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Comments: My wife and I are long-term Black Hills residents and have been acquainted with the consequences of the area's long mining history. Past issues such as chronic stream pollution and the creation of a Superfund site must be considered as further mining is contemplated. The Black Hills economy has undergone major change since the mining heyday, and is now dominated by the tourism industry. The attractiveness of the Hills is the chief commodity for this market, and can be jeopardized by unsightly mining scars, the associated heavy truck traffic, and the damage to land, air, and wildlife in areas surrounding mining sites.

Even more importantly, local residents depend on untainted aquifers and surface waters for municipal and rural use in our semi-arid climate. The Rapid Creek watershed is especially crucial in this regard.

For these reasons, we urge the adoption of the withdrawal proposal concerning this portion of the Rapid Creek watershed. We would hope that an Environmental Assessment can be expedited, and that a finding of no significant impact can be reported.

Thank you for consideration of these points.