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Comments: I grew up in Edgemont and now split my time between Yankton and Hill City. The difference in water quality between East River and West River is remarkable and sobering. Our waterways and lakes in the east are impacted by heavy metals from coal-fired power generation and chemical contaminants from the powerful agricultural interests, aka "the greatest conservationists."
West River, in contrast, has impressively clean water now that Whitewood Creek is no longer defiled by mercury from Homestake. The legacy of mining and ore-processing in the Black Hills has too often been Super Fund sites (Edgemont, Sturgis, Terry Peak) where we, the taxpayers, have been left holding the bag when the magically disappearing mining interest skips town under the guise of bankruptcy, corporate name changing, or legal loopholes wide enough to drive a massive dump truck through. Let's just say that mining interests don't have much credibility when they make promises but are sheltered by antiquated mining laws and regulations sometimes not enforced secondary to underfunding of regulatory state and federal agencies.
We have a value in the clean waters of Rapid Creek and the relatively healthy watershed above Pactola that far outweighs the profits to a select few that would gain from the mining that WOULD impact this amazing watershed, forest, riparian area, recreational area, and fishery.
I humbly submit that this withdrawal should be approved and expanded. Under the current mining laws and bonding requirements, this proposal should be DOA.