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Comments: In 1877, the US federal government unilaterally seized the Black Hills from the Sioux, a direct violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. The treaty language stated clearly that these lands should be reserved for the "absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the Indians."

In 1980, the Supreme Court agreed that the Black Hills had been unconstitutionally taken. Rather than return the land, the court awarded the tribes a settlement of \$120.5 million, equivalent to the value of the land at the time it was stolen.

However, the Sioux have never accepted that payment - now, with interest and increased dollar value, worth more than \$1 billion - declaring instead that "the Black Hills are not for sale."

Instead of allowing corporate greed to destroy these sacred hills, the federal government should instead, right historical wrongs. The government should return what the Supreme Court judges admit it has stolen. Focus should be placed on the return the Black Hills to the Great Sioux Nation.

Instead, I have learned that the US Forest Service is allowing Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project (#67838 ) into the Sioux Nation's sacred ground to drill and destroy the Black Hills in their quest for graphite. It has also come to my attention that this project would involve "18 drill pads. Exploration could contaminate water in the upper Rapid Creek watershed, with some proposed drill pads very close to streams. And there is also the potential for contamination or cross-contamination of underground water sources." Not to mention the roads that will need to be built to get to these places, the destruction that will be made in the building process, the desecration that will take place to the wildlife in the area. All this to source graphite.

I have visited the Black Hills and the surrounding area. It is magnificently breathtakingly beautiful. I personally understand deeply why this land is so sacred to the Lakota peoples. As someone who feels proud of our nations national landscape, I cannot stress enough how urgent it is to leave the Black Hills alone, as well as places like it. Once destroyed (for corporate greed!), the land can never, ever, be the same again. Places like the Black Hills are exactly what makes America beautiful. Places like this are our nation's pride and heartbeat.

The negative environmental impacts and the disruption of traditional ceremonial practices for the Lakota will be insurmountable. At the very least, I urge you to impose a 60-day extension of the "scoping" public comment period, so everyone has an opportunity to comment. The Forest Service must require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project. How could you possibly proceed without one??!

Please keep in mind that if you allow a corporation to come in and drill, once the minerals are gone, and the greedy corporation is fat, wealthier, and happy, what's left of the land? Is it worth it? The pollution, the loss of trees, the loss of animals, insects and plants that thrive in this area-is it worth it to lose all of that? Any decent human being would say never.