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Comments: On behalf of the Black Hills Fly Fishers Club, we strongly support the Sawbuck Project and its emphasis on watershed restoration within the Black Hills National Forest. As avid anglers and stewards of our region's aquatic ecosystems, we recognize the critical need to enhance and sustain the health of our watersheds, and we commend the U.S. Forest Service for prioritizing these efforts through this project.

The Sawbuck Project's focus on restoring degraded watersheds aligns with our club's mission to protect and improve fisheries and aquatic habitats. Healthy watersheds are fundamental to maintaining robust fish populations, supporting aquatic biodiversity, and ensuring the long-term resilience of our cold-water fisheries. Many of our club members have witnessed firsthand the impacts of past land use on stream hydrology and fish habitat, and we fully support science-based efforts to restore these vital ecosystems.

We are particularly encouraged by the project's inclusion of low-tech, process-based restoration techniques, such as beaver dam analogs (BDAs) and other natural channel design methods. BDAs have been widely recognized for their ability to reconnect incised streams with their floodplains, slow water velocities, increase groundwater recharge, and improve habitat complexity for fish and aquatic organisms. These restoration techniques are cost-effective, self-sustaining, and align with natural processes that have historically shaped healthy riparian ecosystems.

By implementing these methods, the Sawbuck Project will help stabilize streambanks, reduce erosion, increase water storage, and create essential habitat for native and sport fish populations. Additionally, enhancing watershed function through these measures will improve overall water quality and mitigate the impacts of drought and climate variability-key factors in sustaining resilient fisheries in the Black Hills region.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this critical initiative, and we encourage the Forest Service to fully implement and expand these restoration techniques wherever feasible within the project area. The Black Hills Fly Fishers Club remains committed to supporting efforts that enhance watershed health, and we look forward to collaborating with the Forest Service and other stakeholders to ensure the success of the Sawbuck Project.

Thank you for your dedication to restoring and stewarding our public lands. Please contact us if you require additional information or wish to discuss ways we can further support these efforts.