		357	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	THE BLACK HILLS ARE SACRED TO LAKOTA NATION NO GOLD MINING SAVE OUR DRINKING WATER STOP RAPING MOTHER EARTH	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		358	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	My family and I continue our opposition to the Jenny Gulch gold drilling project.	Comment noted.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		358	2	Other	Reclamation Financial Assurance	In the response to numerous commenters, the USFS assured that water quality, land and wildlife disruption, and transportation issues would be considered if the drilling permit was approved. However, once approval is obtained, I believe the USFS cannot ensure that there is no resulting damage in those areas. Once damage occurs, it will be irreversible or very costly to remedy.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
	SaraBeth	Donovan		358	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Therefore, I urge the USFS to conduct an Environmental Impact Study prior to approval to address each of those very important concerns.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Oglala Sioux Tribe Cultural Advisory Committee	Elvyn Douglas	Bissonette		359	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Like to make a statement on the mining project at Jenny Gulch, strongly opposed any desecration of the Black Hills.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Tribe is opposed to any activity in the Black Hills that would infringe on our rights under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and other federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA") and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA").	Comment noted. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe believes the Draft EA is inadequate, does not contain the legally-required analysis of impacts from the Project, particularly to cultural and religious resources, and cannot form the basis for a lawful Finding of No Significant Impact ("FONSI").	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Tribe expresses its disappointment that the U.S. Forest Service would issue a Draft EA without having completed the meaningful and good faith consultation with the Tribe that is required by the NHPA, other laws, and the agency's trust responsibilities. This lack of meaningful consultation is evident in the Draft EA's dearth of understanding or analysis of cultural and religious impacts anticipated from the Project. The Tribe requests the U.S. Forest Service suspend all action on this Project until it has satisfied its legal obligations to the Tribe.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Black Hills are sacred to our people. In our Lakota language, we refer to the Black Hills as Pahá Sápa and we consider them "the heart of everything that is." The Tribe is committed, now and forever, to protecting the Black Hills and preserving our claim to our sacred lands.	Comment noted.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Oglala Sioux Tribe is opposed to all mineral exploration and mining in the Black Hills that would infringe on our rights under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and other federal laws, the Oglala Sioux Tribe asserts that the United States should recognize that the Black Hills are not within the scope of the General Mining Law of 1872 and remove the Black Hills from all federal mining and mineral leasing laws. The Oglala Sioux Tribe has treaty rights to land, water, fish, wildlife, and other natural, cultural, and other resources in the Black Hills.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	6	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed mineral exploration would interfere with our Treaty rights and our use of our sacred Pe' Sla and other lands in the Black Hills.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	7	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	These and other activities could create substantial and unreasonable noise and disturbance for surrounding lands, including Pe' Sla. These issues should have been addressed through government-to-government consultation between the Forest Service and the Tribe before any Draft EA was completed or circulated to the public for review.	As stated in the Draft EA Table 2-2 and Section 3.9.4, Alternative C includes work hour timing restrictions for drilling areas within 500 feet of a residence to minimize noise effects. This is also discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	8	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service indicated in the Draft EA that it solicited government-to-government consultation in a mailing dated June 6, 2020. The Tribe indicated its desire to participate in such consultation in a letter dated January 17, 2020, but to date no such consultation has taken place. The Draft EA states that, "due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021." As recently as August 30, 2021, and into September 2021, less than two weeks before the release of the Draft EA, Forest Service personnel acknowledged to Tribal officials that the agency seeks to initiate government to government consultation. While the Tribe appreciates the invitation from the Forest Service to begin consultation – and the Tribe intends to engage – the agency has done a disservice to the Tribe, the public, and itself by issuing a Draft EA before any substantive discussions have begun that could inform the agency's environmental impact review.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	9	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Oglala Sioux Tribe has, by ordinance, adopted laws and procedures governing government-to-government consultation with the United States. A copy of that ordinance—O.S.T. Ord. No. 11-10 (Jun. 7, 2011)—is attached hereto and incorporated by reference. Tribal law requires that government-to-government consultation occur in accordance with the process set forth in Ord. No. 11-10 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation at a Special Meeting of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council. No such consultation has begun, despite the Tribe's prior statement that it would entertain the U.S. Forest Service's request for consultation on this proposed Project.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. On July 2, 2021, the Level I Cultural Resources Inventory was certified mailed to OST Tribal Historic Preservation Office which was delivered July 7, 2021. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	10	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration would cause irreparable harm to archeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites and areas present in and around the proposed Project area. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and full compliance with federal law, including Section 106 of NHPA as well as Executive Order No. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4. The Project is compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. Also see Draft EA Section 3.4 and Appendix G, Section 3.5
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	11	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration may cause environmental harms to the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills, including surface lands, subsurface structures, water, threatened and endangered species, and other natural resources. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and detailed environmental analysis under NEPA, including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS").	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources, including those referenced, discussed in the EA. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	12	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Tribe opposes a FONSI. The Tribe believes the proposed Project would result in significant impacts to the land, water, fish, wildlife, and natural resources in the Black Hills. The Tribe shares and joins in the concerns raised by the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance. Those concerns have not been adequately addressed by the Forest Service.	Comment noted.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	13	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe believes the proposed Project would have significant impacts on its cultural resources as well as its religious and cultural practices in the Black Hills and at Pe' Sla. Without government-to-government consultation with the Tribe, there is no way the Forest Service can adequately assess the significance of cultural resource impacts, let alone make a finding that the proposed Project would have no significant impacts on such cultural resources and on the cultural and religious practices at and around the site.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	14	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe previously submitted comments, dated January 17, 2021, on the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts the proposed Project would have on cultural and religious resources at the proposed exploration sites, at Pe' Sla and religious and cultural practices at Pe' Sla. Yet there is no analysis in the Draft EA on the impacts on Pe' Sla and no competent analysis of any impacts to cultural, historical, and religious resources of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The Draft EA instead relies exclusively on a limited Level 1 "records search" and "targeted site visits". The Draft EA does not indicate what records were reviewed, who selected those records, or that any "targeted site visits" were performed by individuals qualified to identify and review impacts to Lakota religious and cultural resources. Had the Forest Service engaged in the required government-to-government consultation with the Oglala Sioux Tribe and had the Forest Service complied with NHPA requirement that consultation begin as early as possible in the process, the agency would know that a scientifically competent survey is required, and that a simple record search and unspecified "targeted site visits" are inadequate. It would also be aware of the tremendous religious and cultural resource impacts of this proposed Project— impacts both within and beyond the four corners of the Project site.	For the Draft EA, a cultural resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The Level I cultural resources inventory, includes more specific detail of this process than what is able to be disclosed in the EA per Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act as amended. A Level I inventory provided sufficient information to inform agency determinations on the potential for an undertaking's effect on identified historic properties as long as previous Level III pedestrian survey inventories meet or exceed current standards. The report revealed that these previous inventories met South Dakota Guidelines for Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (2012), and South Dakota Codified Law 1-19A-11.1 of 2012, which were the standards at the time of the Level I Records search. The cultural resources report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO(s) (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with USFS conclusions. The Level I Records review revealed that the entire project area has been covered by previous Level III cultural resource inventories. Twenty-five previously recorded, identified, and evaluated cultural resources are within the proposed project area. Targeted site visits were to the two historic properties (39PN0907 and 39PN2527) to monitor current conditions and assess potential effects of the undertaking on the integrity of these two historic properties within the direct Area of Potential Effect (APE). Results from the sites visits helped the USFS and Quality Services Inc. to recommend modifications to the proposed undertaking to avoid adverse effects on identified historic properties. F3 Gold proposed modified project locations and routes and avoid adverse effects to these sites. These modifications are reflected in Alternative C. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration.
Oglala Sioux Tribe, President	Kevin	Killer		360	15	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Given the lack of the required meaningful and good faith consultation by the Forest Service to date, the Tribe requests the agency immediately suspend all work on this Project until all NHPA and government-to-government consultation has occurred. At that time, the agency should prepare a Draft EIS for public and tribal review and comment.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report, which includes more specific detail than what is able to be disclosed in the EA, was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	1	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe is opposed to any activity in the Black Hills that would infringe on our rights under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and other federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA") and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA").	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The Draft EA is inadequate; it does not contained the legally-required assessment of all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from the Project; and it cannot form the basis of a lawful Finding of No Significant Impact ("FONSI").	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Tribe repeats its request for formal government-to-government consultation with the Forest Service concerning the Project and its impacts on the environment, land, water, fish, wildlife, natural resources, cultural resources, and traditional, religious, and cultural practices in the Black Hills. The Forest Service should suspend all further action on this Project until it has engaged in formal government-to-government consultation with the Tribe.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Black Hills are sacred to our people. In our Lakota language, we refer to the Black Hills as Pahá Sápa and we consider them "the heart of everything that is." The Tribe is committed, now and forever, to protecting the Black Hills and preserving our claim to our sacred lands. To that end, several of our Sioux Tribes recently purchased the sacred lands known as Pe' Sla in the heart of the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe is opposed to all mineral exploration and mining in the Black Hills that would infringe on our rights under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and other federal laws, and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe asserts that the United States should recognize that the Black Hills are not within the scope of the General Mining Law of 1872 and remove the Black Hills from all federal mining and mineral leasing laws. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe has treaty rights to land, water, fish, wildlife, and other natural, cultural, and other resources in the Black Hills.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.

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Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	6	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed mineral exploration would interfere with our Treaty rights and our use of our sacred Pe' Sla and other lands in the Black Hills.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	7	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	These and other activities could create substantial and unreasonable noise and disturbance for surrounding lands, including Pe' Sla. These issues should have been addressed through government-to-government consultation between the Forest Service and the Tribe before any Draft EA was completed or circulated to the public for review.	As stated in the Draft EA Table 2-2 and Section 3.9.4, Alternative C includes work hour timing restrictions for drilling areas within 500 feet of a residence to minimize noise effects. This is also discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	8	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service indicated in the Draft EA that it solicited government-to-government consultation in a mailing dated June 6, 2020. The Tribe indicated its desire to participate in such consultation in a letter dated January 17, 2020, but to date no such consultation has taken place. The Draft EA states that, "due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021." The Forest Service should not have issued a Draft EA before engaging in meaningful consultations with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and other federally-recognized Indian tribes.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	9	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Tribe has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration may cause environmental harms to the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills, including surface lands, subsurface structures, water, threatened and endangered species, and other natural resources. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and detailed environmental analysis under NEPA, including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS"). The Tribe opposes a FONSI.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	10	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Tribe believes the proposed Project would result in significant impacts to the land, water, fish, wildlife, and natural resources in the Black Hills. The Tribe shares and joins in the concerns raised by the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance. Those concerns have not been adequately addressed by the Forest Service.	Comment noted.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	11	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe believes the proposed Project would have significant impacts on its cultural resources as well as its religious and cultural practices in the Black Hills and at Pe' Sla. Without government-to-government consultation with the Tribe, there is no way the Forest Service can adequately assess the significance of cultural resource impacts, let alone make a finding that the proposed Project would have no significant impacts on such cultural resources and on the cultural and religious practices at and around the site.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing to the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	12	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribe previously submitted comments, dated January 16, 2021, on the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts the proposed Project would have on cultural and religious resources at the proposed exploration sites, at Pe' Sla and religious and cultural practices at Pe' Sla. Yet there is no analysis in the Draft EA on the impacts on Pe' Sla and no competent analysis of any impacts to cultural, historical, and religious resources of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. The EA instead relies exclusively on a limited Level 1 "records search" and "targeted site visits". The EA does not indicate what records were reviewed, who selected those records, or that any "targeted site visits" were performed by individuals qualified to identify and review impacts to Lakota religious and cultural resources. Had the Forest Service engaged in the required government-to-government consultation with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and had the Forest Service complied with NHPA requirement that consultation begin as early as possible in the process, the agency would know that a scientifically competent survey is required, and that a simple record search and unspecified "targeted site visits" are inadequate. It would also be aware of the tremendous religious and cultural resource impacts of this proposed Project—impacts both within and beyond the four corners of the Project site.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. On July 2, 2021, the Level I Cultural Resources Inventory was certified mailed to OST Tribal Historic Preservation Office which was delivered July 7, 2021. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, a cultural resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The Level I cultural resources inventory, includes more specific detail of this process than what is able to be disclosed in the EA per Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act as amended. A Level I inventory provided sufficient information to inform agency determinations on the potential for an undertaking's effect on identified historic properties as long as previous Level III pedestrian survey inventories meet or exceed current standards. The report revealed that these previous inventories met South Dakota Guidelines for Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (2012), and South Dakota Codified Law 1-19A-11.1 of 2012, which were the standards at the time of the Level I Records search. The cultural resources report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO(s) (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with USFS conclusions. The Level I Records review revealed that the entire project area has been covered by previous Level III cultural resource inventories. Twenty-five previously recorded, identified, and evaluated cultural resources are within the proposed project area. Targeted site visits were to the two historic properties (39PN0907 and 39PN2527) to monitor current conditions and assess potential effects of the undertaking on the integrity of these two historic properties within the direct Area of Potential Effect (APE). Results from the sites visits helped the USFS and Quality Services Inc. to recommend modifications to the proposed undertaking to avoid adverse effects on identified historic properties. F3 Gold proposed modified project locations and routes and avoid adverse effects to these sites. These modifications are reflected in Alternative C.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	13	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Given the lack of the required meaningful and good faith consultation by the Forest Service to date, the Tribe requests the agency immediately suspend all work on this Project until all NHPA and government-to-government consultation has occurred. At that time, the agency should prepare a Draft EIS for public and tribal review and comment.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing to the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	14	Outside of Scope	Mining	The USFS should not permit F3 to mine for gold at Jenny Gulch. The highest use for the USFS land in the Black Hills is to honor the U.S. Constitution, the 1868 Treaty and return the land to the Great Sioux Nation as a permanent home.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	15	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	USFS should honor the sacred sites, the endangered species, big horn sheep—local trout—native plants, among others, and deny the permit. Moreover, protection of Black Hills' watersheds is essential to protect drinking water, as the Great Sioux Nation tribes say, Mni Wiconi—Water is life.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. The technical report appendices and Draft EA address direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these resources.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	16	Outside of Scope	Mining	Gold mining by products typically generate heavy metals and arsenic that poison the water and Rapid City, the second-largest South Dakota city, is threatened: the Black Hills aquifer is an open aquifer and any chemical pollution will leach directly into the water. Gold mining in the Black Hills has previously resulted in EPA Superfund sites that impact the Rivers in the area all the way to the Missouri River. Gold mining should be prohibited at Jenny Gulch and the requested permit should be denied.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

