

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/20/2023 12:30:44 PM

First name: AMY

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: June 20, 2023

Carl Petrik

Acting Forest Supervisor

1019 N 5th Street

Custer, SD 57730

Dear Acting Forest Supervisor Petrik:

I am a resident of Spearfish and work in the outdoor recreation and tourism industry. I'm writing to express my strong support for the proposed mineral withdrawal of approximately 20,574 acres of land near Pactola Reservoir, and ask that it be expanded to include the entire Black Hills National Forest.

The proposed exploration project near Pactola is one of many in the Black Hills on both private and public land. In Spearfish alone, we have the active Wharf Mine and several exploration projects: Golden Crest Project, the Ponderosa Project and drilling on private land at several sites off Maitland Road. Mining is toxic and destructive. We have a history of superfund sites in the area from mining including Whitewood Creek and Gilt Edge. As a normal part of Wharf's operations, it is allowed to discharge toxins into nearby creeks. The more mines and mining activity we have, the greater the threat of polluting our water and destroying land that is heavily used and enjoyed by locals, tourists and wildlife.

The current proposed withdrawal would benefit the local community as it would prevent mining in the area and thereby protect the watershed from pollution and preserve the land for everyone's enjoyment. Pactola Reservoir is very popular for outdoor recreation activities like camping, fishing, hiking, biking, etc., and Rapid Creek serves as a source of drinking water for a large population. This area is also important habitat for sensitive and rare species of wildlife like bighorn sheep, osprey, northern goshawk, the smooth green snake and red belly snake which would be adversely impacted by mining. I ask that you approve the proposed withdrawal and protect this area from mining on the basis of an Environmental Assessment.

I also ask that you expand the withdrawal to cover the entire Black Hills National Forest, 20% of which is currently under active mining claims. The same analysis applies to the rest of the forest - we should protect these lands for the benefit of local communities that depend on clean water to survive, and that are thriving on the tourism driven by the scenic beauty, wildlife, recreation opportunities the Black Hills offer. In addition, the Black Hills greatly enhance the quality of life for all local communities by providing access to free outdoor recreation opportunities for all from hiking, biking, birdwatching, fishing, etc. They should be preserved for all for now and future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Davison