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First name: Liliias

Last name: Jarding

Organization: Black Hills Clean Water Alliance

Title: Executive Director

Comments: See attached comments. Thank you.

Letter Text:

Dear Supervisor Cochran and Ms. Retzlaff:

This communication includes the comments of Black Hills Clean Water Alliance on the proposed Pactola Reservoir [ndash] Rapid Creek Watershed mineral withdrawal: Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). We appreciate this opportunity to provide input. We support the mineral withdrawal and Alternative A: the Proposed Action.

Black Hills Clean Water Alliance is a South Dakota nonprofit corporation with over 1600 members, the vast majority of them living in South Dakota, and the majority of those living in the Black Hills and western parts of the state. Our organization was founded in 2009, and a majority of our Board members are indigenous. We live, recreate, pray, work, socialize, and raise future generations in the beautiful Black Hills. About 35% of our membership are members of the Oceti Sakowin (Great Sioux Nation) and hold unceded treaty rights to the sacred Black Hills. This proposed withdrawal is critical to protection of water and other natural resources, as well as to protection of cultural resources, especially tribal cultural resources.

I have reviewed some of the almost 1600 - so far - comments on this EA and draft FONSI. It is clear that most of the few comments that oppose the withdrawal are from people who work for mining companies and their contractors. In other words, those who oppose the withdrawal are generally those who would benefit financially from exploration drilling and mining in the Black Hills and in the proposed withdrawal area. Make no mistake - they are lobbying against our clean drinking water resources. These resources are used by Rapid City (the second-largest city in South Dakota), Ellsworth Air Force Base (a strategic military installation), and other local residents. We encourage the Forest Service to say [ldquo]No[rdquo] to this lobbying and [ldquo]Yes[rdquo] to the withdrawal.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Liliias Jones Jarding, PhD.

Executive Director