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Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	17	Regulatory Process	Comment Period EA Content	Start the Public Comment Period Over: In our view, your NEPA process is fatally flawed.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	18	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	GPTCA has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration would cause irreparable harm to archeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites and areas present in and around the proposed Project area. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and full compliance with federal law, including Section 106 of NHPA as well as Executive Order No. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4. The project is compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. Also see Draft EA Section 3.4 and Appendix G, Section 3.5.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	19	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	USFS should restart your process because you did not consult with our Indian nations and tribes concerning treaty protected land. Under Executive Order 13175, the USFS was required to undertake consultation with our Sioux Nation tribes prior to formulating the plan for review of the Jenny Gulch gold mine proposal. This is especially so since the lands at issue are treaty protected sacred lands.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	20	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The 1868 Sioux Nation Treaty protects the Black Hills as part of the "permanent home" of the Great Sioux Nation. The Supreme Court held that Congress's taking of the Black Hills was in violation of the Constitution and the Sioux Nation treaty rights in United States v. Sioux Nation, 448 U.S. 371 (1980). The US Forest Service should be mindful of this background when scoping its plans for public meetings and consultations.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	21	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	President Biden affirmed Executive Order No. 13175 and directed Federal Agencies to develop consultation action plans through his January 26, 2021 Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships. USDA has a policy on Consultation.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	22	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources) EA vs. EIS	GPTCA Tribes have legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration may cause environmental harms to the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills, including surface lands, subsurface structures, water, threatened and endangered species, and other natural resources. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and detailed environmental analysis under NEPA, including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS"). GPTCA opposes a FONSI.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing to the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	23	Regulatory Process	EA Content	GPTCA believes the proposed Project would result in significant impacts to the land, water, fish, wildlife, and natural resources in the Black Hills. GPTCA shares and joins in the concerns raised by the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance. Those concerns have not been adequately addressed by the Forest Service.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	24	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	GPTCA believes the proposed Project would have significant impacts on its cultural resources as well as tribal religious and cultural practices in the Black Hills and at Pe' Sla. Without government-to-government consultation with GPTCA, there is no way the Forest Service can adequately assess the significance of cultural resource impacts, let alone make a finding that the proposed Project would have no significant impacts on such cultural resources and on the cultural and religious practices at and around the site.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing to the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Chairman and Great Plains Chairmen's Association	Harold	Frazier		361	25	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Given the lack of the required meaningful and good faith consultation by the Forest Service to date, GPTCA requests the agency immediately suspend all work on this Project until all NHPA and government-to-government consultation has occurred. At that time, the agency should prepare a Draft EIS for public and tribal review and comment.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing to the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Oglala Sioux Tribe THPO	Thomas	Brings		362	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) -Cultural Affairs and Historical Preservation Office (CAHPO) requests the Environmental Assessment be dismantled and reengineered.	Comment noted.
Oglala Sioux Tribe THPO	Thomas	Brings		362	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The OST - CAHPO is also requesting the EA be put on hold until a Nation to Nation Consultation with the OST is instituted.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing to the publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Oglala Sioux Tribe THPO	Thomas	Brings		362	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	OST was never involved in the EA process	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Oglala Sioux Tribe THPO	Thomas	Brings		362	4	Other	Project Description	The EA states there will be 42 drill sites but does not state how many holes will be drilled at each pad. Will there be directional drilling, fracking.	The number of holes drilled on each drill pad will depend on the findings in the field, with the average drill pad having one to two holes and some having up to four holes. This has been clarified in Section 2.2.1 of the Final EA. Exploration drilling involves drilling holes vertically and at an angle from the surface. That angle can vary between -90 degrees (vertical) and -45 degrees. Once the angle is set, the drill will remain at that angle until completion of the drill hole. Directional drilling that controls the direction of the boring during drilling (as commonly used in oil and gas development) or horizontal drilling methods will not be used. Fracking is likewise not a method that will be used by this exploration drilling project.
Oglala Sioux Tribe THPO	Thomas	Brings		362	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	All of the effects the project will have on the aquifers and surface water have not been addressed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jenny	Read		363	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	I understand that appropriate consultations with our tribal nations were not undergone. This is a tremendous error on your part, as we are a state that promotes indigenous culture.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Jenny	Read		363	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Keep in mind that this area is part of Pactola Reservoir which provides drinking water to Rapid City, Pennington County, and Ellsworth AFB.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jenny	Read		363	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	First and foremost, the Forest Service has not met it's legal requirements for tribal consultation. This alone tells me this project has not been though out thoroughly and has overlooked the ramifications this project will cause to our people, our land, and future generations to come.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Kwinn	Neff		364	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I would encourage the Forest Service to move forward with a FONSI for the Jenny Gulch Project. It should be commended the Forest Service and F3 have gone above and beyond reviewing this project by performing an EA, mineral exploration projects sometimes only require a Categorical Exclusion.	Comment noted.
	Kwinn	Neff		364	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Opposition groups have pointed to many threats, which I find hard to understand. This is not a national security threat for Ellsworth's water, their water already has issues from the air base's past fire-retardant activities (PFAS, PFOS). Core drilling does not pose a threat to water quality, recreation opportunities, or wildlife. I see far more significant impacts to Black Hills water quality every day due to run-off from erosion, leaking oil from cars in parking lots/streets and trash/cigarette butts from tourists. Runoff in communities which goes directly into storm drains and into our creeks. No exploration project comes close to that kind of direct impact on Black Hills water quality.	Comment noted.
	Kwinn	Neff		364	3	Other	Access & Transportation	Exploration companies should leave forest roads/trails in better condition than when they start, this is a free benefit to other trail users and helpful to the Forest Service with their road maintenance program. So I would encourage improvement of existing roads/trails.	Comment noted.
	Kwinn	Neff		364	4	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement	I would recommend the staff to posts the recording of the public meeting held in January of 2020 as a resource for the public who weren't able to attend.	The January 2020 meeting was not recorded. Information presented at the meeting is available on the project website.

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	Terry	Schnepf		365	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Allowing exploration drilling in this sensitive area makes absolutely no sense. The Black Hills provides a huge benefit to our states economy through tourism. Corporate greed should not be allowed to jeopardize our citizens and our economy. I am surprised this is even being considered based on past bad behavior of mining companies in our beautiful state. WON'T WE EVER LEARN!!!!	Comment noted.
	Justin	Herreman		366	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Forest Service should support the "No Action" alternative to this project.	Comment noted.
	Justin	Herreman		366	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Forest Plan Revision	The lack of proper Tribal consultation and a forest plan that specifically disallows this project should result in the project not proceeding any further until an updated forest plan has been completed and adequate tribal consultation has occurred.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record.
	Justin	Herreman		366	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	The 30 day comment period is inadequate for a project of this scope and potential impact and should be administratively extended.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Monica	Ackerman		367	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It is true that we need gold to enable us to use many products in our modern society. The worth of the gold needs is measured in the value of the gold and the industry economic impact. There has to be a value subtracted from those measurements in dollars equal to or greater than the damage which will be done to the environment.	Comment noted.
	Monica	Ackerman		367	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining is a temporary gain to the area. The scar left behind by heap leaching and surface mining is permanent.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Monica	Ackerman		367	3	Outside of	Mining	Please deny any future mining in the Black Hills.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Parry			368	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the No Action alternative.	Comment noted.
	Parry			368	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	At the very least publicly release a thorough Environmental Impact Statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Parry			368	3	Outside of	Mining	Also mining operation insurance is available.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Parry			368	4	Regulatory Process	Financial Assurance	Proof of insurance to cover accountability for the possibility of a degraded water source is a responsibility the operation should be required to take.	F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project. The Forest Service will calculate the bond. The bond amount will be based on the actual cost to the Forest Service for hiring a contractor to conduct the work. The Forest has no limitations on what the amount can be.
Yankton Sioux Tribe, Vice Chairman	Jason	Cooke		369	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We the Yankton Sioux Tribe oppose this and all other mining projects in our sacred black hills.	Comment noted. This EA evaluates the Plan of Operations that was submitted by F3, which includes exploration drilling only. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Jordan	Olson		370	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am opposed to any exploratory mining near Silver City and the surrounding area. The Black Hills have been torn up enough by these types of operations. There is no benefit to the local community. The risk of contaminating Rapid Creek is alarming. Please protect our land and our water.	Comment noted. This EA evaluates the Plan of Operations that was submitted by F3, which includes exploration drilling only. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Erik	Andreassen		371	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	I urge you to choose the no action alternative and not issue a rushed permit for mining in Jenny Gulch.	This EA evaluates the Plan of Operations that was submitted by F3, which includes exploration drilling only. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Erik	Andreassen		371	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	While mining and other extractive industries have their place in the world, there is also a very consistent track record in that industry of leaving the landscape significantly damaged and the tax payers having to foot the bill for the clean up.	This EA evaluates the Plan of Operations that was submitted by F3, which includes exploration drilling only. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review, government to government consultation, and Section 106 compliance.
	Haley	Friedt		372	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We can't risk our water, land, and community - it's not worth it.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Lori	Wood		373	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This project threatens the drinking water for Rapid City Ellsworth tribal and Rural communities.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.

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	Lori	Wood		373	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) EA vs EIS	There was no tribal consultation or environmental impact statement of cultural resources.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Lori	Wood		373	3	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	A bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route would be harmed.	Potential effects to wildlife, including bighorn sheep, are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Draft Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Lori	Wood		373	4	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The forest service must analyze all impacts of this project. It has not done this.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Lori	Wood		373	5	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Forest Service must include and analyze all alternatives to F3 gold's plan. It has not done this.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Lori	Wood		373	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please slow this down.	Comment noted. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.
	Aaron	Olson		374	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am a resident of Sunnyside Acres which is located on Sunnyside Gulch Road. I own several properties in this area and I oppose the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project and support the "No Action" alternative. The impact that this would have on this pristine area would be devastating and irreversible.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Aaron	Olson		374	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The potential for our wells to become polluted is very high. Our rock formations in this area are fractured which allows water to move with ease. When we get our summer thunderstorms or spring snowmelt the moisture that is absorbed into the ground finds its way to the bottom of my wells in about 15 minutes. I know this because our well water will become cloudy for days before clearing up. Now imagine if there were contaminants from any of F3 Gold's activities. We would no longer have potable water and my properties would become worthless. Contaminants from F3 Gold would also affect Jenny Gulch, Pactola Lake and Rapid City's drinking water supply.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Aaron	Olson		374	3	Other	Access & Transportation Public Health & Safety	Access into this area is very limited as the Silver City Road is a narrow and winding with only two lanes. Jenny Gulch Road and Sunnyside Gulch Road are even more restricted as gravel one lane roads at best. The large heavy vehicles are going to destroy our access and make it unsafe for the people using them.	Potential project effects on existing roadways are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report. This appendix also describes F3's responsibility for repairing any unexpected roadway damage, as well as reclamation requirements.
	Aaron	Olson		374	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Due to my concerns above which would affect my way of life I request a "No Action" ruling. I do not support F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch project.	Comment noted.
	Aaron	Olson		374	5	Regulatory Process	EA Content	I find the environmental assessment to be inadequate as it does not address my concerns.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.

