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First name: Naomi

Last name: Zurcher

Organization:

Title:

Comments: This proposed Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project #67838 is flawed for a number of reasons:

\* Pe' Sla, one of the most sacred places to the Lakota People, is located high in the Black Hills and will be encroached on and directly affected by the drilling project. The project has been opposed by the Lakota Nation and, as you are required to respect Tribal sovereign rights, this project, if approved, will violate those rights;

\* the 18 drill pad exploration has a high probability of contamination of water in the upper Rapid Creek watershed, located above the Pactola Reservoir which serves the drinking water needs of Rapid City, South Dakota, and Ellsworth Air Force Base, as well as local ranchers who rely on the water for livestock grazing. A number of the pads are sited much too close to pristine, uncontaminated streams. This contamination would affect the entire watershed as well as the probability of contaminating ground water throughout the watershed region.

As a forestry professional, I understand the impact such a project can irreversibly inflict on an entire region and, as a result, the USDA Forest Service must require a thorough Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine the impacts such a project would inflict on water quality as well as the environment before entertaining any thought of approval.