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Comments: I strongly recommend that the Forest Service and BLM move forward with the mineral withdrawal for the roughly 20,000 acres of the Pactola watershed proposed.

Intensive growth of our Black Hills population is predicted for the near future, particularly with the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base as our nation's premier B-21 facility. Demands for water, much of it from Pactola and Rapid Creek, will increase and cannot be accurately predicted. The underlying Madison formation is under severe stress and may eventually be unreliable.

Clean, potable water is finite, and we must protect not only for Ellsworth future needs, but for continuing demands of local residents and our tourism/recreation economy.

The mineral withdrawal will prove to be wise resource use, benefiting the entire area in several ways too obvious to need extensive reason here. This area needs protection.