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	Aaron	Olson		374	6	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	If you are not agreeable to a No Action ruling, F3 Gold should be required to complete the full Environmental Impact Statement to ensure no irreversible damage will be caused.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Nicolette	Rohr		375	1	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	At the very least, please consider an extension to allow more time for review of the Draft Environmental Assessment and allow the public more time to understand and respond to this proposal.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Nicolette	Rohr		375	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	A full Environmental Impact Statement is needed to fully assess the risk of drilling activity and potential harm to water resources, wildlife, and the recreation activities in the area.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Nicolette	Rohr		375	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The current report relies on the company that stands to profit from the project and needs more independent research, public input, and tribal consultation in order to allow a fair and legitimate process.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. The EA was prepared by an independent, third part consultant working at the direction of the USFS.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	1	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	This Project is in a contested area within the 1851 and 1868 Fort Laramie treaty lands for Oceti Sakowin. This Project is within and environmentally and culturally sensitive area that also would have the potential to produce adverse impacts to reserved water rights of the Oceti Sakowin bands; and specific adverse impacts to the all-inclusive environmental reserved treaty rights of Oceti Sakowin within the BHNF.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	But, after review we recommend that the EA process cannot reach a determination of a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) because this Project has the potential to produce adverse impacts that are beyond the scope of the EA for this project and this area; and, this Project has the potential to be a "highly controversial" undertaking and must move to a required EIS.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) EA vs EIS	Only by making this administrative decision to proceed to an EIS can the tribes of Oceti Sakowin have their issues addressed in the analysis section that would include Nation-to-Nation consultation which is lacking in the EA. The SREPC and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe requests and EIS for this Project and government-to-government consultation.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Understanding this process, it also clouds the consultation process with tribes. Both Section 106 consultation with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and government-to-government consultation.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	EA fails to address treaty claims include the following: The SREPC and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe maintains the position that the EA for this Project failed to identify the environmental effects on the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Oceti Sakowin tribes, their cultural, religious, historical-prehistoric resources, burials, water, environment, and sacred sites. These resources are not only Federal Trust Assets-trust resources they are protected by the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868, Federal law, and Executive Orders.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	6	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The EA failed to identify the concerns of the tribes.	Comment noted. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	7	Regulatory Process	EA Content	A core requirement of NEPA is that an agency decision maker must consider an adequate environmental analysis before deciding on a licensing, permitted action or approval by determining a FONSI for the EA.	Comment noted.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	8	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	As provided here, if the comments submitted by the SREPC and the Tribe are not included to address the following: a) the consultation process; b)the reserved water rights of Oceti Sakowin and other tribes; c) the reserved treaty rights of Oceti Sakowin to the environment within the Black Hills, land and air; and d) the decision to not pus this process to an EIS; the BHNF duty and responsibility to the NEPA process is unacceptable and, does not fulfill the "hard look" required by NEPA from a Federal agency and renders the EA "deficient."	Comment noted.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	9	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The SREPC and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in their review of the draft EA failed to see any indication that cultural resources or "historic properties of religious and cultural significance" have been identified by a certified Indian Cultural Resource Management firm (CRM).	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted bur a qualified cultural resources management consultant. The report, which is more detailed than the summary included in the Draft EA was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	10	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	3.4 Cultural Resources. Later in the Level I Records Search the document turns into a "determination of effects" letter, highly unusual to turn a Level I records research report into a Level III Archaeological Survey Report. By doing this BHNF sidesteps their government-to-government consultation with Indian tribes. This action warrants an explanation by BHNF.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report, which is more detailed than the summary included in the Draft EA was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	11	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	3.4 Cultural Resources. This section is unclear and borderline deceiving. On one hand a Level I Cultural Resource Records Search was conducted to identify any archaeological surveys work done in a one-mile area of the project footprint which led to (25) recorded cultural resources with only two sites were identified as eligible sites. On the other hand, the Level I Cultural Resource report makes a recommendation "no adverse effect to historic properties" which is not warranted, only a Class III Archaeological survey would decide like that.	For the Draft EA, a cultural resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report, which includes more specific detail than what is able to be disclosed in the EA, and was a Level I Records Review. A Level I inventory provided sufficient information to inform agency determinations on the potential for an undertaking's effect on identified historic properties as long as previous Level III pedestrian survey inventories meet or exceed current standards. The report revealed that these previous inventories met South Dakota Guidelines for Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (2012), and South Dakota Codified Law 1-19A-11.1 of 2012, which were the standards at the time of the Level I Records search. The cultural resources report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO(s) (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with USFS conclusions. The Level I Records review revealed that the entire project area has been covered by previous Level III cultural resource inventories. Twenty-five previously recorded, identified, and evaluated cultural resources are within the proposed project area. Targeted site visits were to the two historic properties (39PN0907 and 39PN2527) to monitor current conditions and assess potential effects of the undertaking on the integrity of these two historic properties within the direct Area of Potential Effect (APE). Results from the sites visits helped the USFS and Quality Services Inc. to recommend modifications to the proposed undertaking to avoid adverse effects on identified historic properties. F3 Gold proposed modified project locations and routes and avoid adverse effects to these sites. These modifications are reflected in Alternative C.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	12	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The statement "entire project area has been covered by previous cultural resource inventories" as referenced is mis-leading and is categorically false. It does not mention that the drill pads, laydown areas, access roads and areas which may have disturbance was covered by these surveys. The table in the EA references (14) surveys were conducted "within the entire area" and the table doesn't reveal any Indian CRM firm or Native American individual have conducted any TCP surveys in any of the project are. Of the (14) surveys (11) archaeological surveys are conducted after the 1992 amendments to the NHPA, and (3) were prior to, provided that in 1992 the amendment once enacted provided Indian tribes to identify "historic properties of religious and cultural significance," regardless of location.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report, which is more detailed than the summary included in the Draft EA was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. See Draft EA Section 3.4.1 " Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements." Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4. The project is compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. Also see Draft EA Section 3.4 and Appendix G, Section 3.5.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	13	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The EA for this project omits a discussion that ancient petroglyphs in the Black Hills have been identified as Lakota in origin, establishing our connection to this area, and solidifying our right to have our concerns addressed in an EA analysis section.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted, and this type of cultural resource was not identified in the area of potential effect. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	14	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The SREPC provides these sections of 36 CFR 800 regulations as it appears the staff of BHNF failed to comply with these requirements to be included in the EA.	Comment noted; the project is being developed in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	15	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The SREPC contends if the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Mining Exploration Project is permitted to go forward without consultation, and not addressing concerns of SREPC and other tribes, a tribal CRM firm will not be able to conduct a survey in a timely manner; and what will be lost is consultation on the identification phase of land survey(s) requirement contained in (36 CFR 800.2 (C) (2) (ii) & (D)). The BHNF staff may contend that consultation was initiated with THPO's but have not produced any evidence to the contrary. At a minimum, a Section 106 MOA signed off by tribal leadership and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) should have been provided since the tribes have yet to conduct TCP surveys within the project APE.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	16	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	These following sections, quoting verbatum from the regulations for Section 106 will all be lost to the inadequate process BHNF staff has responsibility to in developing this draft EA.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	17	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The draft EA does not contain any analysis of potential project impacts on the cultural, religious, historical-prehistoric resources, burials, and sacred sites of the SREPC, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other Oceti Sakowin tribes. The EA document is silent on these concern(s) considering SREPC and other tribes have an association and interest in the Black Hills.	For the Draft EA, an intensive cultural resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. Previous, recent, and to current standard, Level III pedestrian inventories of this area had been conducted for a variety of undertakings which have had previous requests for SHPO and THPO concurrence and comment were considered sufficient for assessment of the effects of the proposed undertaking on previously identified historic properties and cultural resources. The report, which is more detailed than the summary included in the Draft EA was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. See Draft EA Section 3.4.1 " Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements." Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4. The project is compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. Also see Draft EA Section 3.4 and Appendix G, Section 3.5.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	18	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Because of this decision by BHNF, these cultural, religious, historical-prehistoric resources, burials, and sacred sites have now been opened to potential destruction; and will not be identified in any tribal cultural survey and catalogued to be included for the final EA.	Section 3.4 of the Draft EA describes that work will cease immediately and the USFS notified should an unintentional discovery of cultural resources occur. Section 1.3.4 of the Draft EA lists the laws and regulations applicable to the proposed Project, including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	19	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The SREPC contends that by not including the MOA or PA to resolve any potential adverse effects the Project may produce which would have followed the regulation requirement in Subpart C, Program Alternatives, 36 CFR 800.14 into the draft EA, BHNF cannot piece-meal the EA and cannot achieve a FONSI. The BHNF cannot also use 36 CFR 800.8 to comply with the "hard look" clause required in the NEPA process. Based on the lack of a MOA attached to the EA, the draft EA as referenced is rendered "inadequate" and is determined "Deficient" by SREPC, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, other Oceti Sakowin tribes, and interested public; and we "Object" to BHNF potentially determining and arriving at a FONSI determination for this EA.	The Level I Cultural Resource Inventory follows 36 CFR 800.4 through Level I inventory (records review) by identifying adequate Level III cultural resource inventories within the proposed project's area of potential effect. This document does not uses 36 CFR 800.8 to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. Subpart C 36 CFR 800.14 provides agencies with program alternatives for anticipated and unavoidable adverse effects on historic properties of which The level I cultural resources inventory recommended avoidance of previously identified historic properties for the determination of No Adverse Effect on Historic Properties. This cultural resource inventory report was mailed to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices on July 2, 2021 for comment on potential historic properties and/or sacred sites within the project area. The cultural resources report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO(s) (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our conclusions.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	20	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Because the Oceti Sakowin tribes contend cultural resources are within the APE, the BHNF must identify mitigation measures sufficient to protect the SREPC and other tribes' ownership of their cultural, religious, historic-prehistoric resources, burials and sacred sites that may be affected by the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Mining Exploration Project.	An intensive cultural resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. Previous, recent, and to current standard, Level III pedestrian inventories of this area had been conducted for a variety of undertakings which have had previous requests for SHPO and THPO concurrence and comment were considered sufficient for assessment of the effects of the proposed undertaking on previously identified historic properties and cultural resources. The Level I Cultural Resource Inventory report, which is more detailed than the summary included in the Draft EA, was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with the forest's conclusion of No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. The BKNF made multiple attempts in 2020, 2021, & 2022 to request formal government-to-government consultation with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. However, to date (5/26/2022), the BKNF has received no response from the tribe. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	21	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	SREPC points to the responsible authorizing Federal Officer of BHNF and the staff for developing the EA to consider information collected during this EA timeline but failed their duty; and BHNF failed to list the required tribal consultation input an other tribes expected impacts including the environmental impacts with this F3 Gold Jenny Gulch Project.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	22	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The purpose of this EA is to evaluate potential impacts resulting from implementing future plans and applications related to this F3 Gold mining proposal; to facilitate the decision-making process to approve, approve with modifications, or disapprove the proposed project or project components based on an evaluation of the expected impacts; and to the extent possible, minimize or avoid environmental impacts. This is unclear if BHNF even meets this threshold.	This EA evaluates the Plan of Operations that was submitted by F3, which includes exploration drilling only. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review, government to government consultation, and Section 106 compliance.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	23	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	SREPC contends that there are potentially thousands of un-recorded/unidentified cultural resources and burials within the entire Black Hills national Forest area. SREPC also objects to using only archaeology to control the identification process. SREPC and other tribes want a certified Indigenous Cultural Resource Management (CRM firm) to conduct the tribal identification phase survey(s) per 36 CFR 800 Subpart B, and 800.3 -to- 800.6 contained in the regulations.	The Level I Inventory report follows 36 CFR 800.3 and 36 CFR 800.4 regulations through making a reasonable and good faith effort to identify historic properties through taking into account the past planning and reviews of existing information on historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects. The Level I Cultural Resource Inventory follows 36 CFR 800.4 through Level I inventory (records review) by identifying adequate Level III cultural resource inventories within the proposed project's area of potential effect. The Level I Cultural Resource Inventory report, which is more detailed than the summary included in the Draft EA, was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with the forest's conclusion of No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. The BKNF made multiple attempts in 2020, 2021, & 2022 to request formal government-to-government consultation with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. However, to date (5/26/2022), the BKNF has received no response from the tribe. Government to government consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Communication Manager	Timothy	Mentz Sr.		376	24	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	We again state we require a full Environmental Impact Statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) should not permit F3 to mine for gold at Jenny Gulch. The highest use for the USFS land in the Black Hills is to honor the U.S. Constitution, the 1868 Treaty and return the land to the Great Sioux Nation as a permanent home. Accordingly, protection of Black Hills' watersheds is essential to protect drinking water, as the Great Sioux Nation Tribes say, Mni Wiconi—Water is life. Moreover, USFS should honor our sacred sites, the endangered species—local trout—native plants, among others, and deny the permit.	Comment noted. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources are discussed in detail in the appendices and summarized in the EA. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Gold mining by-products typically generate heavy metals and arsenic that poison the water and Rapid City, the second-largest South Dakota city, is threatened: the Black Hills aquifer is an open aquifer and any chemical pollution will leach directly into the water. Gold mining in the Black Hills has previously resulted in the designation of EPA Superfund sites that impact the Rivers in the area all the way to the Missouri River. Gold mining should be prohibited at Jenny Gulch and the requested permit should be denied.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period EA Content	Start the Public Comment Period Over: The NEPA process is fatally flawed.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	RST has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration would cause irreparable harm to archeological, historical, cultural, and sacred sites and areas present in and around the proposed Project area. These issues should be addressed through government-to-government consultation and full compliance with federal law, including Section 106 of NHPA as well as Executive Order No. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175. Under NHPA, USFS was required to consult with our Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and failed to do so. RST owns Indian trust land nearby at our sacred site, Pe Sla and in Rapid City, South Dakota.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation, EO13007, and EO 13175.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	The Secretary of the Interior must be involved in any NEPA evaluation of mining in the Black Hills, which are under continuing treaty dedication to the Great Sioux Nation as the permanent home of the Lakota—Nakota—Dakota Oyate. Moreover, BLM claims to manage the mineral estate in the Black Hills, and BLM was not involved in this process. The Sioux Nation Tribes were not consulted appropriately before a plan was developed. Our Tribal Historic Preservation Offices were not consulted in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act. For these additional reasons, the NEPA Public Comment and Consultation Processes must start over.	The BLM has jurisdiction over the ownership of mining claims below the surface, while the USFS manages surface rights. The BLM was included in the project scoping mailing, was invited to the interagency scoping meeting in January 2020 and received notice of availability of the Draft EA. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.

