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First name: Kristen

Last name: Anderson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I gather there are two proposals to increase harvesting of trees in the Black Hills National Forest. One is for increased pine harvest and one is to harvest huge swathes of spruce. One purported argument for increasing these dreadful incursions is because the Hill City mill had to close, thus costing jobs in the southern Hills. It is my understanding that in fact this is a specious argument because the owner of the two mills, one near Hill City and one near Spearfish, has retooled the northern mill with modern machinery that replaces use of people in the milling process. The Hill City mill was not closed due to lack of harvest, it was closed due to designed modernity and efficiency in the northern mill. It was closed because its owner planned to close it with no concern for employees jobs other than how it affected his personal bottom line.

As a personal note in my own experience: my propane supplier, after a several months' hiatus, now has a driver for my route - a former employee of the Hill City saw mill who is very pleased with his new job. With the increased need for new housing, surely the construction industry can fold in many others laid off.

As a tax payer, I am also aware that my taxes, by contract between the forest service and Neiman Enterprises, pay for key parts of the cost of harvesting - such as cost for transportation of lumbered materials from site to the northern mill. Neiman does not pay those costs. This gives me skin in the game - I don't want my tax dollars used to line Neiman's pockets and to help destroy land that is set aside for wider, higher purposes than to line his individual pockets.

And next, the greed to sustain a wealthy life-style of one person leads to a proposal to clear-cut the spruce. I would like to remind you that the BHNF was set aside as land for some of the other inhabitants of this planet. This should be item Number One in the mission statement of all national forests and parks. I assume the clear-cutting of spruce is meant to leave new land for growth of pine. The problem with this is that spruce trees are a part of the overall ecosystem of the Hills. They tend to grow on north sides of hills where it is cooler, shadier and damper; an environment meant for spruce - NOT pines. Spruce trees foster growth of birch and aspen, and this diversity is healthy. Healthy not only for the trees but for other members of the ecosystem, including rare orchids, mushrooms, lichens, birds, a multitude of flora, fauna and minerals. Without the diversity, pests (pine beetles to name one) can proliferate and do more damage. And man will again and again exterminate rare and endangered species until there is irreversible damage.