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Comments: My name is Alicia Swimmer, and I am a Sicangu & Oglala Tetonan enrolled in the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. I am also eligible for enrollment in the Oglala Sioux Tribe. I was born in Mni Luzahan (Rapid City, SD). My child is also born in Mni Luzahan. As Lakota people, we have and always will have an ancestral and current connection to He Sapa (Black Hills). Our ancestors have been a part of this area for thousands of years. They have also most recently secured this area in our treaties of 1851 & 1868. I also respect the love from my ancestors, my elders, the Wakanyeya (children), and the unborn, yet to come. We have an obligation to always protect the Black Hills. This is why we had the longest-running court case known as the Black Hills claim, which we won in the courts of the United States. This is due to the illegal congressional Black Hills Act of 1877. The Supreme Court of the United States awarded our people monetary compensation, but we will never settle for that wasicu (greedy fat taker) answer to their own theft. We do not believe we can own Unci Maka, but we believe we have a duty to protect it. These are explained in our creation stories and histories with all forms of life here.

My interest in the protection of treaty provisions has led me to work under contract with the Sicangu Lakota Treaty Council and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe concerning work with the Sicangu Climate Center. The encroachment on our quality of life is constant. We not only have our lands stolen, but our sacred sites are disrespected. Our water is being compromised by projects every day. Our water is directly connected to the Black Hills, this is why our ancestors chose to always include the Black Hills as the center of our treaty protected territory. Water that flows from the Black Hills to the Missouri River is what is provided as drinking water to the Rosebud Indian Reservation, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and the Lower Brule Indian Reservation through Indian Appropriations made to the Mni Wiconi Rural Water Project. The water from the Black Hills also flows under the surface and feeds the Ogallala Aquifer. Both the Missouri River and the Ogallala Aquifer provide water directly to millions of people and indirectly to food sources for millions of people.

I oppose the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project. This proposed site is in the Pesla area, which is considered a sacred site and the site of Lakota history. Castle Creek is within the proposed exploratory drilling area. Castle Creek flows into Rapid Creek. Rapid Creek then flows into the Pactola Reservoir, which provides drinking water to residents of the Rapid City metropolitan area, including Ellsworth Air Force Base and Rapid Valley. The best mitigation plan is prevention. Allowing further extractive activities around sacred sites and critical water resources will have long term effects for those who depend on the water provided from the Pactola Reservoir. I have already explained further implications for millions of people further downstream which is an important part of the water cycle. Water is being brought from off site yet will disrupt the water sources in the Black Hills, regardless of if Pete Lien and Sons has a spill or even worse, if these exploratory activities puncture an artesian aquifer. Mni Wiconi is a right that not only Lakota people have a right to, but all walks of life have a right to. Water is life. Without clean water, the quality of all types of life are compromised.

The United States Forest Service must complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project. This needs to include all treaty signatories to the treaties, which not only promise land but are further interpretive to clean water as agreed to in 1851 and 1868.

I have included copies of the treaties referenced concerning the known theft of this entire area for mining purposes that are not authorized by the Oyate.