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Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	6	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	USFS should restart your NEPA process, in cooperation with Interior and our Indian nations, because you did not consult with our Indian nations concerning treaty protected land. Under Executive Order 13175, the USFS was required to undertake consultation with our Sioux Nation Tribes prior to formulating the plan for review of the Jenny Gulch gold mine proposal. This is especially so since the lands at issue are treaty protected sacred lands.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation and EO 13175.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	7	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The 1868 Sioux Nation Treaty protects the Black Hills as part of the "permanent home" of the Great Sioux Nation. The Supreme Court held that Congress's taking of the Black Hills was in violation of the Constitution and the Sioux Nation treaty rights in United States v. Sioux Nation, 448 U.S. 371 (1980). USFS should be mindful of this factual and legal background when scoping its plans for public meetings and consultations.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	8	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	President Biden affirmed Executive Order No. 13175 and directed Federal Agencies to develop consultation action plans through his January 26, 2021 Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a policy on Consultation.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	9	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) EA vs EIS	RST has legitimate concerns that the proposed exploration may cause environmental harms to the land, natural resources, and fish and wildlife in the Black Hills, including surface lands, subsurface structures, water, threatened and endangered species, and other natural resources. These issues should be thoroughly addressed through government-to-government consultation and detailed environmental analysis under NEPA, including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). RST opposes a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI).	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources are discussed in detail in the appendices and summarized in the EA. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	10	Regulatory Process	EA Content	RST believes the Jenny Gulch proposal would result in significant impacts to the land, water, fish, wildlife, and natural resources in the Black Hills. We share and join in the concerns raised by the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance. Clearly, those concerns have not been adequately addressed by USFS.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources are discussed in detail in the appendices and summarized in the EA.

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Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	11	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	RST believes the proposed Project would have significant impacts on tribal cultural resources as well as tribal religious and cultural practices in the Black Hills and at Pe' Sla. Without full and robust government-to-government consultation with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and other affected Sioux Nation Tribes, there is no way USFS can adequately assess the significance of cultural resource impacts, let alone make a finding that the proposed Project would have no significant impacts on such cultural resources and on the cultural and religious practices at and around the site.	An intensive cultural resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. Previous, recent, and to current standard, Level III pedestrian inventories of this area had been conducted for a variety of undertakings which have had previous requests for SHPO and THPO concurrence and comment were considered sufficient for assessment of the effects of the proposed undertaking on previously identified historic properties and cultural resources. The Level I Cultural Resource Inventory report, which is more detailed than the summary included in the Draft EA, was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with the forest's conclusion of No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. The BKNF made multiple attempts in 2020, 2021, & 2022 to request formal government-to-government consultation with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. However, to date (5/26/2022), the BKNF has received no response from the tribe.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	12	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Given the lack of the required meaningful and good faith consultation by the USFS to date, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe requests the agency immediately suspend all work on this Project until all NHPA and government-to-government consultation has occurred.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	13	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	At that time, the agency should prepare a Draft EIS for public and tribal review and comment.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Rosebud Sioux Tribe, President	Scott	Herman		377	14	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	In conclusion, USFS should start its policy over and it is no excuse that there was a National COVID-19 Public Health Emergency for not consulting with Indian tribes.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Aubrey	Lee		378	1	Regulatory Process	EA Content	F3 Gold worked very closely with the Forest Service to design a drilling program with minimal to zero impact on the concerns addressed in the EA. The EA took 3 years to conduct, is exhaustive and thorough, and shows no significant impact to any environmental or cultural items evaluated. F3 conscientiously cooperated with USFS and made many concessions and adjustments to their drill program design and agreed to continuously assess the EA-delineated concerns throughout their drill program.	Comment noted.

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	Aubrey	Lee		378	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	It is important for US-based miners to develop resources of the critical metals and minerals needed to supply the green economy American citizens deeply need. In addition to gold, it is believed that the Black Hills could provide significant deposits of other critical and strategic minerals that are crucial for high-tech manufacturing and national defense in the US. F3 is a company devout in their responsibility to environmental stewardship and they've viewed their part in the EA as an opportunity to pave the way for responsible exploration of the key materials we need.	Comment noted.
	Aubrey	Lee		378	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Alternative C is a great example of how private industry and government can collaborate to design a natural resource project that bolsters the goals of both entities. Through Alternative C, F3 commits to their duty of environmental stewardship by pledging to proactively assess their impact throughout their drilling campaign and I believe their minimization measures are sufficient and demonstrative.	Comment noted.
	Aubrey	Lee		378	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the findings of the EA and Alternative C as described in the draft EA.	Comment noted.
	Taryn	Brencola		379	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This plan needs to be abandoned to conserve the natural beauty of the Black Hills. Drilling into not only a recreational area but also a primary source of drinking water is beyond absurd. This area is vitally important to my family who has lived there for several generations. I vehemently oppose this project.	Comment noted. Potential project effects on recreation are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Taryn	Brencola		379	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Forest Plan Revision	I have discovered that not only has this project not been amended since 2005, indicating that it's wildly outdated, It also has not met the Tribal Consultation legal requirements.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project. The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record.
Brave Heart Society	Faith	Spotted Eagle		380	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This letter is in regard to the extreme opposition of the Brave Heart Society elder grandmothers to the Draft Environmental Assessment for the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project and we trust that you will select the No Action alternative and reject the plan of operation for Jenny Gulch action.	Comment noted. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.
Brave Heart Society	Faith	Spotted Eagle		380	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	This is an intrusion in our unceded Ihanktonwan territory of the Black Hills where according to our 1851 Treaty Territory we continue to harvest medicinal plants for the health of our people. This is particularly important during a time of pandemic severity. We did these harvests, unhindered by potential pollution prior to the existence of the Forest Service.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Brave Heart Society	Faith	Spotted Eagle		380	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Our treaties are the supreme law of the land in Article 6 of the US Constitution and supersedes the Mineral Leasing Act. The Forest Service must respect the Treaty Rights of the Yankton Sioux Tribe and deny approval of the Jenny Gulch Project. We are further justified when we review the environmental justice guidelines that the Forest Service has been asked to abide by from the Biden Administration; which will be violated if the project is approved without any consultation with our tribe.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Brave Heart Society	Faith	Spotted Eagle		380	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	As elders we ask you to respect our request in a sensible human being manner. If not, this issue will be intensified and we will be present to stop this type of expansion in our sacred lands of the Black Hills.	Comment noted. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As downstream residents of the proposed project area, we oppose the F3 project and support the No Action Alternative.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We oppose the F3 Jenny Gulch exploration project because the risks to drinking water, recreation, and the revenue generated by outdoor businesses far outweigh any benefit local citizens might derive (if any.)	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreation are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The EA is insufficient in its scope and assessment of potential risk.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are discussed in detail in the technical reports and summarized in the EA document.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a policy matter, the Sierra Club Black Hills Group is opposed to gold exploration and mining in the Black Hills National Forest. We recognize, however, the responsibility of the U.S. Forest Service to permit these activities under the 1872 Mining Act. Therefore, we will take the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment for the proposed F3 Gold, LLC Jenny Gulch Exploration Drilling project.	Comment noted.

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Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	5	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	The proponents of the project have been providing inaccurate — even misleading — information in their public appearances and on their website. Either they are vastly ignorant of the operation of the watershed, the source of community water, or the structure of the watershed and the aquifers it charges, or they are deliberately misleading the public with their assertions that the project will not extract water from Rapid Creek. Where do they think city water comes from? The Rapid Creek Watershed is the sole source.	Section 3.7 of the Final EA and Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3, have been updated to remove the reference of no affects to the municipal watershed. As noted in the EA and Appendix E, water would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced directly from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	6	Other	Project Description	Further green-washing by the company about the minimal footprint of their exploration occurs in their descriptions of an individual drill site as "half a soccer field," and that the project purpose is "to test scientific theories at depth and determine the potential for an economic gold deposit."	Comment noted. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	7	Outside of Scope	Mining	As though they will not sell all the claims off for a fortune if they discover anything.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	8	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Significant changes on the BHNF in the past two decades require a full EIS. The EA is insufficient in its scope and assessment of potential risk.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	9	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	The combination of pine beetle infestation, fires, snowstorm and tornado damage, logging, and expansion of trails since the mid-1990s call for a much more thorough consideration of the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of all these events on the Rapid Creek watershed, of which Jenny Gulch and Pactola Reservoir are component parts.	The Project is temporary, as it is anticipated to last one year from start-up through reclamation; as such, cumulative effects are discussed in this context. Past and on-going forest and recreation management activities, such as timber sales, prescribed fire, grazing and pasture allotments, and road and trail construction, have contributed to the Project area's existing landscape. Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within each technical report appendix that is included as part of the EA.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	10	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	Given the potentially significant impacts of the proposed project on the watershed for Rapid Creek, we question whether the environmental analysis and decision document can result in a Finding of No Significant Impact and encourage the Forest Service to prepare an EIS.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	11	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	The National Environmental Policy Act calls for an examination of "reasonable alternatives." The Forest Service rules allow for preparation of an EA if it meets the requirements of CFR 220.7(b), one of which is to consider additional alternatives if there are unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. The EA provides only three alternatives, a No Action Alternative, and two actions that are similar.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	12	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment	Nor does the EA analyze indirect and cumulative impacts on a variety of issues, such as wildlife corridors, sound disturbance, historic and sacred sites. It dismisses disturbance to elk and bighorn sheep birthing areas.	The Project is temporary, as it is anticipated to last one year from start-up through reclamation; as such, cumulative effects are discussed in this context. Cumulative effects are discussed in the Draft EA and in each of the five accompanying technical reports. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	13	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The proposed action to amend the current Forest Plan to remove even this infinitesimal amount of protected recreation area to enable more drilling sites is unconscionable.	See Draft EA Section 2.3. Alternative C relocates drilling sites out of MA 8.2 to avoid the need for a Forest Plan amendment.

