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Comments: As someone who grew up in Rapid City, South Dakota, and who currently lives in a place where water scarcity and contamination is a huge barrier, I urgently support the Pactola mineral withdrawal of mineral rights near this important watershed. This is the water source for well over 100,000 people in Rapid City and the Black Hills, surrounding communities, and is in part so because it is so clean and pristine. A lot of community members and tourists use the lake for recreation such as swimming, waterskiing, boating, and inter-tubing with young children all the way up to older adults. The lake is a beautiful destination, and since Angostura, our other recreational lake and reservoir is heavily contaminated with uranium. Gold mining, even at its most minimal, will damage this last place of recreation and clean drinking water for all of the Black Hills. Gold mining leeches harsh chemicals, and even exploration damages the water table and shows evidence of habitat disruption at an early stage (despite being touted to be "safe" there is generally little oversight). One reason I am so passionate about this is because we live on a huge aquifer that is significant to the entire world, let alone hugely important in this area for the reasons previously stated. As a child, I had a rare throat tumor caused by radiation, which was an expense that my parents paid off until after I graduated college out of their own pockets. I attribute this rare cancer to drinking contaminated water from uranium mining, living near the old Homestake mine (despite living in RC, we all know water travels hundreds of miles from its source), or to swimming in Angostura lake when I was a kid.

This is something we can prevent other children and families from experiencing with. Nobody can afford cancer, and especially not many of the people who live in the Black Hills area. Additionally, this mining is too risky and will likely destroy one of our primary tourist attractions. Trust me as someone who lives in a hot and dry place with lots of radioactive contamination and little clean drinking water/ recreational waters- this place is a jewel. I have always imagined coming back here with my children and I do not want my 6 year old nephew to get cancer because of swimming. Please consider this an urgent request. Nothing is worth risking our treasure.