

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/20/2023 9:31:03 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a landowner with property adjacent to Rapid Creek, a professor of biology, and an avid mountain climber, I am writing in support of the USDA Forest Service's application to withdraw the mentioned National Forest System lands from settlement, sale, location, entry, and leasing under public land, mining, mineral, and geothermal leasing laws.

I urge the Forest Service to consider an expansion/additional withdrawal:

*UPSTREAM from Pactola to protect tributaries that supply water to the Reservoir (as well as cultural & natural resources in those areas)

*DOWNSTREAM from Pactola to protect aquifers that Rapid Creek flows into (as well as cultural & natural resources in those areas)

*IDEALLY ask for protection of the entire Rapid Creek Watershed as the best way to protect surface & groundwater that Rapid City, Ellsworth Air Force Base, and surrounding communities rely on.

My professional background and personal experiences have provided me with a deep understanding of the delicate balance in our local ecosystem and the importance of preserving the natural resources in our area. Based on my knowledge and observations, I believe that allowing mining activities in the Rapid Creek Watershed area would have several detrimental consequences:

- *1. Water contamination: Mining can introduce hazardous chemicals, such as cyanide and heavy metals, into the lake and creek, posing risks to human health and the environment.
- *2. Soil erosion and sedimentation: Mining operations can cause soil erosion and sedimentation, which negatively impact water quality, aquatic habitats, and the stability of the creek banks.
- *3. Habitat destruction and fragmentation: Mining can result in the loss of habitats for many plant and animal species, leading to a decline in biodiversity and local extinction of sensitive species.
- *4. Noise and air pollution: Mining operations generate noise and dust, which can negatively impact the quality of life for residents living along the creek and cause potential health issues.
- *5. Social and economic impacts: While mining may bring short-term economic benefits, these are often offset by potential negative impacts on the environment, public health, and quality of life.

As someone who has experienced the beauty of our region through mountain climbing and as a biology professor, I recognize the value of preserving the natural landscape for both ecological and recreational purposes. The Rapid Creek Watershed area is an invaluable resource that supports a diverse array of plant and animal species and offers countless recreational opportunities for locals and visitors alike.

In light of these considerations, I urge the responsible officials to approve the withdrawal application and protect our land and water resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

Sincerely,

Richard Ellison
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