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Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	14	Regulatory Process	Forest Plan Revision	The shelf life of the current Forest Plan is long past; the Forest Service already has begun the process of developing a new plan. Twenty years of significant change on forest areas in the Rapid Creek watershed over the life of the current Forest Plan render that document irrelevant at worst, and inadequate at best. Planners should be considering increasing uses of water and their significance to forest health as part of the pending revision to the Forest Plan, not putting water quantity and quality at risk.	The Forest Plan revision process commenced in October 2021. The anticipated date for completion is 2025. Until revision is complete, this project is being evaluated under the 2006 Black Hills Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended); which is the current plan on record.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	15	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Reliance on South Dakota state rules to protect groundwater is foolhardy. The history of past failures, leaks, and contamination from mining is written in the list of Super Fund sites in the Black Hills. To presume that exploration does not predict mining is naïve. To presume that exploration does not pose any environmental risk is a false promise. Machines leak. Engines start fires.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	16	Other	Project Description	There will be limited state capacity to inspect test holes or ensure that the operation plan is followed in regard to implementation of proposed impact minimization measures (Table 2-1).	F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits with the State and other regulating agencies they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	17	Other	Access & Transportation Recreation	The intensity of the timing of drilling and the number of sites pose risks to the watershed and will affect the surrounding community. Although the project operations description downplays roads, noise, and footprint of the drill pads, the proposal is for 42 to 47 drill pads and staging areas, heavy use of roads, widening of roads, noise and light effects because of the 24/7 operating timetable. Heavy use of roads in the area to move equipment constrains numerous recreational activities and access to public lands and developed trails.	Potential project effects on access, transportation, and recreation are described in the Draft EA, Appendix B, Draft Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	18	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Tribal consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete. Few tribal consultations were conducted during 2020, not only because of the pandemic, but also because the burden to initiate, schedule, and attend consultations was on tribal officials. The lack of consultation was pointed out in scoping, and yet the EA does not address any remedy to this gap in requirements.	See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	19	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We urge you to choose the No Action Alternative.	Comment noted.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	20	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This project needs further review that can only be accomplished with more time and an Environmental Impact Statement.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
Sierra Club	Suzanne	Iudicello		381	21	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	A mere 30 days to review a 300+ page document is insufficient for activities that could cause lasting impacts to highly valued areas of the Black Hills National Forest and the water supply for citizens of Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base, Rapid Valley, Box Elder, and tribal and rural communities.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
Yankton Sioux Tribe, Chairman	Robert	Flying Hawk		382	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We oppose this project and call upon the Forest Service to select the No Action alternative and to reject the plan of operation for Jenny Gulch.	Comment noted.
Yankton Sioux Tribe, Chairman	Robert	Flying Hawk		382	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources) Mining Act of 1872	The Forest Service stated on page 7 of the EA that the No Action Alternative "does not meet the project's purpose and need as it would negate the F3's statutory right under the Mineral Leasing act of 1872 to access its mineral lease areas." The 1851 Fort Laramie Treaties and 1858 Ihanktonwan Treaty are the "supreme law of the land." They supersede the Mineral Leasing Act. The Sioux Nation Treaty rights to the Black Hills are prior and superior to any rights claimed under the Mineral Leasing Act. The Forest Service must respect the Treaty rights of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, and deny approval of the Jenny Gulch Project.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
Yankton Sioux Tribe, Chairman	Robert	Flying Hawk		382	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The Forest Service must also comply with Executive Order 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments. E.O. 13175 requires the Forest Service to "ensure meaningful and timely input by tribal officials" prior to approving the plan of operation for Jenny Gulch. However, the EA indicates that letters were sent out by the Forest Service and the Yankton Sioux Tribe responded that it sought consultation on Jenny Gulch, but that no consultation has occurred. The Forest Service has failed to consult with the Yankton Sioux Tribe on Jenny Gulch as required by E. O. 13175. The plan of operation must be denied.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts that initiated concurrent to project scoping on January 6, 2020 : Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation efforts are ongoing and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Yankton Sioux Tribe, Chairman	Robert	Flying Hawk		382	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Black Hills is sacred land to the Lakota and Dakota Nations. Under the E.O. 13007, the Forest Service is obligated to manage the Black Hills in a manner that respects the sacred nature of this land. Approval of Jenny Gulch would desecrate this land, in violation of EO 13007.	Comment noted. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Christine	Sandvik		383	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This letter is in opposition to the permitting of the F3 Gold Jenny Gulch gold permit.	Comment noted.
	Christine	Sandvik		383	2	Other	Public Health and Safety Water Quality/Water Quantity	As a biogeochemist whose study area was just below the Pactola dam, it is hard for me to imagine how a spill might be cleaned up. The sheer volume of water in Pactola would present an incredible challenge, and I am not sure if any amount of money could clean up Pactola or affected downstream areas should there be an accident.	Potential project effects on water quality are described in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Draft Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report. Potential project effects on public health and safety are described in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Draft Public Health and Safety Technical Report.
	Christine	Sandvik		383	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	With only 30 days to comment on a 304 page document, no one can be sure exactly what is in this EA. It is simply not enough time to critically review the entire document, and THE COMMENT PERIOD SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO ALLOW THE PUBLIC TIME TO FAMILIARIZE OURSELVES WITH THIS ISSUE.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Christine	Sandvik		383	4	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement EA Content	I have been to stakeholder meetings, and on this project, it seems as though the information is incomplete. We saw a short, quick powerpoint done by an F3 representative, but then were not allowed to ask questions. WE NEED MORE DETAILS ON ALL POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF THIS PROJECT, and I do not feel that a sufficiently complete analysis has been presented to the public.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. The NEPA consultant directed by the USFS presented the project at the January 16, 2020 public information meeting. Representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and the NEPA consultant (Barr Engineering Co) were available to discuss the project. The public was given the opportunity to comment on the project during the scoping period that followed the public information meeting, and scoping comments were accepted up to the publication of the Draft EA. The public review and comment period for the Draft EA also allowed the public an opportunity to review and comment on potential project effects. Information related to scoping and the Draft EA are available on the project website.
	Christine	Sandvik		383	5	Outside of Scope	Mining	You are prioritizing mining activities over recreation in a heavily used recreational area. In addition to being vital for drinking purposes, this lake is important to many, and will be forever changed if mining were to be done in this treasured area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction, including managing lands under its authority for multiple uses. Exploration and mining are such uses allowed with approval on Forest Service lands. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreational resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report - Section 3.
	Christine	Sandvik		383	6	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Wildlife is affected by land disturbance, and this area is a known birthing ground for bighorn sheep.	Potential effects to wildlife, including bighorn sheep, are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Draft Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Also see Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Christine	Sandvik		383	7	Regulatory Process	EA Content	I also believe that further analysis is also needed to consider ALL possible impacts of this project to the region.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.
	Jeremy	Smith		384	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to you this evening to add another voice in opposition to the granting of exploration permits for F3's proposed gold mine in the upper Rapid Creek watershed.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Karen	Little Thunder		385	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support the NO ACTION Alternative!	Comment noted.
	Carla	Marshall		386	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I strongly oppose the “Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project” or any gold exploration or destructive mining in the Black Hills, which is 1851 and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty Territory. Therefore, I choose the “No Acton” alternative.	Comment noted. As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
	Carla	Marshall		386	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	This Project’s Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) is vague and incomplete making it impossible for the public, including the Tribal Nations, to be adequately informed. There are many questions that need further research and documentations.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Carla	Marshall		386	3	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Therefore, I request an extension for Public Comment of this EA based this aforementioned observations, and due to the fact that the Mystic Ranger District Office closed early on Tuesday, Oct. 12 at approximately 2:00 PM. This closure during this comment period prevented any public members from the option to hand deliver their comments to your physical office, and as provided on the Forest Service Comment Form for this project as such: Return to: Jim Gubbels, District Ranger, Mystic Ranger District, Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project, 8221 S Mt. Rushmore Rd., Rapid City, SD 57702	Hand delivered comments needed to be received by 4:30pm, October 22, 2021. Emailed and faxed comments had to be received by 11:59pm on October 22, 2021; and mailed comments had to be post marked by October 22, 2021. In addition, It is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt. 36 CFR 218.25(a)(2) - Computation of the comment period - states the time period is computed using calendar days, including Saturday, Sunday, and Federal holidays. There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Carla	Marshall		386	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement) Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	In this Draft EA 4.4 Government to Government Consultation you state that due to the pandemic and governmental shut downs that this was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. You mention that 16 Tribal governments were included in a mailing distribution, however you don't say who those 16 Tribes are. You also mention the Cultural Resources Report was forwarded to these tribes and to the THPOs, but do not mention how that was transmitted.	The following tribes were contacted as part of government to government consultation efforts: Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne/Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. Engagement efforts for consultation have included correspondence by letters, emails, certified letters, and phone calls. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices by mail for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Carla	Marshall		386	5	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	It is very unfortunate that the USDS Forest Service has not held, for this or any Special Use Project, as mandated by government rules and regulations, meaningful and thorough Government to Government Tribal Consultation in accordance with the Executive Order No. 13007 on Indian Sacred Sites and Executive Order No. 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Carla	Marshall		386	6	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	It's also unfortunate that the Forest Service has not kept their Tribal Relations website page at hpps:// www.fs.fed.us/spf/tribalrelaKons/index.shtml more current and include more detailed information regarding Government to Government Consultation information.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. See Draft EA Section 3.4.1 " Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements. Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4. The project is compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. Also see Draft EA Section 3.4 and Appendix G, Section 3.5.
	Carla	Marshall		386	7	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	This project will have a "disturbance area" that will negatively have a huge impact on the Bighorn sheep birthing ground. Other wildlife and flora in the area will also be negatively impacted from the mining activity. Therefore, the Forest Service must provide a thorough and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement for this project, or for any mining project in the Black Hills Forest Service area.	Potential effects to wildlife, including bighorn sheep are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Draft Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. Potential effects to botanical resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix C - Botany. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Carla	Marshall		386	8	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Who will the Forest Service cater to? The American people who come to the Black Hills Forest to enjoy the land, water and wildlife, and sacred sites, or these extraction industries that will sell their find (claim) to the highest bidder and eventually this area will end up with a huge open pit gold mine. Therefore, I choose the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands. The Forest Plan allows for multiple uses on Forest Service land, including mineral exploration. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report. Potential effects on wildlife are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries.
	Carla	Marshall		386	9	Outside of Scope	Mining	EXPLORATION LEADS TO Large-scale extraction industries that produce toxic wastewater.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Carla	Marshall		386	10	Other	Public Health and Safety	This EA states "No hazardous materials or toxic substances are used to conduct the proposed drilling." Then in the next sentence, which contradicts the first sentence, you say "The only hazardous materials utilized for the proposed project are - and you list a slew of hazardous and toxic petroleum products, most are liquid and will leach into the soil if spilled. F3 says they will provide Petroleum product-specific spill kits will be available at all sites where petroleum products are stored or utilized. However, they do not give specifics to what is contained in their "Spill Kits." Are they prepared for a major spill disaster if one should occur?	Fuels, oils, and petroleum-based products would only be used in access/site preparation, drilling equipment and/or lighting equipment as stated in Section 3.9.3 of the Draft EA and in Section 2.3.2.4 of the Draft EA, Appendix F - Public Health and Safety. These materials would not be used in the drilling process itself. Spill kits would be used to control unanticipated spills of materials such as petroleum products, lubricants, and fuels including diesel and gasoline. Spill kits typically include containment and cleanup materials.
	Carla	Marshall		386	11	Incorporate	Public Health and Safety	In a recent article; F3 says they will use "Biodegradable Lubricants". What are the EPA rules and regulations on using these "New" types of hydraulic oils. Are the "Biodegradable Lubricants" approved for use on Forest Service lands, or in the State of South Dakota.	It is acknowledged that, in addition to water, F3 may also use industry standard drilling additives such as bentonite clays and muds, or other natural and/or biodegradable additives, during drilling to more efficiently and safely drill and seal boreholes. Table 2-1 and Section 2.2.1 of the EA have been updated to more accurately depict this.
	Carla	Marshall		386	12	Other	Public Health and Safety	Any type of petroleum spills are detrimental to the soil, no matter how small.	As noted in Table 2-1 of the EA, all fuels and oils would be stored in appropriate containers or tanks with secondary containment to minimize any spill hazards.
	Carla	Marshall		386	13	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	Also in the news article the Project says it will not take water from the Rapid Creek Watershed, but will use water from the Municipal water system. Actually, the Rapid Creek Watershed, Rapid Creek, and Pactola are the main source of water for Municipal Water in this area. Therefore, they will be using water from the Watershed.	Section 3.7 of the Final EA and Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3 have been updated to remove the reference of no affects to the municipal watershed. As noted in the EA and Appendix E, water would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced directly from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters.
	Norma	Thomson		387	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please deny F3 Gold's request for water.	Comment noted. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project.
	Roger	Johnsen		388	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I want to be recorded as on record as totally completely opposed to the proposed F3 proposed Jenny Gulch Gold Project and any similar type project.	Comment noted.
	Lawrence	Beezley		389	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am strongly opposed to permitting the gold exploration to take place near Pactola Reservoir.	Comment noted.
	Lawrence	Beezley		389	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining has left a tragic history of short-sighted greed for many years in this area.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Karen	Ellison		390	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I support Alternative A - NO ACTION. The wildlife, plants, geology, water, ecosystem, cultural sites should remain undisturbed.	Comment noted.
	Karen	Ellison		390	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	30 days is nowhere near enough time for the public to review and comment on these 300+ pages of information . Not all the pages are searchable, which makes it much more difficult to analyze.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Karen	Ellison		390	3	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	No details are provided about tribal consultation status. Perhaps the details are privileged but a summary of what's been done so far is not even included. In any case, the consultation should be complete because an accurate EA cannot be made without it.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
	Karen	Ellison		390	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Although the EA states repeatedly that mining is not part of the proposed action, the only reason for exploration is that F3 hopes it will lead to mining. It is preposterous to consider goldmining near Rapid Creek or Lake Pactola, or any body of water for that matter. Gold mining in Lead has a sordid past full of pollution.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Karen	Ellison		390	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This project in no way, shape or form benefits the surrounding area or its residents (human, animal or plant).	Comment noted.
				391; included as part of Form Letter 5					
	James	Preston		392	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	After careful review examining the issue of hard rock mineral mining within Rapid City, Box Elder, and Ellsworth Airforce Base's only water supply in the watershed, it is certain that the economic risks of pursuing a project like the Jenny Gulch F3 Gold Exploration Project far outweigh any benefit that would be gained by a small number of equity owners of F3 Gold.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	James	Preston		392	2	Incorporate	Water Quality/Water Supply	The water lubricated for these drills will be pulled from aquifers that support numerous homeowners in and around Silver City. If that is the "municipal water source" they use and deplete to lubricate their drills, then that is still a far reach-but that water is STILL in our watershed and that argument should be omitted from discussion immediately.	Any water used for the drilling would be sourced from an approved municipal or industrial source; no water would be sourced from Rapid Creek or other local surface waters. This has been clarified in the section 3.7 of the Final EA and Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	James	Preston		392	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Putting any type of mineral hard rock mining above our vital, sole water source is irresponsible at best. There is no reason for this company to engage in exploratory drilling if they are not going to turn around and sell the claim to the next (highest) bidder. This is obvious. The fact that F3 does not come out and say that, but COUNTERS that by stating "there will be no gold mining," then they must really think people out here are not paying attention or are plain stupid.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report.
	James	Preston		392	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	There is NO WAY for a mining company to justify a comparison with the largest employers in the region: state and Federal governments. This private firm jeopardizes our entire way of life out here and should be viewed as what it is: an existential threat.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands. As such, exploration is allowed on U.S. Forest Service Lands.
	James	Preston		392	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please, deny any permitting for the F3 Project and consider my comment as a vote for NO ACTION.	Comment noted.
	James	Preston		392	6	Regulatory Process	Comment Period EA vs EIS	We must be better stewards and provide civil argument within the much-needed process that should even require MORE time for comment and even a further Environmental Impact Survey instead of an Environmental Assessment (particularly since some of the proposed 42 drill sites rest within the riparian zone).	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Ashley	Preston		393	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a scientist and graduate from the School of Mines in Rapid, I vehemently oppose this drilling project. Please, do not allow this unnecessary project to proceed and choose NO ACTION.	Comment noted.
	no name provided			394	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do not want you to give permission to a private company to come in and pollute our watershed by gold mining, please focus on cleaning up the hills of beetle, thistle, and fire danger instead. Open more selective logging or add more motorized trails and charge more instead.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report.
	Joanne	Anderson		395	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I do believe we should say "NO" to F3 Gold Project.	Comment noted.
				396; included as part of Form Letter 6					
	Form Letter	Form Letter 1	Adam Kaiser, Angela Lehmann, Amy Green, Kelli Shaw	orm Letter	1	Outside of Scope	Mining	Dear USFS, this company (F3) has an exploitative business model that will use an antiquated mining law from 1872 to threaten our way of life In the Black Hills. Their objective Is to find gold and sell these claims to the highest bidder.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.
	Form Letter	Form Letter 1	Adam Kaiser, Angela Lehmann, Amy Green, Kelli Shaw	orm Letter	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	They aim to use the General Mining Act of 1872 to destroy our recreational economy (multi billion dollar economy) and threaten the drinking water for over 150,000 people who depend on this water- including 100% the water for EAFB. This plan is as BAD for Silver City property owners as it is for our drinking water for those of us downstream. We do NOT want Industrial waste pollution to have an irreversible Impact upon our ONLY source of clean drinking water in the Central Black Hills.	Comment noted. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report. Potential effects on public health and safety are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Public Health and Safety.
	Form Letter	Form Letter 1	Adam Kaiser, Angela Lehmann, Amy Green, Kelli Shaw	orm Letter	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do NOT let this project proceed.	Comment noted.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Form Letter 2	Form Letter 2	Trish Anderson, Chloe Brandsrud, Seth Brandsrud, Mary Gustke, Lora Hawkins, Gail Hines, Russ Johnson, Joni Johnson, Mary Kelly/Curt Pochardt, Kris Norlin, Betty Terrill, Sandra Thielen, Susan Baker, Ellen Basbof, Mary Everson, Kaysie Hislip, Conner Hislip, Tom Katus, Paula Koda, Sandra Olson, Pat Steinman, Kelly Thomas, Ellen Thomas, Caitlin Bosch, Floyd Butler, Miana Fay, Chelsea Forehead, Susan Hey, Saneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris, Nancy Morris, Mark Perrenoud, Leonard Renning, Linda Richard, Allaya Sieps, John Trescot, Suvena Centers, Suneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris	orm Letter	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold project and support the "No Action" alternative. This project threatens recreation, Pactola Reservoir, wildlife, and the drinking water for Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base, and rural communities.	Comment noted. Potential effects to recreation, wildlife, and water resources are discussed in the Draft EA and the following appendices: Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation; Appendix D - Draft Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report; and Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report.
	Form Letter 2	Form Letter 2	Trish Anderson, Chloe Brandsrud, Seth Brandsrud, Mary Gustke, Lora Hawkins, Gail Hines, Russ Johnson, Joni Johnson, Mary Kelly/Curt Pochardt, Kris Norlin, Betty Terrill, Sandra Thielen, Susan Baker, Ellen Basbof, Mary Everson, Kaysie Hislip, Conner Hislip, Tom Katus, Paula Koda, Sandra Olson, Pat Steinman, Kelly Thomas, Ellen Thomas, Caitlin Bosch, Floyd Butler, Miana Fay, Chelsea Forehead, Susan Hey, Saneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris, Nancy Morris, Mark Perrenoud, Leonard Renning, Linda Richard, Allaya Sieps, John Trescot, Suvena Centers, Suneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris	Form Letter 2	2	Regulatory Process	EA Content	The draft Environmental Assessment is vague and incomplete, making it impossible for the public to be informed.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA.

