Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/4/2023 6:29:04 PM
First name: Sandor
Last name: Ringhoffer
Organization:
Title:
Comments: In regard to the proposed Pactola area mineral withdrawal, I wish to state my strong opposition to this highly irregular, and politically driven action imposed by a group of non-Black Hills based federal officials in collaboration with a small number of radical environmental groups. As a degree holding, earth science geologic professional with 36 years of experience in exploration drilling and modern mine building, I find no scientific basis for the proposed withdrawal which is based on my personal experience in drilling hundreds of exploration holes on numerous projects in north and south America including some in the Black Hills. No evidence or documentation of ANY impacted ground or surface waters from ANY exploration drilling in the Black Hills is provided by the USFS or the environmental groups claiming such impacts would occur in the future. Why is this??...The fact is that exploration drilling does NOT impact either surface of underground water quality. Boreholes are plugged with a cement/bentonite grout immediately after completion of the hole unlike residential water wells which are strewn throughout the Black Hills by the hundreds and penetrate both confined and unconfined aquifers. Further, the process of mineral exploration is NOT mining and 99.9% of the time exploration does not lead to an economic deposit that is then developed into a mine. The people proposing this withdrawal have no background or experience in modern exploration drilling, borehole abandonment, groundwater geochemistry, hydrogeology, chemistry or even a basic understanding of Black Hills geology. Modern industry practices in regard to exploration drilling, and in the rare case a mine is developed, is heavily regulated by state and federal environmental laws and mine development must go through strict, expensive and exhaustive permitting and environmental study. More groundwater is polluted in the Black Hills and across the state from historic, leaking underground gasoline and diesel tanks at your local gas station than from any completed and grouted exploration borehole. Facts Matter.

In summary, I support the following:
* No to expanding the current proposed withdrawal area
* No to expanding any future proposed withdraws to the entire Black Hills
* No to any future ADMINISTRATIVE Withdrawals originating outside of the Black Hills

Yes to the following:
* Extend the comment period for an additional 30-days
* Conduct a full Environmental Impact Study (EIS)
* Allow our Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board to discuss the withdrawal
* Provide monetary compensation to all current USFS lode claim owners within the withdrawal/study area due to what is effectively a governmental property "takings" led by outside federal officials and private groups. Compensation should include a refund (with interest) for all of their annual claim fees paid to the BLM to date.