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Comments: I am deeply concerned over the plan to destroy the native trees of the Northern Hills. I have several points that I think have been unanswered or approached:

(1) One of the great things about the Black Hills is the diverse eco-systems in play going south to north. The seasonal climates, the rainfall & the altitude, as well as other factors, create a far different situation in the Minnehaha area as opposed to the Sand Creek area. This, in turn, makes for situations that cause different varieties of plants to flourish in one area but not in the other areas. Perhaps we should be cognizant of where Mother Nature has chosen to grow plants.

(2) Although the forest service & the logging industry disparage the White Spruce for its uselessness for them-- there are many of us who prefer the spruce over the pine. I have some Black Hills Spruce in my yard in west Omaha.

Some of us would consider the Lodgepole & Ponderosa Pines more of a weed than the Spruce. I am not sure how it can be justified to cut down 100+ year old spruce for fire prevention when they have lasted so long without intervention. Those trees rooted before your grandparents were born.

(3) Something that should be considered in this decision process is the impact that will occur to small bird & animal life that depend & enjoy the benefits of the spruce, bushes, hedges & trees. The density of spruce plants provide for far better protection from weather & predators for nests & shelter. Loss of the mass amounts of spruce proposed would literally be a disaster for the small bird & animal populations in the Hills as a whole.

(4) I am old man. Whatever happens to these forests will not be decided on my sentimental memories. I understand the FS dislike of fighting fires- I hated doing it too- but there has to be better options than clear cutting native plants that provide value to all the inhabitants of the Hills- not just the humans. Turning the Black Hills into a Pine Forest cash crop is unseemly

Thank You, & good luck to all