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	Form Letter 2	Form Letter 2	Trish Anderson, Chloe Brandsrud, Seth Brandsrud, Mary Gustke, Lora Hawkins, Gail Hines, Russ Johnson, Joni Johnson, Mary Kelly/Curt Pochardt, Kris Norlin, Betty Terrill, Sandra Thielen, Susan Baker, Ellen Basbof, Mary Everson, Kaysie Hislip, Conner Hislip, Tom Katus, Paula Koda, Sandra Olson, Pat Steinman, Kelly Thomas, Ellen Thomas, Caitlin Bosch, Floyd Butler, Miana Fay, Chelsea Forehead, Susan Hey, Saneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris, Nancy Morris, Mark Perrenoud, Leonard Renning, Linda Richard, Allaya Sieps, John Trescot, Suvena Centers, Suneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris	Form Letter 2	3	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	I request that and Environmental Impact Statement be completed.	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Form Letter 2	Form Letter 2	Trish Anderson, Chloe Brandsrud, Seth Brandsrud, Mary Gustke, Lora Hawkins, Gail Hines, Russ Johnson, Joni Johnson, Mary Kelly/Curt Pochardt, Kris Norlin, Betty Terrill, Sandra Thielen, Susan Baker, Ellen Basbof, Mary Everson, Kaysie Hislip, Conner Hislip, Tom Katus, Paula Koda, Sandra Olson, Pat Steinman, Kelly Thomas, Ellen Thomas, Caitlin Bosch, Floyd Butler, Miana Fay, Chelsea Forehead, Susan Hey, Saneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris, Nancy Morris, Mark Perrenoud, Leonard Renning, Linda Richard, Allaya Sieps, John Trescot, Suvena Centers, Suneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris	Form Letter 2	4	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (tribal engagement)	Tribal consultation and protection of cultural resources are incomplete.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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	Form Letter 2	Form Letter 2	Trish Anderson, Chloe Brandsrud, Seth Brandsrud, Mary Gustke, Lora Hawkins, Gail Hines, Russ Johnson, Joni Johnson, Mary Kelly/Curt Pochardt, Kris Norlin, Betty Terrill, Sandra Thielen, Susan Baker, Ellen Basbof, Mary Everson, Kaysie Hislip, Conner Hislip, Tom Katus, Paula Koda, Sandra Olson, Pat Steinman, Kelly Thomas, Ellen Thomas, Caitlin Bosch, Floyd Butler, Miana Fay, Chelsea Forehead, Susan Hey, Saneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris, Nancy Morris, Mark Perrenoud, Leonard Renning, Linda Richard, Allaya Sieps, John Trescot, Suvena Centers, Suneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris	Form Letter 2	5	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	Raptor nesting sites and a bighorn sheep birthing area and migration route would be negatively impacted.	Potential effects to wildlife, including bighorn sheep, are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Draft Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. See Draft EA Table 2-1. "Drilling activities in the vicinity of Sunnyside Gulch Road could be restricted from April 15-August 31 to avoid disturbance during the bighorn sheep lambing season should lambing be observed. Any potential restrictions would be coordinated and implemented at the direction of the USFS Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger." Also see Section 3.5 and Appendix D Section 4.2, Table 4-1, Section 4.5.2, and Table 4-2. Additional timing restrictions have been added to Alternative C in the Final EA to limit drilling of sites SPC-016, SPC-017, and SPC-019 from May 1 to June 15 to further minimize potential effects to bighorn sheep lambing.
	Form Letter 2	Form Letter 2	Trish Anderson, Chloe Brandsrud, Seth Brandsrud, Mary Gustke, Lora Hawkins, Gail Hines, Russ Johnson, Joni Johnson, Mary Kelly/Curt Pochardt, Kris Norlin, Betty Terrill, Sandra Thielen, Susan Baker, Ellen Basbof, Mary Everson, Kaysie Hislip, Conner Hislip, Tom Katus, Paula Koda, Sandra Olson, Pat Steinman, Kelly Thomas, Ellen Thomas, Caitlin Bosch, Floyd Butler, Miana Fay, Chelsea Forehead, Susan Hey, Saneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris, Nancy Morris, Mark Perrenoud, Leonard Renning, Linda Richard, Allaya Sieps, John Trescot, Suvena Centers, Suneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris	Form Letter 2	6	Regulatory Process	EA Content Cumulative Assessment	The Forest service must analyze all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the project. It has not done this.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within each technical report appendix that is included as part of the EA.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Form Letter 2	Form Letter 2	Trish Anderson, Chloe Brandsrud, Seth Brandsrud, Mary Gustke, Lora Hawkins, Gail Hines, Russ Johnson, Joni Johnson, Mary Kelly/Curt Pochardt, Kris Norlin, Betty Terrill, Sandra Thielen, Susan Baker, Ellen Basbof, Mary Everson, Kaysie Hislip, Conner Hislip, Tom Katus, Paula Koda, Sandra Olson, Pat Steinman, Kelly Thomas, Ellen Thomas, Caitlin Bosch, Floyd Butler, Miana Fay, Chelsea Forehead, Susan Hey, Saneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris, Nancy Morris, Mark Perrenoud, Leonard Renning, Linda Richard, Allaya Sieps, John Trescot, Suvena Centers, Suneetha Kurra, Wesley Morris	Form Letter 2	7	Regulatory Process	Alternatives Analysis	Providing a choice between 42 drilling locations and 47 drilling locations is not including all reasonable alternatives. The Forest Service must include and analyze all reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan.	NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Form Letter 3	Form Letter 3	Robert Johnson, Cara Artman, Jim Loveland (submitted late), Lydia Garvey (submitted late), Jessica Stone (submitted late), Kathryn Reichard (submitted late)	Form Letter 3	1	Regulatory Process	Public and Agency Engagement EA vs EIS	I am writing to request that you release all information on proposed and actual gold exploration projects in the Mystic Ranger District and complete full Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for each gold mining project. The futures of Rapid Creek, the central Black Hills, Lakota cultural and treaty resources, Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base are threatened by these projects, and full disclosure and complete consideration are imperative.	The Project and Project record and subject to the Freedom of Information act (FOIA); information can be gained through the formal FOIA process. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS. Potential effects of all project alternatives are disclosed in the EA.
			Robert Johnson, Cara Artman, Jim Loveland (submitted late), Lydia Garvey (submitted late), Jessica Stone (submitted late), Kathryn Reichard (submitted late)	Form Letter 3	2	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Proposed gold mining projects require tribal consultation and serious consideration of the issues raised by the Lakota and other indigenous peoples in the region. Without full EIS evaluations, these concerns will not receive the required "hard look." The release of all information being withheld by the U.S. Forest Service on current and proposed projects is a prerequisite to thorough EIS processes.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
			Robert Johnson, Cara Artman, Jim Loveland (submitted late), Lydia Garvey (submitted late), Jessica Stone (submitted late), Kathryn Reichard (submitted late)	Form Letter 3	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Historically, mining operations have harmed land, wildlife and water in the Black Hills, and a former gold mine has been declared a Superfund site. If there were to be a mining spill (usually cyanide, arsenic and other heavy metals), Rapid Creek would be polluted, and the aquifers would be polluted soon after. Concern over the potential harm that could be caused to Rapid Creek and its associated communities has led American Rivers to include it on the list of America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2020.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
			Robert Johnson, Cara Artman, Jim Loveland (submitted late), Lydia Garvey (submitted late), Jessica Stone (submitted late), Kathryn Reichard (submitted late)	Form Letter 3	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Rapid City Council recently passed a resolution opposing gold exploration and mining in the Rapid Creek watershed due to the immediate threat they pose to our area's economy and future. All of Rapid City's water sources have their beginnings in Rapid Creek, and damage to the Creek could have permanent, widespread impacts. What's more, the economy depends on tourists who want to continue fishing, boating, hiking, bicycling and sightseeing in a beautiful ecosystem that centers on plentiful, clean water.	Comment noted. The City of Rapid City's resolution was evaluated as scoping comment 174-7 in the Draft EA, Appendix H - Scoping Comments and Responses. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Form Letter 4	Form Letter 4	Nancy Clary, Pat Skancke	Form Letter 4	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I am writing to say "no" to the F3 Gold Project. I want the "no action" alternative to protect our waterways. Water is life!	Comment noted.

