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Title: CEO

Comments: Attn: Carl Petrik, Acting Forest Supervisor (Black Hills National Forest)

This comment, in short, is to support the proposed mineral withdrawal that comprises 20,574 acres in the Rapid Creek Watershed Area. I am also asking you to expand this withdrawal to include the entire Rapid Creek Watershed.

Having grown up in the Black Hills and spending a majority of my time outdoors - and of course, summers on Lake Pactola and Sheridan - I did not understand the cultural, social, environmental and economical importance of the area we live in... That is, until I moved back to the Black Hills. I spent 6 years in New Orleans, learning and experiencing the myriad of issues related to water that they are constantly experiencing - in large part due to industry and the effects of global climate change. I lived in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where they experience water issues related to energy creation and massive flooding. I've lived in Corpus Christi, where multiple regional watersheds begin to empty out into the Gulf of Mexico. I've resided in Chicago, where mining and extraction and processing of multiple different resources has resulted in the pollution of great lakes, streams, rivers, and smaller lakes around the region.

In October of 2020, when I returned, I was shocked to see how mineral exploration and extraction has come to dominate our public lands to an extent we have never seen. Lands that (still) belong to the Lakota. Lands that are federal public acreage that all of us pay taxes on, and lands that - if minerals have been discovered - are no longer in "our" control, but we will still pay to clean up after a company has pillaged said area and decides to "bankrupt" their corporation. Note: many of these companies are owned, or are in collaboration, with much larger corporations based in Australia, The Netherlands, Canada, and other countries that profit off of our lands.

I am a small business owner, and I contract out well over 100 individuals and companies each year to put on concerts and musical performances throughout the hills, often with the hills as a backdrop. I am an artist, an angler, an educator, and I believe in the power of community to transform the systems we all live in.

It is a once-in-a-generation happening to have the opportunity to protect lands, in the way that this proposed mineral withdrawal protects. This will give future generations not only the ability to enjoy the land as we do today, but to prosper economically, intellectually, and socially, as this area continues to undergo massive growth. This growth, and how we direct it, will shape how the environment and humans will continue to live in harmony, with clean water and unobstructed land.

Thank you,

Alexander Massa

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