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Comments: I support the withdrawal of mineral claims within the entire Rapid Creek watershed. In fact, I support the withdrawal of mineral claims from any and all sensitive ecological sites or within areas that are in the best interest of the greater public to preserve for more widespread and beneficial use by the public - mainly by recreation.

The sole water supply for Rapid City originates in the Rapid Creek watershed. The city relies on both ground and surface water from this watershed for its water supply. One spill and the entire water supply could be contaminated. Is it really worth the risk? Can mining companies guarantee that they will never have an accident and will never contaminate the water supply? Of course, its impossible to guarantee that accidents will never happen. The benefits of this project are not worth risking the safety of our public water supply.

The aquifers that supply water to Rapid City are primarily rock with little to no filtering capacity. Therefore, a single accident by a mine could contaminate the aquifer and that contamination could reach the city water supply within a matter of months or even hours. And once contaminated it could take years to clean up or develop an alternative water supply. Banner & Associates recently estimated that developing an alternative water supply from the Missouri River for Rapid City could cost between \$555 million and \$1.87 billion. Is this gold mine really worth the risk?

In 2022, 4.4 million people visited South Dakota and spend \$4.7 billion. Tourism accounts for 5.1 percent of the state's economy and employs 56,826 people. By contrast, mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction made up 0.2 percent of the state's GDP and employed less than 1,000 people in 2019. Preserving the Black Hills in its natural and pristine state is not only good for the environment, it also makes good financial sense. Why would we threaten a \$4.4 billion tourism industry that employs over 50,000 people in favor of a mining industry that generates less than \$100 million annually and employs less than 1,000 people.