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Comments: I have read the entire scoping letter describing the proposal for clear cutting Spruce stands in the Black Hills of South Dakota. As a longtime resident (early 70's) it has been my great fortune to hike and fish among these beautiful trees and consider them a true asset and break from the monolithic stands of Ponderosa that dominate most of the Hills. They add diversity and eco systems to the landscape not otherwise found.

After studying Wildlife biology at South Dakota State University (69-summer 74) which included Silviculture, I moved to the Black Hills and did pre-commercial thinning for the Forest Service eventually doing that work in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana as well. Doing that work exposed me to large-scale clear-cutting areas in some of those states which to my eyes resembled the aftermath of some sort of warfare on the land.

Spruce grow in areas that tend to have more moisture and their canopy acts to prevent rapid evaporation. Given long term predictions of future drought in the Black Hills Spruce would be a plus in holding onto some of that needed moisture.

Future drought will also tend to limit expansion of Spruce stands in my opinion thus reducing the need for clear cutting. If any cutting needs to be done make it selective to reduce damage to the delicate eco systems found only in Spruce habitats.