

I oppose all activities outlined in Project #67838.

The proposed project (#67838) includes a range of activities that will have adverse impacts on the surrounding community and ecosystem.

Among my primary concerns is the potential impact on year-round tourism, which serves as a vital contributor to the local economy in this region of South Dakota. If the drilling activities outlined in the proposed project move forward as currently described, they may lead to a decline in tourism—an essential source of revenue for local restaurants and businesses—due to potential adverse effects such as, (but not limited to) air pollution, structural degradation, and other environmental impacts.

A significant environmental concern associated with the proposed activities is the potential for water contamination to the Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek Watershed. This area of the Black Hills currently serves as a primary source of drinking water for the Rapid City community. Treating drinking water that has been contaminated with minerals and other pollutants is a complex and costly process, and such contamination can pose serious health risks to individuals living in the affected community.

The activities proposed in this plan have the potential to significantly impact local residents—not only through economic disruption, but also through the possibility of substantial environmental damage, which could ultimately result in the displacement of numerous settled families in the area. As stated in the signed *Plan of Operations for Mining Activities on National Forest System Lands*, “Drilling operations are planned to occur approximately 12 hours per day, however, to reduce the timeline, **a secondary option would be to conduct drilling 24 hours a day (if required).**” Continuous 24-hour drilling could severely impact local residents through prolonged exposure to noise and air pollution, hindering basic activities such as restful sleep and clean breathing. Over time, these health-related challenges may necessitate the relocation of affected individuals due to the potential risks to their well-being.

Another key concern is the disruption of the established ecosystem, which not only impacts the wildlife residing in the Black Hills but also affects the surrounding community. Many local residents are avid hunters who rely on the resources of the Black Hills to provide food for their families each year. Should the activities proposed in this plan result in significant disruption, it could directly affect the availability of resources essential for feeding the local community, owing to a decline in wildlife populations. Preserving existing ecosystems is essential not only for securing vital resources, but also for maintaining biodiversity and regulating climate and water cycles. These natural processes provide significant benefits to humans, including (but not limited to) clean air, clean water, food security, disease regulation, and soil fertility for agriculture.

As a chemist, I am aware that there are established methodologies for synthesizing graphite in laboratory settings by utilizing residual materials derived from active mining operations. Synthesizing graphite in a laboratory setting results in a significantly higher purity compared to naturally sourced graphite. This increased purity enhances the material's physical properties, including thermal and electrical conductivity, which is important for the manufacturing of batteries. By resourcing the use of laboratories, this reduces the environmental impact significantly and the costly implementation of mining equipment that doesn't currently exist.

On a more personal note, my family will be directly impacted if the activities outlined in the proposed plan are implemented. My father has dedicated years of hard work and effort to establish a legacy, with the hope that future generations, including his grandchildren, would be able to experience and appreciate the Black Hills and all of its natural wonders. This will lead to a legacy of loss for both current and future generations, including any potential inheritance tied to it. I would like to reiterate my opposition to all activities outlined in Project #67838. I respectfully request the following actions be taken:

1. A 180-day extension of the public comment period, and
2. The completion of a comprehensive environmental impact study for the proposed area.

Alisha Frye