

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/14/2022 6:00:00 AM

First name: Paul

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I object to the Spruce Vegetation Management Project #61599. I support sustainable, responsible logging in the Black Hills but (as a resident of Custer, SD) I am not seeing that here now. Where logging takes place it is done with huge tracked machines and trucks which destroy the landscape by making tracks and ruts wherever they go. I will try to attach a current photo of what is going on 7 miles northwest of Custer. What assurance do we have that this won't happen in each of the dozens of spruce areas marked on the project map? Many of these areas are located along streams (see photo) or in other damp/sensitive landscapes that can't handle any traffic of logging equipment. The stated goal of reducing spruce in FAVOR of increasing pine trees (as well as increasing aspen, a more worthy goal perhaps) while attempting to achieve fire reduction makes no sense. Pine trees are much more of a fire hazard. Yes some of the spruce stands are quite dense but they provide cover for wildlife (on the ground below and in their branches) and also shelter plant communities and rare plants such as orchids found only in a few places. I would argue that some of these spruce are among the oldest remaining trees in the Black Hills in light of the mountain pine bark beetle epidemic and continuous logging for 100+ years. Please reject this plan or do a major revision that treats the landscape with more care, on a much much smaller scale. Show us you can do it right (timber industry) before you get a chance at an area this large.

Another thing, your map was much too difficult to read. I added labels to help people comprehend at least some locations so they can come to appreciate how wide-spread this project would be and where. I would urge you to do better with the map next time.

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USFS Added for coding of attachments:

ATTACHMENT: Photo [Clearcut logging operations along the Limestone Road (FS 284) 7 miles northwest of Custer, SD on 3/2/2022]

ATTACHMENT: Map [Spruce Vegetation Management Project #61599] with landmarks added

ATTACHMENT: Photo [Orchids and other rare plants that grow in spruce stands are vulnerable to logging activity]

ATTACHMENT: Photo [Picnicking along Ditch Creek under the spruce trees in area proposed for logging]