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Comments: I am opposed to the proposed withdrawal of 20,574 acres in the Black Hills National Forest. Currently, more than 400 million acres of the 650 million acres managed by the federal government are already off limits or severely restricted to mineral exploration and development. Taking more lands off the table will make it even harder to discover the next deposit.

The United States is already dependent on foreign sources of minerals like copper, lithium, zinc, cobalt, nickel, rare earth elements and many others. Not only do we have these minerals in abundance domestically, they are present in South Dakota. However, mineral withdrawals like the one proposed by the Forest Service here place these minerals, which are vital to diverse technologies like computer chips, wind turbines, jet engines, cell phones, electric vehicles and countless others, off limits. Our dependence on imported minerals will grow, potentially threatening our economy and our national security.

Lastly, the withdrawal is unnecessary. Laws and regulations in place, such as the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and dozens of other laws and regulations govern how mines must be designed, and how they must operate in order to keep their permits. They are more than adequate to protect the environment, while allowing mineral exploration and development to proceed in South Dakota. To rely on international mineral production from countries that do not provide the same environmental and workplace safety requirements as the United States does is simply non-ethical and irresponsible.