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Comments: I am against this project. The Black Hills Spruce (*Picea glauca*) is a variety of white spruce native to the Black Hills region of South Dakota and is the state tree. The species of spruce requires cool summers and cold winter to thrive making it particularly vulnerable to warming, especially to warming associated with anthropogenic climate change. As humans continue deforestation (which I would argue is what this cut would accomplish), we are ever changing the albedo of the land and exposing bare ground allowing snowpack and moisture that helps cool the land to escape thus aiding warming. We are also taking away rich sources of carbon storage that in turn transform carbon dioxide into oxygen. The Black Hills spruce is a niche species that provides a niche habitat for many other specialized plants and animals, habitat not provided by other pine forests, that would not survive anywhere else in the Black Hills. They provide shade and help hold ground moisture for rare orchids, habitat for the flying squirrel, and many other plants and animals. These would be lost, too.

As our area continues to warm and we see warmer and warmer winters with less and less moisture, these trees will need to move up in elevation. Niche tracking for plants, especially when going up in elevation rather than down, is a particularly slow process. Removing these trees would ensure their demise in our area. We are already in danger of losing this unique riparian ecosystem. If we add logging into the mix, we might as well forget this special ecosystem ever existed.

As someone who worked in forestry and helped manage for saw timber, I am not against logging. In fact, I currently have many friends and family still in the industry. However, as someone who is pursuing a masters in sustainability and was also a wildlife biologist, I implore you review this project to make sure it is sustainable for generations in the face of a changing climate. In my educated opinion, cutting the Black Hills Spruce is an unsustainable practice. Once you cut it, it is gone. So why is this proposal on the table? Is it because the pines are being cut too fast, and we are running out of saw timber? Or is it because the spruce themselves are not viable as sawtimber, so we want to convert the forest to new-growth pine? Either way, cutting the spruce does not solve the problem for the timber industry. If there's a problem in the timber industry of the Black Hills, let's solve that problem directly by implementing a management plan that is sustainable. Cutting the spruce isn't even a short-term solution. It is a dead-end solution. What good comes out of removing an ancient forest that protects streams, groundwater, and has shown to be less of a fire risk than nearby ponderosa pine stands for a couple years of pulp wood? The short-term economic benefit does not outweigh the social and environmental benefits these forests provide.