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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Mallory Whitfield

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Subject: Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project - Request for Extension and EIS

To the U.S. Forest Service:

I am writing as a concerned citizen who values the cultural significance and environmental integrity of the Black Hills. These lands have profound importance not only as part of our shared natural heritage but particularly as sacred spaces for Indigenous peoples who have maintained deep spiritual connections to these areas for thousands of years.

Regarding the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project, I am deeply concerned about the potential impacts of the proposed graphite drilling on both the cultural resources and environmental health of the region. The Pe'Sla area is a sacred site still actively used by Lakota people for ceremonies, and drilling operations with 18 pads reaching depths of up to 1,000 feet would constitute an unacceptable disturbance to this sacred space.

I formally request a 60-day extension of the scoping public comment period to ensure that all stakeholders, especially tribal members and local communities most affected by this project, have adequate time to provide meaningful input on this consequential proposal.

I oppose this exploratory drilling project because it threatens not only cultural heritage sites but also poses serious risks to critical water resources, including those supplying Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base. The Black Hills region deserves protection from extractive industries that prioritize short-term profit over long-term environmental stewardship and respect for Indigenous sovereignty.

Furthermore, I strongly urge the Forest Service to conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) rather than a more limited environmental assessment. The cultural significance of this area, combined with the potential for water contamination and ecosystem disruption, warrants the most thorough and comprehensive environmental review process available.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Mallory Whitfield