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First name: Julien

Last name: Wiley

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I strongly oppose this spruce management project for the following reasons:

The identified areas are in the most beautiful parts of the Black Hills. Spruce trees grow on north slopes in moist cool canyons. These trees support an ecosystem that includes rare plant species, including orchids, lady's slippers, and the fairy of Venus slipper. Spruce trees do not compete with Ponderosa pines in these areas, as the pines grow in hot dry areas.

I own property in the southern Black Hills where the pines have been over harvested. In their place are now 30 x 50 x 20 high foot slash piles that sterilize the soil underneath them, are ugly, and are a terrible fire hazard, especially since they are on mountain tops subject to lightning strikes. Since spruce is considered by the USFS as poor lumber, suitable only for pulp, I foresee even more unsightly slash piles.

The Black Hills are not solely a plantation for timber. The Hills are a uniquely lovely ecosystem of varied plants, and all of the native trees must be valued.