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**January 28, 2020  
Chief Engineer, Manager  
US Forest Service  
8221 South Mt. Rushmore Road  
Rapid City, SD 57702**

**Dear Our US Forest Service Team:**

**Thank you for this opportunity to enter my comments into the official proceedings and the public record concerning the industrial application to permit drilling procedures in search for gold near the point where the waters of Rapid Creek run directly into the City of Rapid City's and Ellsworth Air Force Base's potable water supply: Pactola Lake or Reservoir.**

**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. The F-3 Gold firm is not a serious investor in this mine site. Their plan might be to sell their permit and mining claim to other investors and be long gone when it comes time to clean up the potential mess if their customer goes broke and cannot pay the expense to return the site to the pristine condition it is in today.**

**The current drilling near Rochford by the Canadian firm (Mineral Mountain Resources) should never have been approved until the firm filed a \$50 million clean-up or environmental mitigation bond to insure that this firm will pay 100% of the clean-up expense if the venture proves to be unprofitable.**

**Please review the following suggestions:**

- 1. 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:**
- 2. 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.**
- 3. 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 Basin (drainage area), the Cheyenne River Basin, and downstream to the Gulf of Mexico.**

- 4. 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 of Rapid City.**
- 5. 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. This very large supply of water and the new purification plant is a gigantic part of the water purification and delivery system for the City of Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force base. Each day, the City pipes between 500,000 and 1,000,000 gallons of potable water to Ellsworth Air Force. Rapid City has been under contract with the Federal Department of Defense (DOD) since the 1940s and early 1950s for this potable water. If this water becomes polluted by pouring chemical waste(ss) and tons of mining debris into even a portion of the city's water supply, that water can never be replaced. These elements of massive pollution are a serious danger to the very existence and survival of Rapid City and Ellsworth. With the City supporting and encouraging the current planned expansion of the military mission at Ellsworth, we cannot permit a foreign corporation (or other short-sighted applicants) to endanger the city and air base from permanent endangerment of our water supplies (please see my note at the end of this presentation about US Senator Francis Case who represented SD in the US Senate from 1950 to 1962.)**
- 6. Nobody (tourists included) visits the Black Hills or any tourism destination within South Dakota to view a heavy-**

**polluting gold mine. Just consider the following hypothetical circumstance about Rapid City. Suppose that eight or ten years (on or about June first of that year) after the mining begins, senior managers (skilled civil servants) of the City Water Purification and Distribution Department inform the mayor and council members that significant traces of chemicals and mining debris are entering the city's treatment facilities from the flowing waters of Rapid Creek. And, suppose, the city does not have a proven methodology to remove these dangerous chemicals and mining debris from the waters flowing from Rapid Creek and Jackson Springs at both of the city's water treatment facilities. This headline news would be carried on local news outlets, regional media, national media, and even international media. (Much like the polluted public water supplies in Flint, Michigan during the past few years and continuing today.) The number of tourists visiting South Dakota would drop to historical lows. Motel vacancy rates might drop to 90%. I watched this happen to our tourism industry within hours after the 1972 Flooding disaster when I served as Mayor of Rapid City from 1971-75. The radical reduction in visitors to the Black Hills threatened our state with a second economic disaster on top of the 1972 Flood. During the early hours of the 1972 recovery, two of our council members and I prepared to order 50,000 cases per day of potable (bottled) water from suppliers in the Twin Cities and Denver (to be delivered to metro RC by commercial truck carriers). Fortunately, Mr. Don Wessel and his crews managed the short term repairs of the City Water Treatment Plant (near the old Bennett Clarkson Hospital and the Baken Park Shopping Center along the banks of Rapid Creek) by the Thursday morning, six days following the flood the previous Friday night. Of course, it would require a far longer period of time to solve the problems and crisis relating to chemicals used in hard rock mining and debris from the mining area that has the potential to permanently**

**destroy our city's water supply and beneficial use of the same water at Ellsworth. 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 Golf Mine? Who gets that Shaft?" Proponents of gold mining will suggest that the chemical pollutants that pour into Pactola Lake will eventually be diluted by the massive amounts of water in this reservoir. Skilled scientists agree about the following phrase related to water-born pollution. "Dilution is NOT the solution" to these life-threatening issues. Mixing massive volumes of chemicals with human drinking water is never a good or beneficial idea.**

**Dozens and hundreds of other issues must be resolved before this testing can begin; These include the following points of discussion and many more:**

- A. 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. During the 1930s, the state legislature, for a brief period of time, imposed severance taxes upon the gold, silver, and related minerals extracted by Homestake Mining Corporation from their mining operations in Lawrence County. After Homestake threatened to close the mines, during the deepest depression in American history, the legislature repealed the severance taxes. Surrounding states (North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado) aggressively tax the corporations that remove minerals from their states. SD must do the same.**
- B. 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
- C. 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.**
- D. 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 the Black Hills and before the first boring or drilling is permitted to begin. The state must treat these “Out of State and Out of Country” potential polluters in an adversarial manner to separate the sound investors from dangerous pretenders who do not have the economic strength to file these bonds. Without a doubt, some of the pretenders will be “fly-by-night” operators who are only searching for a “fast buck”. SD has never demonstrated wisdom in how the legislature protects our mineral and water rights in the past. South Dakota is not desperate for this mining. SD must not be blinded by the promise of a few mining related jobs over the short-term. Look at the terrible example of the Gilt Edge Mine near Lead. A few mining jobs were created during a short period of time. Then, the Canadian Mining Corporation left a bigger and more expensive mess to clean up (at State and Federal expense) after this firm had taken**

**(mined) the gold, left behind tons of chemical waste and millions of gallons of polluted ground water, and then fled back to Canada. We must preserve our state in the best possible manner to serve future generations in the lands of Paha Sapa.”**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Don Barnett**

**Note: Before you ask, I am currently a taxpayer within the State of Colorado and have a lingering affection and concern for the State of my heritage. I make these suggestions within my power as a citizen of the United States of America as these public meetings are managed by a agency of the federal government. Thank you!**

**Note: Francis Case.**

**While serving as West River Congressman in the 1930s and 1940s, he was elected to the US Senate in 1950s. He was from Custer and Hot Springs. This great statesman (in my mind, one of the greatest public servants in the history of our state) was responsible for the selection of Rapid City as the prime site for a United States Air Station shortly after Pearl Harbor was devastated on the morning December 7, 1941. Case sponsored the federal appropriation for the Construction of Deerfield Reservoir during World War II and funding for the construction of Pactola Reservoir in the 1950s. The prime uses of this public water in these reservoirs was for the citizens of Rapid City, all water users at the RC Air Force Station (Now, Ellsworth), and agriculture users (irrigation) in Rapid Valley between Raid City and Scenic. These water rights are listed within a large variety of documents.**

**The enabling legislation listed Rapid City as the provider for potable water at the new air base.**

**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.**

**Thank you. DVB**