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Comments: The Black Hills are the ancestral and sacred homelands of the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota Peoples. The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty recognized these lands as theirs and affirmed that they were to be respected and protected in perpetuity. That legally binding agreement was broken when the U.S. government illegally seized the Black Hills. In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged the theft but offered monetary compensation, which the Očeti Šakowí? have never accepted. They demand the return of their land-not gold mining on sacred ground. Yet this project has entirely failed to consult the Tribes whose homelands it threatens.

The Forest Service is trying to fast-track this drilling project under a Categorical Exclusion, claiming it poses no significant harm, but we know better:

It threatens water contamination, fragile karst systems, and rare species

It borders ceremonial Tribal lands used year-round

This violates the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). At a minimum, an Environmental Assessment is required. In truth, a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is legally and scientifically necessary.

The project would disrupt Spearfish Canyon, a designated Scenic Byway and treasured public recreation space

It would endanger Bridal Veil Falls, wildlife habitats, and rare plants

Increased truck traffic, lighting, and noise would disturb not just nature but also ceremonial use and public enjoyment

In the Black Hills region, it is known that contaminants in karst systems can travel miles in just days, bypassing natural filtration and reaching drinking water sources or fragile aquatic habitats. Water that feeds Spearfish Creek, a beloved trout stream and water source, could become toxic in days.

The United States exports gold; it is not a critical or strategic mineral. Most new gold is used for jewelry or financial speculation, not essential needs. We do not need to sacrifice sacred land for corporate greed.