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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in support of the proposed Pactola Area-Rapid Creek mineral withdrawal. This is one of the best things I've seen in a long time in the Black Hills area, and something we should be doing more of to protect this beautiful land and water.

I am a business owner, life-long Black Hills resident, and someone who loves and appreciates the natural beauty and recreation the area has to offer. I spend a great deal of time outdoors hiking, fly fishing, and mountain biking, and I know these hills very well. There are areas where the creeks are crystal clear and full of fish, healthy aquatic life and you can see how pristine they are. Then there are areas where you can still see the effects of mining operations from the past in the form of discolored water, and old mining operation junk that has just been left behind. This is a cycle we should be looking to end in the Black Hills, not repeat, and the mineral withdrawal is a good start to that.

I care about protecting this land and water to keep it healthy and thriving for many reasons. My personal love of the recreation it offers is top of the list for me, and I think I would move away if I started to see things like mining start to ruin the places I love so much. I also believe protecting the water and land is key to the health and well being of all people, and animals that live here... especially when it comes to things that threaten drinking water.

Another consideration I feel is extremely important is listening to the concerns of Native American tribal members to whom this land rightly belongs. To do anything but try to protect this land and water is to spit in the faces of these people who have had this done to them before. It's repeating a cycle we should be trying to heal, not re-opening the wound. Listen to the tribes, respect their wishes for the land management and protection.

Lastly, I would say a huge consideration would be the fact that tourism is the major economy in the area, and unfortunately without this there isn't much here for many people. Any type of harm done to the water and land from mining exploration would adversely affect the tourism economy in many ways that I don't think we could come back from. Who is going to come visit the area if its beauty is tainted by mining? There are already too many areas where the effects of mining are an ugly sore on the land, and adding any more would be a travesty.

The bottom line is... water is life, not gold, or any other resource that people come here to take from the land without caring about the consequences to the people, and animals who live here. I would ask that the Forest Service expedite the withdrawal, and present it to the Secretary of the Interior as a matter of an urgent nature.