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Comments: I say that The Spruce Vegetation Management Project #61599 is a terrible plan.

1. The Black Hills Spruce, *Picea glauca* var. *densata*, is a disjunct UNIQUE variant that has evolved. Also, contrary to belief, humans do not know everything about the natural environment. The Black Hills Spruce may well be more different than a variant. It is the South Dakota state tree, so a majority of people have historically appreciated its beauty. Spruce in the Black Hills are a very small habitat community and if that acreage is reduced, then it increases the risk that this UNIQUE variant could be lost in the future due to natural events such as beetles. What if survivorship from beetle infestation turns out to be genetically based as some suggest? Do you know which trees to cut?

2. There is a natural limit on Spruce habitat in this forest and the vast majority of the BHNH habitat is Ponderosa. Now a replacement to increase Ponderosa cover is planned that will in turn reduce forest diversity. It would make more sense to replace Ponderosa with Aspen, Oak, Birch etc. but that also would be meddling. Or you can encourage regrowth where Ponderosa has already been logged out. The politicization of science is a very bad idea. Spruce can be supplied from the vast Spruce forests in Canada. The Black Hills National Forest is not a wood products farm.

3. This "project", I suspect will encourage erosion, which can destroy riparian ecosystems even if there is not cutting directly in riparian locations. However, I do not trust that there will be no cutting in riparian environments. Was not that learned from clear cutting in other forests?

4. If this "project" goes forward, then expect tremendous outrage, especially in the environs of Spearfish Canyon, Little Spearfish, Hanna, Deerfield, Mystic, Roubaix, Dumont, Nemo, Black Fox, Rochford, Ditch Creek, Castle Creek, the Mickelson Trail, the Centennial Trail and others.

5. I have not done a study, but I would guess that tourists view Spruce as more scenic than pine, and Aspen probably wins only in the Autumn. More Black Hills jobs depend directly or indirectly on tourism than on logging.

6. The political and bureaucratic situation is again the type of "public service" that in the past generated the idea of bulldozing Aspen in the Black Hills and a road up Black Elk Peak to a restaurant. Yes, We the People have been watching for that long and remember.

The Spruce Vegetation Management Project #61599 is a definite, NO WAY.