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	Form Letter 5	Form Letter 5	Keith Schartz, Andrea Schartz	Form Letter 5	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	This is a communication to the USFS to consider the health, environmental, and economic impacts that mining projects could potentially have on the lands and waters of the Black Hills and surrounding areas in where we live and enjoy.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. Potential effects of all project alternatives on public health and safety are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix F - Public Health and Safety.
	Form Letter 5	Form Letter 5	Keith Schartz, Andrea Schartz	Form Letter 5	2	Regulatory Process	Comment Period EA vs EIS	I am asking for an extension to be filed and no less than a full environmental impact study to be conducted.	There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended. Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Form Letter 5	Form Letter 5	Keith Schartz, Andrea Schartz	Form Letter 5	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	Irresponsible mining would have a significant and devastating economic impact if tourism destinations and outdoor water recreation areas were adversely affected.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives proposed on recreation are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation Technical Report, Section 3.3.
	Form Letter 5	Form Letter 5	Keith Schartz, Andrea Schartz	Form Letter 5	4	Other	Fisheries & Wildlife	What will become of the numerous osprey and bald eagles who call this place home and come back to the area annually to fish for their dinners?	Potential effects to wildlife, including bald eagles are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix D - Draft Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report. An osprey nest is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Project area. USFS established protection buffers for this species are likewise outside of the Project area. F3 would adhere to Forest Plan Standard 3204: Protect known raptor nests, as mentioned in Section 6.2.10 of Appendix D - Wildlife and Fisheries Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation and Technical Report.
	Form Letter 5	Form Letter 5	Keith Schartz, Andrea Schartz	Form Letter 5	5	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please tread lightly. I believe it is in the Forest Service best interest to include and analyze all reasonable alternatives to F3 Gold's plan.	Comment noted. NEPA analysis must evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 CFR § 1508.1(z) defines "reasonable alternatives" as a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action, and, where applicable, meet the goals of the applicant. Under this definition, the draft EA has analyzed reasonable project alternatives.
	Form Letter 6	Form Letter 6	Pat Beaudette, Gary Outka, Scott Sewell, Leslie Beaudette, Stephen Briggs, Mary Tiesen, Robert Bishop, Lynn Bishop, Tim Hammerquist, Kristene Hammerquist, Daryl Christenson, Lorna Lee, Ryan Madsen, James Jefferson, Robery Johnson, Richard Cabot, Kyle Kircher, Randall Hanson, Gary Rasmoon, Dot Rasmoon, Les Beaudette	Form Letter 6	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	We, the undersigned, are in complete opposition to the F3 Gold Project. We say "No" F3 Gold Project and support the "no action alternative".	Comment noted.
	Form Letter 6	Form Letter 6		Form Letter 6	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	Mining proposed of this nature harms our clean water supplies, our health, natural ecosystems, natural beauty, recreation, agriculture and our quality of living. Mining proposed of this nature also has long lasting negative impacts on our watersheds that are irreversible and poisonous to our health and well being. Take a drive to Terry Park near Lead and see that the absolute destruction of the adjacent hills and natural ecosystem from ongoing scar mining.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all exploration project alternatives proposed on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jim	Stephens		397-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow any mining exploration above the Pactola Reservoir, especially by the F3 Gold's Jenny Gulch gold project. Do not let them even get their foot in the door. I support the "No Action" alternative.	Comment noted. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.

Organization	First Name	Last Name	Additional Signators	Letter Number	Comment Number	Action	Resource	Comment	Response
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	1	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	My concern, however, is whether anyone can adequately account for the CONSEQUENCE of failure for this type of operation so close to such a precious resource to western South Dakota, the Black Hills, Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base, and surrounding areas. The resource: the water in our watersheds, reservoirs (Pactola and Deerfield) as well as our precious groundwater aquifer supplies all which are amazingly interconnected should be protected to the utmost, even if everything looks good on paper. If the CONSEQUENCE of failure is so high that it could debilitate a community, then it increases the Risk of Failure, even if the likelihood of failure has been minimized.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits they are required to obtain before initiating the project. F3 Gold is required to submit a reclamation plan to the Forest Service prior to authorization for project initiation in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2840. In addition, F3 Gold is responsible for submitting a reclamation bond to the Forest Service for the exploration project, with the bond amount determined by the Forest Service.
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I would encourage you to complete a review of the existing superfund sites nationwide. I don't think people planned to create these when they set about trying to achieve a goal.	Comment noted. The EA analyzes the proposed Plan or Operations submitted by F3. A nationwide review of superfund sites is outside the scope of this project.
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	3	Regulatory Process	EA Content	Please require the companies requesting this exploration to provide the consequence of failure study performed as part of this project, the people and areas impacted and call for a public vote. If these studies have not been done, please require them to be completed. Please require them to demonstrate the risk of failure so that our Great State can make an informed decision.	The draft Environmental Assessment follows the USFS streamlined NEPA format and contains several technical report appendices that provide an in-depth assessment of all the resources discussed in the EA. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands. Project proposed on federal lands are not subject to a vote. The purpose of the EA is to objectively describe potential effects of all project alternatives so the deciding official may make an informed decision.
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please reconsider allowing this exploration and eventual mining if they find the gold they are looking for. Do not allow it anywhere that could impact our most precious natural resource, if there is even a small risk on paper. The consequence is too high.	Comment noted. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	5	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	The first time I was made aware of public comment was on Oct 20,2021 via the following newscenter1 article. I thought the public comment closed Oct 24,2021 but it was evidently Oct 22,2021, two days earlier leaving an even shorter amount of time. I am respectfully requesting consideration of my comments sent Oct 23,2021. Please confirm whether or not they will be considered.	A legal notice announcing the availability of the Draft EA and public comment period was published in the Rapid City Journal on September 22, 2021. Comments received after the October 22, 2021 Draft EA public comment deadline will be considered and a response will be provided in the Draft EA comments and responses appendix of the Final EA. However, because the response was received after the formal 30-day Draft EA comment period, this party will not have standing for objection per 36 CFR 218.5 which addresses who may file an objection. USFS NEPA Planner Jessica Eggers responded to this email with the following text: There will not be an extension to the Draft EA comment period. Please see the 36 CFR 218 regulations below that discuss extensions and Environmental Assessments. 36 CFR 218.25 - Comments on proposed projects and activities. (a) Opportunity to comment. (1) Time period for submission of comments— (i) Comments on a proposed project or activity to be documented in an environmental assessment shall be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice. (iv) Extension. The time period for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project or activity to be documented with an environmental assessment shall not be extended.
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	6	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Is there an appeal process to this? In truth, my comments arrive online faster than many of the postmarked comments and should be considered. Who can I reach out to if I am not satisfied with this answer? Would you recommend anyone within the Forest service or my state representatives?	This comment is in response to a follow-up email sent by Jessica Eggers, NEPA Planner, to comment 398. She responded as follows: The legal notice for the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was published in the Rapid City Journal on September 22, 2021, and serves the exclusive means for calculating the 30-day comment period. These regulations are found at 36 CFR 218.25, and prohibit the extension of the formal comment period on an Environmental Assessment (EA). Emailed and faxed comments had to be received by 11:59pm on October 22, 2021; and mailed comments had to be post marked by October 22, 2021. In addition, hand delivered comments needed to be received by 4:30pm, October 22, 2021. It is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt.
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	7	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Please confirm. Does this mean my comments will not be acknowledged, reviewed, or considered? I don't know what objection you are referring to or what rights I even have as a citizen for comments as there were only two days between media posting and deadline. If not please let me know so I can consider other options to be heard. Will there be additional comment periods? How will my comments be considered?	This comment is in response to a follow-up email sent by Jessica Eggers, NEPA Planner, to comment 398-6. She responded as follows: Feel free to reach out to Lou Conroy. He is the Environmental Coordinator at our Supervisor's Office in Custer, SD.
	Morgan	Falcone		398-late	8	Regulatory Process	Comment Period	Thank you for calling me this morning. I wanted to confirm my understanding of our discussion again that my comment will be considered and there will be a response provided in the appendix, but that I do not have a right to object because my comment was submitted a day late.	Lou Conroy, Forest Environmental Coordinator, discussed comments from Morgan Falcone by phone. Morgan Falcone sent an email with follow-up questions after the phone conversation. Lou Conroy responded to Morgan Falcone's email with the following email response: "You are correct. Your comment that was submitted on October 23rd, 2021 will be considered and a response will be provided in the appendix of the Final EA. However, because your response was received after the formal 30 day comment period, you will not have standing for objection per 36 CFR 218.5 "Who may file an objection". If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to contact me.....Lou Conroy."
	Sierra	Frazier-Riggs		399-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I know I'm late at sending this, but sign me up TO SAVE JENNY GULCH!	Comment noted.
		Tabrown		400-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	As a local citizen and active user in recreational activities in the directly affected area I strongly oppose this project. This is OUR public land. I am 100% against opening up the area where I get my drinking water from to gold exploration. Keep public land public.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Ty	Brown		401-late	1	Outside of	Mining	What happens when they find Gold?	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Ty	Brown		401-late	2	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	OPPOSE F3 Gold from entering the Jenny gulch area for Gold exploration.	Comment noted.
	Amanda	Morrisette		402-late	1	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	They have not done the nation-to-nation tribal consultation required by federal law... let alone gotten proper consent or permission to do this in the Sacred Black Hills. At least 6 different Tribal Nations objected to this proposal in scoping comments in early 2020.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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	Amanda	Morrisette		402-late	2	Regulatory Process	EA vs EIS	And they have not done the highest level of environmental analysis, which would be an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).	Federal regulations identify certain actions as categorical exclusions. Per 36 CFR part 220.6, a proposed action may be excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if the action falls within one of several identified categories. 36 CFR part 220.6(e)(8) identifies short-term (1-year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads as a categorically excluded action. The first identified example is authorizing geophysical investigations which use existing roads that may require incidental repair to reach sites for drilling core holes and other data-collection features. F3's proposed action fits this definition of a categorical exclusion action. The regulations indicate that if the Responsible Official (i.e., the Forest Service) determines the proposed action may potentially result in significant environmental effects, a categorical exclusion action may be elevated to an EA to assess those potential effects. The Responsible Official may also elevate a categorical exclusion action to an EA if a high level of public interest is anticipated. The Forest Services has elevated F3's proposal to an EA to assess potential project effects. The purpose of an EA is to assist in 'determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact' (40 CFR 1508.9). The Responsible Official will determine whether the EA analysis shows that the project would have significant impacts. If the EA analysis shows that the project would not have significant impacts, this would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact at the time of decision. If the EA analysis determines the proposed action likely results in significant environmental impacts, the EA may be elevated to an EIS.
	Amanda	Morrisette		402-late	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Due to these reasons, I SAY NO TO THE DRILLING IN OUR SACRED BLACK HILLS.	Comment noted.
	Wolfgang and Cathline	Schmidt		403-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Totally against the exploration.	Comment noted.
	Kevin	Ryan		404-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not let this happen. This could be catastrophic to the water needed for Rapid City. Doom a whole city because of this greed? Water is life and this watershed is critical to life around Pactola Lake and everyone downstream. Please do the right thing and strike this down. This is no way a good place to drill or to mine. Too much at stake!! Please vote no! I am a lifelong Black Hills resident now living in Rapid City and I survive here because of that water.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.
	Michele	Dunham		405-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I oppose drilling by Pactola Reservoir. Save our water!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Janeen	Walker		406-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I realize that this is past the deadline for taking comments. I just wanted to voice my concerns for our precious drinking water....please do not allow this project to proceed.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
		Allannah		407-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Water is Life!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jaclyn	Spencer		408-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Do not drill on our land please.	Comment noted. The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes the right to mineral exploration claims that an individual or corporation holds on federal lands.
	Colleen	Kurtz		409-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Of course we are not in favor of mining exploration.	Comment noted.
	Colleen	Kurtz		409-late	2	Outside of Scope	Mining	There are already tons of little mining claims in the area and they are destructive.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Colleen	Kurtz		409-late	3	Outside of Scope	Mining	The value of our area as far as recreation, tourism, and the beauty of living here can not be replaced by destructive mining. I don't think the value could ever be equal.	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review. Potential effects of all project alternatives on recreation and public health and safety are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix B - Access, Transportation, and Recreation and Appendix F - Public Health and Safety.
	Uma	Wilkinson		410-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I want to see any water permits DENIED. You leaders have a duty and responsibility of the public's Trust and Faith that was placed in you, to make decisions that are in the best interests of the People who reside here in the Black Hills and the State of South Dakota.	Comment noted. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits with the State they are required to obtain before initiating the project. At this time, there are no needs for water permits since F3 would procure water from a municipal source. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Uma	Wilkinson		410-late	2	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	The Aquifers that lie beneath the Black Hills are subsurface groundwater sources that MUST be protected NOW and the FUTURE.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Uma	Wilkinson		410-late	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	You are merely men and women with decision making power to prevent and protect or exploit. None of you can guarantee nor ensure nor reverse toxic contamination of Water Sources underground by drilling chemical injection and leaks and below surface fissures in soil and bedrock.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Uma	Wilkinson		410-late	4	Outside of Scope	Mining	Here in South Dakota the People and the environment already suffer from elevated levels of arsenic lead and radioactive poisoning due to more than two thousand uncapped uranium wells, enormous devastation environmentally from former and current gold mining operations that STILL create ongoing poisoning and contamination of our watersheds and underground waters, that have never been cleaned up and cannot be cleaned up!	Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.

