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Comments: I am writing to express my strong support for the withdrawal of plans for mining operations near Pactola Lake. This treasured location in the Black Hills is much more than a scenic spot-it embodies the very essence of beauty, serenity, and recreational opportunity that makes our region special. Allowing mining in this area would not only detract from the natural allure that locals and visitors hold dear, but it also poses serious risks to the area's environmental and public health.

Pactola Lake serves as the primary water source for Rapid City and many surrounding areas. The risk of contamination from mining activity would have a profound effect on the quality of this vital drinking water. Mining chemicals, potential runoff, and other pollutants that accompany such operations threaten the purity and safety of a water source upon which so many depend. It is unthinkable to jeopardize the health of our community and the trust that people place in their water supply.

Furthermore, Pactola Lake and its surrounding areas offer a variety of recreational opportunities that draw people from all over. Whether it's kayaking, fishing, or simply enjoying a peaceful day by the lake, this area is cherished for its tranquility and natural beauty. Mining would inevitably disrupt these activities and alter the pristine environment that so many have come to appreciate and love. The adverse impact on recreation would not only hurt the local tourism economy but also rob residents and visitors of the cherished experiences that only a place as special as Pactola can offer.

I urge you to consider the long-term impacts of allowing mining near Pactola Lake and to prioritize the preservation of our natural environment, community well-being, and the irreplaceable quality of life that this region affords. We cannot afford to lose what makes Pactola Lake-and the Black Hills as a whole-such an extraordinary place.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue.