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Title:
Comments: I am writing to express concerns regarding the environmental review process for the proposed Pactola Mineral Withdrawal in the Black Hills National Forest. Specifically, I am seeking clarification as to why the Forest Service chose to evaluate this proposal using an Environmental Assessment (EA) rather than a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Pactola area is a region of potentially significant types of mineral deposits including those minerals identified as strategic. Given the potential for the proposed mineral withdrawal to impact the ability to explore for and potentially mine strategic minerals, a full Environmental Impact Statement would provide a more detailed and transparent review of the consequences the mineral withdrawal would have. An EIS would also enable more extensive public input and help ensure that any potential impacts-both direct and cumulative-are thoroughly evaluated and disclosed.

The decision to proceed with an EA and the speed at which the EA was prepared, raises concerns about the adequacy of the assessment in addressing issues.

Given the importance and complexity of this proposal, it is request that the Forest Service reconsider its decision and initiate an Environmental Impact Statement to ensure that all potential impacts are fully and transparently evaluated.