

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/9/2023 4:11:15 PM

First name: Tirah

Last name: Maryott

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it may concern,

Please protect our Western South Dakota watershed by blocking all mining from the entire region. I moved to Rapid City in 2013 from San Jose, California, specifically for the numerous clean lakes and creeks.

The land I grew up on in Northern California was completely impacted by statewide mining. As an avid open water swimmer and kayaker, I grew up without having access to clean waterways for leisure activities. As a child, and unbeknownst to my mother, my friends and I snuck into dirty creeks and percolation ponds for toxic swims and pond life examination during the frequent 100 degree days back in the 1970's, because even those were safer than the reservoirs that were high in mercury pollution from mining. I see kids swimming in our clean creeks in Rapid City and reflect on my childhood, wishing I had clean water to play in. Swimming in waterways in the Bay Area of Northern California could put a person at risk for mercury poisoning and toxic algae exposures- not just toxic chemicals and bio hazardous bacteria.

As a teacher, I enjoy the luxury of a 10-20 minute drive to locations where I spend summer days on our Rapid Creek Watershed areas. I have taken thousands of beautiful photos of all the abundant plant and animal life that surrounds me as I float on pristine water and snorkel with the fish. Some say kayaking on open water is a religious experience. For me, our lakes are my church. They are my church. I would be lost without our clean waterways.

If mining activities are permitted around our Rapid Creek Watershed, there will be only negatives for those of us who have chosen to spend our lives here. I will be obligated to move out of the area if our water is not carefully treasured. Pollution would be an absolute end to what I love about the Black Hills. It would also greatly reduce the value our location provides to the country as a vacation destination.

Mining companies make big promises, but the reality is that there is no such thing as "safe" mining around waterways. The science is proof, and having lived in a former mining boom town, I saw firsthand what damage mining does.

Please do not allow the mighty dollar and greed of some ruin everything for those of us who are financially and emotionally bonded to the region. It is OUR land (those of us who purchased land, pay taxes, and live here), not for sale to greedy people who do not have our best interests in mind, only wanting to dig their hands into the land for unnecessary, devastating reasons.

I am begging you to please block all mining around our Rapid Creek Watershed before it is too late.

Attached is a brief description of a reservoir I grew up near that is unsafe for swimming. This is our Black Hills future if we don't protect the land.