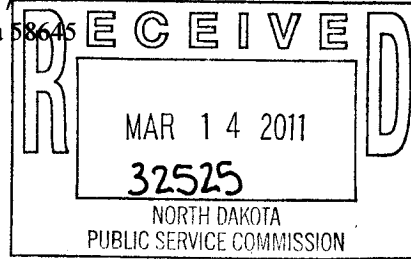




United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service
Theodore Roosevelt National Park
Post Office Box 7
Medora, North Dakota 58645



L2423

March 10, 2011

Public Service Commission
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Dept. 408
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505

Dear Public Service Commissioners:

We understand that application No. SHSH-1001 from South Heart Coal, LLC for a surface coal mining permit has been deemed complete and is now in the public comment period.

Because of its proximity to Theodore Roosevelt National Park (13 miles), the National Park Service has concerns about the proposed mine and associated industrial development. The park is one of only 58 National Parks in the country and the only National Park in North Dakota. Truly, it is North Dakota's crown jewel. In recent years, the park has received increased national attention. Visitation has soared to more than 630,000 visitors per year and numbers are increasing annually. Most of the visitors approach the park from the east where they would have a clear view of industrial development near the badlands.

A coal mine would surely increase the likelihood of additional coal development in the South Heart area. As you know, in their request for rezoning to allow a mine near South Heart, Great Northern Power Development requested many conditional uses including a chemical fertilizer plant; a coal gasification or conversion plant; a coal mine; an electric power generating plant; liquid, explosive and hazardous material storage; mineral exploration or excavation and mining; a solid waste landfill; manufacture of hazardous products; and manufacture of odorous products. Although we don't have details on the conditional uses, any one of them could have negative impacts on the park and the public's perception of the badlands and North Dakota.

We have heard many questions and concerns from the public regarding coal development near South Heart, and the impacts on the park and the tourism industry. We ask that you strongly consider Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and its aesthetic and economic importance to the state of North Dakota as you consider the mining request. A mine is one issue, but the cumulative impacts of opening the gateway to the badlands (North Dakota's #1 tourist destination) to major industrial development could be enormous.

Due to concerns about this project as it relates to Theodore Roosevelt National Park, we request that you hold an informal conference on this issue in the vicinity of the proposed operations (South Heart or Dickinson).

Sincerely,

Valerie J. Naylor
Superintendent