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Organization:

Title:

Comments: June18, 2023

ATTN: Bureau of Land Management and USDA Forest Service:

I am writing to express my approval of the proposed mineral withdrawal in and around the Rapid Creek watershed in the Black Hills region of South Dakota that was recently announced by your agencies. Aside from the fact that this watershed serves as the drinking water source for easily 100,000 people upstream and downstream of Rapid Creek and therefore should be protected above the profit margins of extraction companies, the fact that the multitude of destructive mining projects being proposed by F3 Gold and other companies would further culturally harm the Indigenous nations of the region (who explicitly hold treaty rights to this land that are already being violated by the US government as well as historical, spiritual, and ceremonial ties to the Black Hills since time immemorial) should serve to any reasonable person as beyond enough of a reason to approve the withdrawal.

People who are financially invested in mining and stand to benefit from the cash grab of devastating the Black Hills ecosystem often claim there is an economic benefit to communities and entire regions that mining brings with it. However, even a cursory examination of this claim proves it false in South Dakota. In fiscal year 2021, mining and its related industries brought in \$74.5 M to South Dakota's economy. Tourism and its adjacent industries, which would be absolutely destroyed by contaminated drinking water along with 24/7 industrial noise and light pollution from mining, brought in \$4.4 Billion (source: Visit Rapid City). Mining lobbyists lie, but numbers don't - and it's not even close. There is no economic incentive in destroying a massive economy that is based entirely in the state to prop up a comparatively tiny economy that sucks revenue out of our communities even in the short term. Why should we drink mercury, arsenic, and cyanide in the Black Hills so that mining companies in Canada and Australia can scrape a few extra pennies from our children's skeletons?

In summary, as an Oglala-Lakota winyan and a resident of Rapid City, I respectfully demand that you approve the Pactola withdrawal proposal and expand it permanently to withdraw all mineral rights in the entire Rapid Creek watershed area. Presently there are 261,000 acres of the Black Hills that are under active mining claim, every single one an acre of stolen, illegally occupied treaty land. How can you witness that level of injustice and still prioritize an industry characterized by short-sighted greed and a history of disastrous environmental impact? There is no excuse not to protect our water anymore. The entire culture of our diverse community is in grave danger every second that you consider allowing mining companies to pollute the drinking water of 100,000 innocent citizens with "forever chemicals." Do the right thing.

Mitakuye Oyasin,
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Oglala-Lakota
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