

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/14/2025 12:42:53 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To the U.S. Forest Service regarding the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project #67838:

I write in opposition of the proposed Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project. This project will likely have a negative impact on the surrounding environment, which will not only harm local vegetation and wildlife, but will also hinder the traditional religious practices of the Lakota people. The area in which this project is proposed to occur, the Black Hills, has immense spiritual significance to the Lakota and other indigenous American tribes. Mining in this region would disrupt ceremonial practices and infringe upon the right of indigenous peoples to practice their religion and steward the land that is sacred to them. This particular mining project would be in close proximity to one of the most sacred places in the Lakota religion, Pe' Sla. Contamination of water from drilling would likely impact this holy site, and drilling pads could even encroach on this sacred space.

The Lakota and other indigenous groups have the right to exercise their religion, and their connection to the land that predates the claims of the United States government to the territory should not be infringed upon for the sake of the interests of the mining industry.

At the very least, the Forest Service must require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project to ensure its responsibility to maintain the wellbeing of the local environment. The Forest Service should also affirm its responsibility to the local community by instituting a 60-day extension of the public comment period, thereby ensuring that all community members who wish to provide input on the project will have the opportunity to do so.

I strongly urge the Forest Service to respect tribal sovereignty and ensure environmental well-being by opposing the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project.

In Peace,

B. N. Q. Estep