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 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Proposed Dewey-Burdock In-Situ Uranium Recovery Project

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 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Proposed Dewey-Burdock In-Situ Uranium Recovery Project in Custer and Fall River Counties, SD

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General Comment

I am writing to you as both a concerned citizen and a registered Professional Engineer (Ohio – lic. E-72675) regarding the Dewey-Burdock in-situ uranium mine proposal for the Southern Black Hills in South Dakota. Though Ohio residents, my wife, son and I have strong ties to the Black Hills and adjacent prairie regions of your state going back 30+ years. I am specifically writing to you on behalf of the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, private ranchers in the area southern Black Hills area, and the nearby impoverished Oglala Lakota tribe on Pine Ridge. As part of Canadian company PowerTech's mining plan, huge amounts of pristine ground water from two aquifers will be consumed. There is the strong potential for radioactive uranium residue contamination to be leached back into these aquifers. This would prove devastating for the Oglala Lakota, local ranchers, and the horse sanctuary. Certainly such potential risks are unacceptable, and if such project were proposed in a more populated or popular tourist area, I am convinced this plan would never be undertaken. As a Professional Engineer working in steelmaking and aerospace for over 25 years, I am deeply aware of energy needs and the economic and infrastructure innovations required to keep our nation strong. However, experience has also shown me that there are no such thing as guaranteed safeguards, and a risk of toxic contamination to vital aquifers in a pristine natural area is not something that should be entertained, especially given questionable metrics and past results for PowerTech's operations. I cite the following admission from SD DENR engineer Steven M. Pirner (PE) to a written inquiry I sent Dec. 14, 2012 – "The Crow Butte Mine near Crawford (NE) ... has used this (sic) process (in situ recovery) for over 20 years. While there have been some problems ..." (Dec. 14, 2012) What specific problems? How much damage has been done due to these problems? What has been the response and effectiveness of the response?

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