

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/19/2023 7:55:45 PM

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Comments: Sirs:

I am strongly oppose to the proposed withdrawal of the Pactola Reservoir - Rapid Creek Watershed in the Black Hills National Forest. Our country needs to maintain access to all its natural resources and the Black Hills contain vast mineral deposits, many yet to be discovered and /or developed. Closing off access to government lands where these potential resources exist before they can be identified is a big mistake! Besides, the rationale to "protect" this land from mining is not based on science but on pure emotions. Mining is one of the most heavily regulated activities in the world. The review and permitting process already exists to protect the environment from degradation.

If protection is what is required, then think about closing off the watershed to all people related activities! Probably the biggest polluters are recreation on the lake and damage done by landowners within and around the watershed. Mining is a temporary activity with final reclamation to bring the site back to near original conditions. Expansion of homes and growth outside the city and excessive tourism into the National Forests are the real problem issues for the environment.

Again, I strongly oppose any Black Hills National Forest withdrawals!

Sincerely,

William Gehlen