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Comments: There is no need to withdraw the Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek Watershed from mining. I believe that the current NEPA process, required for every proposed exploration or mining project, protects cultural and natural resources. A withdrawal based upon on concerns of "potential" effects rather than "plausible or demonstrated" effects fuels irrational fears and fantasies and allows fictitious and inaccurate thinking to flourish among those prejudiced against mining.

It's not clear how the no-action alternative in the environmental review of the withdrawal will be evaluated. The no-action alternative must encompass the wide range of possible proposed mining projects that could come if withdrawal is rejected. Location, size and plan of operations will differ for each proposed exploration and mining project. The no-action alternative must also only consider impacts under current regulatory and mining practices. Conditions at legacy mining sites have no role in the evaluation of future projects. Please keep the environmental review objectively focused on science and reality, and not allow conjecture, untrue information, and bias to influence the decision making process.

Withdrawing large tracts of land from mining is contrary to our Country's stated goal of mineral independence. The Black Hills of SD contains many critical minerals as well as industrial metals (including gold) used in electronics that we all enjoy and are necessary to support our transitioning energy economy.

A withdrawal of lands from exploration and mining denies future proposed projects the opportunity to be judged on their merits. Each proposed project should be objectively reviewed based upon its need and mitigated impacts.