

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/14/2025 4:38:44 PM

First name: Anna

Last name: Jurusik

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project #67838 in the Black Hills.

The proposed drilling project poses serious risks to the delicate ecosystem of the Black Hills. With 18 drill pads planned in proximity to streams and waterways, there is significant potential for contamination of the upper Rapid Creek watershed. This watershed is vital not only to the immediate ecosystem but to communities downstream that depend on this water source. Furthermore, the risk of cross-contamination of underground water sources could have far-reaching and long-lasting negative impacts that extend well beyond the project boundaries.

The project area is also immediately adjacent to Pe' Sla, one of the most sacred sites to the Lakota People. This proximity is unacceptable, as it threatens to disrupt traditional ceremonial practices that have been conducted at this site for generations. Pe' Sla is not simply land to be exploited for resources; it is a living spiritual center that plays a crucial role in Lakota cultural identity and practices. The disruption from drilling activities-including noise, dust, increased traffic, and physical alterations to the landscape-would fundamentally undermine the sanctity of this ceremonial ground.

Given the potential for significant environmental and cultural impacts, I strongly urge the Forest Service to require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project. A more limited environmental assessment would be inadequate to properly evaluate the complex and far-reaching implications of mineral exploration in this sensitive area.

Additionally, I formally request a 60-day extension of the "scoping" public comment period to ensure that all stakeholders, especially the Indigenous communities most affected by this proposal, have adequate time to review and respond to this significant project.

The Black Hills region has immense cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance that must be protected. The region is a living, sacred landscape with profound significance to the Indigenous Lakota peoples and is of ecological importance to the region. The proposed graphite mining exploration represents yet another chapter in a long and brutal history of the U.S. government's policies and capitalist interests combining to disregard and strip Lakota and Indigenous people broadly of their sovereignty and livelihoods.

Finally, I urge the Forest Service to prioritize the protection of Pe' Sla and the surrounding areas by denying permission for the Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project.