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Comments: Hello,

As someone who has witnessed first hand the harms of mining on a relative's property, mining in wilderness (or close to) is unacceptable. The air quality is typically the first to suffer that people notice, but in all reality the water is what will suffer and no one typically knows until it is too late.

Extraction not only uses way too much water, but pollutes what it doesn't use. Furthermore, getting rid of the poisoned water is becoming more and more difficult as humans are moving in to certain areas, making other wilderness areas susceptible to dumping contaminants.

The Forest Service and BLM should recognize that hunting, fishing, ranching, and recreation in the Thompson Divide area support nearly 300 jobs and \$30 million in annual economic output for local communities. These sustainable uses should be prioritized over the destructive practices of mining and fossil fuel extraction on our publicly owned lands.

The Forest Service and BLM should close the Thompson Divide area to oil and gas leasing and mining for at least 20 years, if not more. The proposed Mineral Withdrawal would protect 225,000 acres of public lands from future oil and gas leasing, as well as mining. Benefits to air quality, wildlife habitat, watersheds, wilderness corridors, and our climate would be immediate and worthwhile.

Thanks for your time,
Baylan Hefferman