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Comments: I am a longtime user of public lands for recreation and personal rehabilitation, and I place a very high value on the careful stewardship of U.S. Forest Service lands for the benefit of all Americans in perpetuity. I am writing today with specific concerns about the Forest Service plans for the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project #67838 in the Black Hills.

The Black Hills contain lands that are sacred to the Lakota people, who worked diligently to see them returned to Indigenous care in 2012. With the proposed Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project, the possible threat to continued protection of these ceremonial lands and the cultural heritage of the Lakota have generated serious concerns.

First, it seems that one month for public comment, with a one-week extension, is precious little time, for the people who are entrusted with the care of these lands, to research the issue and develop thoughtful comments. I would ask the Forest Service to grant an additional extension of 60 days on this scoping comment period, to allow additional time for all interested parties to participate. It does not seem that allowing additional time for comments would compromise the process.

In addition, it seems reasonable and prudent for the Forest Service to require an Environmental Impact Statement, given the potential for negative environmental impacts and the disruption of traditional ceremonial practices of the Lakotas. I would urge the Forest Service to call for this. I believe the Forest Service has a statutory responsibility to follow the law and to respect the people who are impacted by its activities on Forest Service lands.

Thank you for considering my comments. The Forest Service has a long history of upholding the public trust.