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Comments: I'm submitting this comment out of deep concern for the potential environmental and cultural impacts of the proposed Rochford Mineral Exploratory Drilling Project (#67838), which would take place alarmingly close to Pe' Sla, a site of profound spiritual and cultural significance to the Lakota People.

Pe' Sla is not only a sacred ceremonial ground; it is also part of a fragile, pristine ecosystem in the Black Hills. This land was rightfully returned to Indigenous stewardship in 2012 after decades of advocacy and commitment. Allowing exploratory mining activity in such close proximity threatens to undo this progress, further desecrating a landscape already scarred by centuries of disregard for Indigenous rights and traditions.

I strongly urge the Forest Service to:

1. Extend the scoping public comment period by 60 days. A one-week extension is insufficient to ensure that all voices - especially those of Indigenous communities most affected - are heard and included in the decision-making process.
2. Deny the proposed drilling project. The potential for water contamination in the upper Rapid Creek watershed, as well as the disruption of ceremonial access to Pe' Sla, poses unacceptable risks. Drilling in this sensitive area is incompatible with the stated mission of the Forest Service to "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands."
3. Require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Given the cultural, hydrological, and ecological stakes involved, a thorough EIS is essential. Anything less would be a dereliction of the agency's responsibility to protect public lands and uphold environmental justice.

Pe' Sla must be protected - not just for the Lakota People, but for all who value sacred traditions, ecological integrity, and human dignity. I implore you to act with conscience and foresight.

Thank you for your time and consideration.