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First name: Heather

Last name: Podoll

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service Planning Staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project #67838. I first would request that you extend the comment period by an additional 60 days so that more stakeholders and members of the public are able to learn about the project and submit comments.

Although I am currently a resident of California, I am a fourth generation South Dakotan by birth, and spent a great deal of time across my life in the state. My family history is closely tied to the Black Hills region, where several generations of my family have lived and worked. For this reason I have a particular care for the quality of the environment in the region, as well as a deep respect and understanding of the importance of the lands that are sacred there to the original Native inhabitants. As an American, I recognize it is vitally important to honor treaty rights including access to sacred sites and traditional ceremonial practices of the Lakota people.

I am very concerned about the impact that this proposed project will have on the quality of the environment in an ecologically sensitive and sacred place. This project's potential contamination of water in the upper Rapid Creek watershed and cross contamination of underground water sources are a concern for the health and safety of all residents in the area. I request that before the project is given further consideration you will require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be completed.

In addition, the project would encroach on the traditional Lakota sacred site Pe' Sla, resulting in the disruption of traditional Lakota ceremonial practices.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns as you fulfill your duty to protect the health and integrity of forest and natural lands under U.S. jurisdiction in the Black Hills.

Sincerely,

Heather Podoll