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First name: Caitlin

Last name: Bird

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Officers of the Forest Service,

I am writing today to express my strong opposition to this project. As a member of an Indigenous Resources group, an ally to the Indigenous People of our lands, and a committed defender of all treaty rights, environmental resources, and spiritual practices, I am strongly opposed to this project and its extractive nature. This project endangers the precious natural beauty of our lands and the safety of our ecosystems, and tramples on the rights and spiritual practices of the Indigenous Peoples who steward this land.

The land endangered by the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling project is first and foremost the holy site of Pe'Sla, which has been important to the Lakota people for thousands of years. Pe'Sla is irreplaceable to multiple tribes' religious practices, and tribes return there not only annually for ceremonial gatherings, but also individually for spiritual gatherings throughout the year. There is no replacement for this site, no secondary holy site for them to gather on, and no way to compensate the loss of such sacred land. As we would oppose someone drilling or demolishing a holy site such as the Temple Mount, or the Notre Dame cathedral, we should oppose the wholesale destruction and degradation of this sacred land. There is no difference. If we drill here, we are committing a grave atrocity. The land itself is holy, and should not be forfeited in such a crude manner.

This is land that has been protected under federal Indian land trust status, and we have a moral imperative to continue to protect it and push back against the use of land trusts and sacred sites for extractive purposes.

Additionally, for this project, 18 Drill Pads are being proposed. Drill pad areas go through a process of vegetation removal, toxic drilling mud pits, and destruction or degradation of all other uses of the land. This project will threaten the Rapid Creek Watershed and the underground water sources in the area. Mining at Pe'sla could contaminate drinking water for Rapid City, Rapid Valley, Box Elder, and even Ellsworth Air Force Base, and cause irreparable ecological damage- and all that for comparatively small and low-grade graphite deposits. Graphite is not worth clean drinking water, and we have seen the loss of clean drinking water devastate communities and sicken our armed forces across America. The cost is too high.

It would be short-sighted and corrupt to desecrate the sacred site of Pe'Sla with mining or other extractive purposes. Please, consider instead supporting the Lakota and their protection of their religious lands, and say no to the Pete Lien and Sons Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project and any future extractive or development related projects on Pe'Sla.

Best,

Caitlin Bird