

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/20/2023 10:23:33 PM

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Comments: I support this mineral withdrawal and it needs to be expanded to all of Pactola Reservoir and the Rapid Creek watershed, as well as cover the entirety of the Black Hills. Furthermore, an Environmental Assessment needs to be conducted, Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

It is important to note that this is part of the unceded territory of the Oceti Sakowin, which has been guaranteed to the Lakota people in perpetuity by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. This Treaty still has legal standing and is the foundation of the US Federal government's fiduciary responsibility to the Tribes. The US Constitution states that treaties are the supreme law of the land.

For us, Lakota, all of the Black Hills is sacred land. This is where we gather our medicines for ceremony, these are where we welcome back the thunders at Black Elk's Peak, our medicine people go on vision quests at Bear Butte, we welcome the birds back every spring at Pešla, which you know as Reynolds Prairie near Deerfield Lake. These are the sacred sites that come from our Creation Story, none of which would be protected by the current and limited scope of the proposed mineral withdrawal.

This land is still in use by the Lakota people. The warriors of the Lakota nation have fought, killed, and died for over 200 years to preserve the Black Hills and its sanctity. Continued mining in the Black Hills represents an existential threat to our way of life, to our culture, and to our physical well-being.

As organizers and a community, we face constant and continuous threats from the mining industry. Since our April 26 meeting, there have been more and more of these proposals that need comments and letters and research and documentation submitted. It is a constant barrage from a community that has so many larger worries and concerns. We need to conserve our water sources so that we can live.

We have to understand that we will be facing the catastrophic effects of climate change in the Black Hills. Both the oceans and the Amazon rainforest are nearing their ability to absorb CO2 saturation. I am bringing this up to note that these global ecosystems are overstressed, and when they collapse, it will lead to a cascade effect, meaning, the next part of the ecosystem will carry the weight of the burden of the one before it. This looks like more extreme weather patterns, this looks like drought and heat waves for us in the Black Hills. That means we are going to be facing near continuous forest fires within our lifetimes. Our efforts need to be focused on the conservation of water and building sustainable communities. This is beyond politics.

On the more current practical level, expanding the mineral withdrawal to all of the Black Hills would just be more efficient for all parties. Aren't you all tired of having to do this for every single proposal? Think of the savings and gas in admin alone!

To understand the Black Hills is to understand the sacred poetry of ancient land. The Black Hills contains the highest point in the world between the Rockies and the Alps, the largest undiscovered unmapped cave systems in the world! At the bottom of Wind Cave is the purest naturally occurring water found anywhere. You will find species and animals that live here and nowhere else. The water systems have carved maze-like structures in billion-year-old sedimentary rock that are still not fully mapped.

I think we need to consider the Snail Oyate. The Black Hills Mountain Snail is an endangered and endemic species. It evolves to fit perfectly in this niche ecosystem-an isolated mountain range in the middle of the prairie, which was once ancient oceans. The scholar and activist, Rosalie Little Thunder, said the spiral of the snail is a map of culture and spirituality. Our understanding of ourselves as human beings begins in the center, has

spiritual entities in physical forms, stretching outward with our relationship to one another, then to all living things, and to creation itself. The Black Hills Mountain Snail's habitat is under threat of attack by continued mining operations that disturb the land it lives on and poison the water it needs to survive.

The link between mining and water contamination is well established and documented.

I support this mineral withdrawal for all of the Black Hills to protect our drinking water, honor the treaties, preserve our culture, prepare for the coming effects of climate change, more efficiently utilize everyone's time and resources, understand the sacred poetry of this ancient land, and lastly, for the Snail Oyate.