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	Uma	Wilkinson		410-late	5	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The one final point I wish to impress upon you is that the Black Hills actually belongs to the Great Sioux Nation which is actually known as the Lakota Dakota and Nakota Bands of the Oceti Sakowin. You have a moral and Spiritual and ethical duty to defer to their interests in maintaining the health and quality of the Land, to their standards and to their desires.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation. See Draft EA Section 3.4.1 " Due to the sensitive nature of information presented in the cultural resources report, this document is only able to be shared with appropriate agency and tribal entities and is exempt from public availability requirements. Also see Draft EA Section 1.3.4. The project is compliance with Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites; Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (and related Presidential Memorandums from 2004, 2009, and 2021); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.); Protection of Historic Properties 36 CFR 800; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and 43 CFR 10; American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration. Also see Draft EA Section 3.4 and Appendix G, Section 3.5.
	Uma	Wilkinson		410-late	6	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	I urge you today to DENY and REJECT any and all water permits, and to also put a stop to any industry that threatens our Water Supply, now and into the Future. The mining laws are outdated, and it's time to protect our Earth so All Beings can live and have a Future. If our Waters and Aquifers are polluted and contaminated, there will be no Generations in the Future.	Comment noted. F3 would be required to comply with any environmental compliance requirements issued by the USFS as part of the EA decision. In addition, F3 will be required to comply with all environmental requirements and conditions that may be issued in the other permits with the State they are required to obtain before initiating the project. At this time, there are no needs for water permits since F3 would procure water from a municipal source. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Anoush	Saryan		411-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please don't put water at risk.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Laurence	Pesek		412-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Seriously do we need more gold more than we need Water? Life supporting Water is the lifeblood of Life on earth, I can't believe someone would threaten that for gold. How irresponsible money grubbing people can be. Block this project now!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
	Jason	Nesbit		413-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	Please do not allow this project to move forward! As my family depends on clean drinking water, do not place our health at risk!	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The proposed F3 Jenny Gulch project will impact water in the Black Hills and the Treaty rights of the Sioux Nation - the Oceti Sakowin Oyate. Accordingly, it is a significant concern to the Tribal Water Alliance.	Comment noted. Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Tribes of the Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance are signatories to the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty and the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty, and Jenny Gulch violates both Treaties. The vast boundaries of Sioux Country were first codified in Article V of the Fort Laramie Treaty of September 17, 1851…	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	3	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Subsequently, Article II of the Fort Laramie Treaty of April 29, 1868, established the Great Sioux Reservation as follows…	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	4	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	Thus, our Treaty Reservation comprised of all present-day South Dakota west of the Missouri River, and includes the sacred Black Hills. The land affected by the proposed Jenny Gulch project is part of the Great Sioux Nation (Oceti Sakowin Oyate) Treaty claim to the Black Hills. It is sacred land to the Tribes of the Water Alliance. Our Tribal members engage in pilgrimage to sacred sites in the Black Hills, gather medicinal plants and traditional foods, and possess Treaty hunting and fishing rights in this area.	Comment noted.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	5	Regulatory Process	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The Forest Service stated on page 7 of the EA that the No Action Alternative "does not meet the project's purpose and need as it would negate the F3's statutory right under the Mineral Leasing act of 1872 to access its mineral lease areas." The 1851 Fort and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaties are the "supreme law of the land." They supersede the Mineral Leasing Act. The Sioux Nation Treaty rights to the Black Hills are prior and superior to any rights claimed under the Mineral Leasing Act. The Forest Service must comply with E.O. 13175 and respect the Treaty rights of the Great Plains Tribes, and deny approval of the Jenny Gulch project.	As an agency, the USDA Forest Service is responsible for administering and managing all Federally owned lands within the National Forest System, including the Black Hills National Forest, according to the United States' statutory direction. Congress has not authorized the Forest Service to settle or address the lands claim issue of the Sioux Tribes. Only Congress has the authority to transfer ownership of the Black Hills National Forest to the Sioux Tribes. Further consideration of the Sioux nation's desire to return the lands is a matter of deliberation for Congress. Any potential impacts directly linked to treaty issues and land claims are beyond the scope of the Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Drilling Project.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	6	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	However, the Forest Service failed to consult with the Great Plains Tribes and Oceti Sakowin Oyate prior to preparing the Environmental Assessment for the Jenny Gulch project. The EA does not demonstrate compliance with the consultation requirements of E.O. 13175. The Forest Service stated on pages 38-39 of the EA: …due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the project.	The USFS solicited government to government consultation interest in a mailing distributed to 16 Tribal entities on January 6, 2020. Government to government consultation was requested by the Yankton Sioux Tribe on January 6, 2020 by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe on January 16, 2020 and by the Oglala Sioux Tribe on January 17, 2020. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe requested in-person government to government consultation. The USFS responded in writing to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe determine consultation meeting dates in letters mailed March 13, 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns, government to government consultation was not possible for most of 2020 and early 2021. On April 16, 2021, the USFS distributed another mailing to 16 Tribal entities to re-engage on the Project and to re-initiate consultation requests. This is described in Section 3.5 of Appendix G of the Draft EA. For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	7	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	That fails to demonstrate meaningful Tribal consultation. For this reason, the Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance strenuously objects to Alternative B - the Jenny Gulch project and Alternative C - the modified project.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	8	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	Moreover, the EA failed to properly identify the potential impacts to surface water and groundwater. The potentially affected area is greater than estimated by the Forest Service. Impacts to groundwater and the inter-relationship between ground and surface water in and down-gradient of the project area are not disclosed.	Potential effects of all project alternatives on water resources, including surface water and groundwater, are discussed in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	9	Regulatory Process	Cumulative Assessment EA Content	The cumulative impacts analysis in the EA is inadequate.	Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 3.10 of the EA, as well as within each technical report appendix that is included as part of the EA.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	10	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	The USDA Departmental Regulation 1350-002 requires the Forest Service to consult with the Indian Nations of the Great Plains, and with "Intertribal Organizations - these organizations are comprised of officially delegated members who represent their Tribe's interest in conjunction with other Tribes, often relating to a specific issue or policy area." That includes the Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance. The Forest Service consultation regulation requires consultation with the Water Alliance prior to consideration of the Jenny Gulch proposal. That did not occur.	For the Draft EA, an intensive heritage resource inventory of all areas to be disturbed was conducted. The report was submitted to SHPO (August 2, 2021) and THPO (July 2, 2021) offices for review and comment. A letter dated September 18, 2021, was received from the SHPO concurring with our recommendation. See Sections 3.4 and 4.4 of the Draft EA. Consultation is ongoing until publication of the Final EA and will adhere to the USDA Department Regulation 1350-002 Tribal Consultation, Coordination and Consultation.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	11	Regulatory Process	Government to Government Consultation (Tribal engagement)	Departmental Regulation 1350-002 states that "A Tribe may seek conflict resolution through the USDA Office of Tribal Relations when… a Tribe (or Intertribal Organization) believes the USDA, or its offices or agencies, should engage in consultation and the USDA has not done so." The Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance hereby invokes the Conflict Resolution provision of Departmental Regulation 1350-002 due to the failure of the Forest Service to consult with the Tribal Water Alliance prior to the development of the EA for Jenny Gulch. There must be conflict resolution prior to any approval of Jenny Gulch. In the meantime, the Forest Service must implement the no action alternative.	The Departmental Regulation 1350-002 Conflict Resolution - Background and Policy, section i. states "Tribes" and makes no reference to Intertribal Organizations with the regulation. The regulation states the following: A Tribe may seek conflict resolution through the USDA Office of Tribal Relations when: (1) a Tribe engaged in consultation believes that the USDA or its offices or agencies have not appropriately or adequately considered the needs, desires, or requests of the Tribe, or (2) a Tribe believes the USDA, or its offices or agencies, should engage with them in consultation and the USDA has not done so.
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Department of Water Resources	Errol	CrowGhost Jr.		414-late	12	Other	Statement of Project Opinion	The Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance also expresses our support for comments submitted by our member Tribes in opposition to the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project.	Comment noted.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		415-late	1	Other	Reclamation	We believe on-site disposal is not practical and the reclamation plan does not adequately address restoration and mitigation for the following reasons.	Comment noted.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		415-late	2	Other	Reclamation	As stated by F3, the average hole depth would be 1,000 ft producing a cuttings volume of 1.5 to 2 Cubic Yards (CY) per hole. Barr reflected this as the maximum cuttings (assume this is for a 1,000 ft hole) as some cuttings would remain in the hole. However, F3's plan allows for a maximum hole depth of 6,000 ft. The site reclamation plan must account for the maximum possible volume of cuttings, in this case 12 CY. Based on the F3 reclamation plan we do not believe this volume could be adequately addressed on-site.	Spread drill cutting depth would be dependent on hole depth with most sites resulting in a spread drill cuttings depth of 0.25 inches; however some sites may result in up to approximately 1.50 inches of drill cuttings spread across the drill pad. This information has been added to Section 2.2.1 of the EA and Section 2.3.2.2 of Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		415-late	3	Other	Reclamation	Soils in the area are thin and variable as stated in the proponent's plan and may be insufficient to cover even the 2 CY. As we discussed in the meeting, the term "burial" as used in the EA, Plan of Operations, and the Reclamation Plan, with respect to any action involving the cuttings is a misnomer. Soils at the sites, where they exist, do not have properties for protecting against the oxidation or migration of solids or leached contaminates from the proposed cuttings dispersal site(s).	These impacts are discussed in Sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock would be buried on-site or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. Drill cuttings and used water recovery are described in Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA. Additional text has been added to Section 2.2.1 noting that thin-spreading and burying cuttings beneath the topsoil is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the Western U.S. Burying the cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Should on-site disposal in this method not be feasible, off-site transport and disposal may be required in coordination with the USFS. The text has also been updated noting the role of bentonite in isolating and confiding trace amounts of sulfur-based minerals. F3's cuttings management program complies with South Dakota state disposal rules. F3's cuttings management program also proposes the use of storage tanks instead of sumps to further minimize potential effect.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		415-late	4	Other	Reclamation	The proponent has provided no evidence that operations or restorative methods will protect against the oxidation or migration of solids or leached contaminates from the proposed cuttings dispersal site(s). The proponents should address the means by which the migration of solids, liquids and other contaminates will be prevented, e.g. designed on-site interment, permitted C&D landfill, etc.	These impacts are discussed in Sections 3.6.1.2 and 3.7.3.2 of the Draft EA and in the Draft EA, Appendix E - Soils, Geology, and Hydrology Technical Report, Section 3.3.2.2. As noted in these sections, drill cuttings that contain mineralized rock would be buried on-site or disposed of off-site to mitigate this risk. Drill cuttings and used water recovery are described in Section 2.2.1 of the Draft EA. Additional text has been added to Section 2.2.1 noting that thin-spreading and burying cuttings beneath the topsoil is the industry standard for low-sulfur cuttings management in the Western U.S. Burying the cuttings on-site allows the cuttings to be protected from erosion until vegetation is re-established. Should on-site disposal in this method not be feasible, off-site transport and disposal may be required in coordination with the USFS. The text has also been updated noting the role of bentonite in isolating and confiding trace amounts of sulfur-based minerals. F3's cuttings management program complies with South Dakota state disposal rules. F3's cuttings management program also proposes the use of storage tanks instead of sumps to further minimize potential effect.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		415-late	5	Other	Water Quality/Water Supply	As indicated in our comment letter, we ask that the operator be required to develop and maintain specific pollution prevention plans—this addresses the possibility that the regulatory authority might not require the operator to develop these plans.	A SWPPP would be prepared as required by project permitting.
Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		415-late	6	Other	Reclamation	The Reclamation Plan does not address any mechanism to stabilize the disturbed sites (including temporary roads). There is no evaluation of the top soil/cuttings seed bed ability to establish and hold native vegetation, no seeding and mulching plan, and no follow-up or monitoring plan.	The USFS will be monitoring operations and ensuring that reclamation requirements are fulfilled. The project will be monitored through administration of PoO by USFS personnel.

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Ellsworth Air Force Base	Gary	Brundige		415-late	7	Other	Reclamation	The operations plan and the EA do not present any evidence that the reclamation plan as proposed will accomplish the objectives. It's very important that the proponents resolve the many "trust me" statements in the Plan of Operations, the Reclamation Plan, and particularly in the EA.	Comment noted.
	Lisa	Iron Cloud		416-late	1	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Mining	The Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance also expresses our support for comments submitted by our member Tribes in opposition to the F3 Jenny Gulch Gold Exploration Project.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Lisa	Iron Cloud		416-late	2	Other	Cultural Resources (Heritage Resources)	The drilling will more than likely deeply impact our work negatively as we need access to our ancestral lands in the Black Hills.	Comment noted.
	Lisa	Iron Cloud		416-late	3	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Mining	I will like to express that I am against this drilling project because it will likely lead to mining which will hinder the Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapahoe People from learning about our history, connection and importance of our water that comes from Pactola and Rapid Creek as well as many other creeks in the Black Hills that hold cultural, plant, water, soil and animal relevance to the Lakota People.	Comment noted. Mining is not part of the proposed action. Any mining activity proposed in the future would be subject to additional, project specific NEPA review.
	Lisa	Iron Cloud		416-late	4	Other	Statement of Project Opinion Mining	I ask that you take all of this information into consideration and please stop any drilling and mining in our Precious and Sacred He Sapa.	Comment noted.