



December 6, 2018

STUDIES SHOW RISKS TO ALL RAPID CITY WATER SOURCES
FROM POTENTIAL GOLD ACTIVITIES IN CENTRAL BLACK HILLS

Contact: Liliias Jarding, Ph.D.
605-787-2872
During the day M, W, F: 605-455-2700

Clean Water Alliance recently completed research that reviewed studies about the connections between the surface water in Rapid Creek and two major underground aquifers, the Madison aquifer and the Minnelusa aquifer.¹ According to the Rapid City Water Division, Rapid Creek and these two aquifers provide all of Rapid City's water.

This is significant in the context of a major gold exploration project at Rapid Creek's headwaters, as well as four other requests for gold exploration permits in the central Black Hills. If there was a leak at a gold project in the area of the current gold exploration near Pe' Sla and Rochford, it would come down Rapid Creek. According to a School of Mines graduate who studied the situation, it would take as little as 29 minutes for a leak to reach Pactola Reservoir.

Studies done for the U.S. Geological Survey and studies done by School of Mines professors show that Rapid Creek water goes underground between Pactola Reservoir and Rapid City.² When the water goes underground, it goes into the Madison and Minnelusa aquifers. So a spill at a gold site in the central Hills could contaminate all of the water sources currently used by Rapid City. It could also threaten families, ranches, businesses, cultural sites, and other communities from the Creek's source in the central Black Hills to where it joins the Cheyenne River about 35 miles east of Rapid City.

This is important because large-scale modern gold mines are associated with the cyanide that is used to process the ore, with two Superfund sites³ in the northern Black Hills (Homestake Mine and Gilt Edge Mine), and with a history of inability to clean up acid-laced water that perpetually seeps to

¹ The research summary is attached for your reference.

² This also happens to the water in Boxelder Creek and Spring Creek.

³ Superfund sites are locations that have been designated to be among the nation's most polluted places under the 1980 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act.

P.O. Box 591 – Rapid City, South Dakota 57709 – www.bhcleanwateralliance.org
nobhuranium@gmail.com – Facebook: Black Hills Clean Water Alliance

the surface at old mine sites. The spill at the shuttered Gold King mine in southwestern Colorado -- and into Arizona -- in 2015 is an example of the problems that can result. There, a three-million-gallon spill of water, acid, arsenic, and sediment contaminated the Animas River. Impacts were felt for 150 miles downstream, stopping all uses of the river, including drinking water, agriculture, and recreation. The spill required the closure of not only municipal water intakes, but also 1,000 nearby wells.⁴

In our semi-arid region, we cannot take a chance on losing even one source of water. But Rapid City's situation is particularly problematic -- if there was a gold mining related spill in the central Black Hills, the City could lose all its sources of water at once. Dr. Liliias Jarding, who reviewed this research, has a clear message: "Clean Water Alliance calls on all City, County, State, and Federal officials to put a stop to gold exploration and permitting in the central Black Hills. Protect our communities, our families, our economy, and our future generations."

***Clean Water Alliance** is a diverse collection of citizens concerned about the health, environmental, and economic impacts that proposed destructive and radioactive mining projects would have on our communities, people, economy, and natural resources.*

⁴ Turkewitze, J. (August 10, 2015). Environmental Agency Uncorks its own Toxic Water Spill at Colorado Mine. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/us/durango-colorado-mine-spill-environmental-protection-agency.html>