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Comments: I would like to express my opposition to the proposed withdrawal of 20,574 acres in the Black Hills National Forest. Mineral exploration and modern hardrock mines are subject to stringent environmental, cultural, labor, and safety laws and regulations such as the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and dozens of others. The proposed withdrawal won't provide any benefit, but it will deprive South Dakotans of jobs that pay well above average, and will make our entire nation more dependent on minerals from foreign sources.

The United States is already dangerously 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 here 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.

Overall, federal and state processes are already in place that provide a formal, comprehensive means to evaluate proposed mineral or resource exploration and development actions, and to provide public input. Proposing to withdraw multiple use lands without any formal proposed action to assess is not only pre-decisional and preempts existing public and regulatory processes, but also is a dangerous precedent to set.