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Comments: In an effort to consolidate and secure our mineral resources we must not lose sight of the cultural heritage of our natural lands. The BlackHills have long served as a sacred place for the Lakota nation (Sundstrom 2018 p. IV 73) of which the Pactola reservoir, as the largest and deepest reservoir of the BlackHills serves as an important freshwater resource for South Dakotan residents. The Pactola reservoir is abundant in freshwater fish species such as Lake trout, bluegill, brown trout, northern pike, yellow perch, rainbow trout, green sunfish, largemouth bass, rock bass, golden shiner, and black crappie (Norrik Fishing guides). Any potential mining operations at the Pactola reservoir could interrupt the occurrence of these species in the reservoir in ways that would be impossible to assess in environmental survey. In addition potential mineral leeching into the reservoir could reduce water quality.

Returning to the Pactola reservoir's indigenous heritage, deep at the bottom of Pactola Lake is old Camp Crook named after General Georgie Crook's headquarters for chasing off criminal miners in accordance with the federal governments treatise with the Lakota and Sioux nations (Griffith Blog 10/30/18). General George Crook was instrumental in the US governments campaigns against the Lakota, Cheyenne, and other plains Indians. Camp Crook was turned into a miniature Atlantis with the Pick-Sloan plan as part of the Flood Control Act of 1944 (Wolff 2005). This project inadvertently preserved this history. A history defined by environmental protection against mining.

While their remains an exhaustive list of reasons for withdrawing the 20,574 acres of the BlackHills national forest adjacent to the Pactola Reservoir from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the public land laws, mining laws, mineral leasing laws, and geothermal leasing laws of the United States the potential impacts to the Pactola watershed's freshwater resources (and subsequent harm to tourism) and the area's tradition of environmental preservation remain the most pertinent.

In the upcoming 90 days of research and environmental assessment these two factors should remain at the top of people's minds.