

January 18, 2024

ATTN:

Randy Moore, Chief of USDA Forest Service

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management

We the Black Hills Sioux Nation Council, stand as successors to the Great Sioux Nation, which entered into the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 (11 Stat. 749) and the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 (15 Stat. 635) with the United States. We collectively and respectfully demand your immediate approval of the U.S. Forest Service's proposed Mineral Withdrawal surrounding the Pactola Reservoir in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Additionally, we instruct you to extend this withdrawal to encompass the remaining 90% of the Rapid Creek Watershed area and the entirety of the Black Hills National Forest.

In the Treaty of 1868, the Great Sioux Nation reserved for its "absolute and undisturbed use and occupation" a tract of land, including the Black Hills and specifically the approximately 20,574 acres of Forest Service lands proposed for withdrawal from mining activities. As sovereign nations, we uphold unbroken treaty rights to the affected land, and it is our inherent responsibility to safeguard it for future generations. Article VI of the United States Constitution declares treaties as "the Supreme Law of the Land." The Great Sioux Nation's treaties with the United States, including the 1851 Treaty of Ft. Laramie and the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, remain valid, living, and binding agreements. Our treaties are not fleeting promises. As we understand treaties, in our language, they are enduring and lasting commitments. We were not given any rights; these were sacrifices and promises we made to secure our future and ensure that certain rights would be protected, forever. They must be read in light of this.

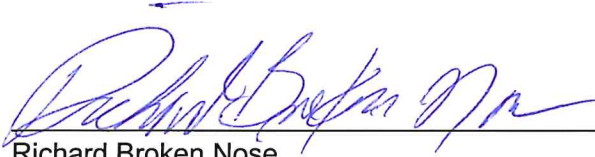
The federal government must honor its treaty obligations, engaging in a meaningful nation-to-nation relationship and moving beyond viewing our original homelands—our un-abrogated treaty lands—as commodities for extraction and exploitation. We have never consented to allowing the Black Hills to be mined, and we never will.

Therefore, we direct you to approve the Mineral Withdrawal. This approval, extended to the entire Black Hills National Forest, signifies a long-overdue step in the nation-to-nation relationship between the Great Sioux Nation and the federal government.

Respectfully,

Date :01/19/2024

Rick Two Dogs
Black Hills Sioux Nation Council



Date :01/19/2024

Richard Broken Nose
Black Hills Sioux Nation Council



Date :01/19/2024

Bill Means
Black Hills Sioux Nation Council



Date :01/19/2024

Robert Two Crow
Black Hills Sioux Nation Council

Date :01/19/2024

Richard Moves Camp
Black Hills Sioux Nation Council