Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/8/2023 7:11:59 PM
First name: James
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Dear US Forest Service and BLM,

I am opposed to the proposed Pactola Watershed mineral withdrawal in the Central Black Hills based on the following reasons. The proposed mineral withdrawal is not based on scientific evidence and is a knee jerk reaction by the bureaucracy in Washington to overrule the National Environmental Protection Act that has been established to protect the environment. The proposed withdrawal circumvents processes put in place by Federal and State regulators.

Gold and Silver are important to our everyday lives. Gold is a critical component in electronic chips, used in groundbreaking medical treatments, necessary for space exploration, and is important store of economic value. All cell phones and computers contain gold. Silver is also an important metal. Currently, approximately 100 million ounces of silver are used for the manufacture of solar panels. Silver is important for medical treatments and as an antibacterial agent in athletic sportswear. Our lives would be greatly impacted if these metals were taken away. Although South Dakota currently produces gold and silver, its residents use more than what is produced. Environmental groups have offshored mining from the United States to less regulated jurisdictions.

The US Forest Service has completed an environmental assessment for the proposed exploration project in the area and determined that the project possess minimal environmental impacts. Exploration drilling utilizes a small diameter (less than 4 inches) drill hole to determine if a mineral project is worth advancing. Access to the drill site is usually by existing roads or trails and drill sites are reclaimed during or at the end of a project. Drilling is done with environmentally friendly drilling additives, such as bentonite clay, soy-based lubricants, and municipally sourced water. Drill holes are sealed with bentonite or cement when completed to ensure that the integrity of any aquifer encountered is maintained. Exploration drilling has been extensively done in the Black Hills in the past with no deleterious impacts. Current activities such as off-road vehicles, septic systems, and storm water runoff pose greater environmental threats than exploration drilling.

Removing areas from exploration without understanding the resource potential erodes the economic and strategic strength of the United States and the Black Hills region. Gold mining has continuously taken place in the Black Hills for almost 150 years adding immense value to the country and the state.

Sincerely,

James Berry
Nemo, South Dakota