

Mark R. Nelson
12445 Misty Meadows Rd.
Nemo, SD 57759
November 7, 2011

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MINERALS & MINING PROGRAM

Richard C. Sweetman
Chairman
South Dakota Board of Minerals and Environment
Joe Foss Building
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Mr. Sweetman:

I would like to express my support for the proposed expansion to the Wharf Resources Mine near Lead, South Dakota. As a mining environmental professional working on mine remediation and permitting projects across the western United States, I am more aware than many about the environmental issues associated with the proposed mine expansion. As a Lawrence County resident, I am also aware of the economic challenges facing our communities and our families, and recognize the importance of a strong mining industry within our state. I believe that we can reach an appropriate balance that will both protect our natural environment and facilitate necessary economic development to support our communities and families.

Wharf has been in operation since the early 1980's, and the company has worked through numerous environmental challenges over the years. However, we need to remember that the environmental regulations that apply to gold mining have become much more stringent over the past 30 years. In response, the company has evolved professionally, improved their environmental management practices, and invested in additional environmental protection facilities. The SD DENR Minerals and Mining Program has also evolved, and DENR has a highly qualified and experienced cadre of mining environmental professionals who understand the tough environmental issues and oversee the operations of Wharf Resources on a day to day basis. Although no industrial development is without environmental risks, Wharf's commitment to address environmental challenges and DENR's oversight capabilities provide effective mitigation for those risks.

Within South Dakota, we need to balance our desire for wide open spaces, abundant wildlife, recreation opportunities, and tourism with the practical need to support our communities and families. Gold mining is a part of our heritage in South Dakota, and gold mining has coexisted with other land uses and values throughout the history of our state. For young families in South Dakota, it is a challenge to make ends meet in this tough economy. Our communities and schools are also struggling, as the state deals with decreased sales tax revenues. Wharf Resources generates needed tax revenue for the state, and provides important jobs that allow hard working South Dakotans to put food on their tables each week.

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I urge you and your colleagues on the South Dakota Board of Minerals and Environment to approve the proposed expansion with appropriate conditions to protect the environment as recommended by the dedicated environmental professionals at DENR.

Sincerely,



Mark Nelson