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First name: Lacey

Last name: Woida

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I oppose the Ponderosa Project, which is an illegal operation on unceded Oceti Šakowin land and is in direct violation of their sovereignty and relationality over how they interact and care for their land. This project violates the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868, which recognize Oceti Šakowin authority over these lands. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the United States broke these treaties and that the land seizure was illegal. Although the court awarded a financial settlement as reparations, the Oceti Šakowin refused the payment - and because they never accepted it, the land remains legally theirs under U.S. law.

My opposition to this project is legally grounded in the facts that the U.S. government has no right to lease mineral extraction on Oceti Šakowin land, as it does not own this unceded territory (according to its own treaties and Supreme Court rulings), therefore neither does it own the resources beneath it. While my opposition is firmly based on those facts and legal realities above - namely that this is not government land to lease for an illegal mining project - I also want to highlight the U.S. government's continued pattern of violating its own laws and treaties.

For example, it has strategically used loopholes as it has with the Ponderosa Project to bypass environmental review processes, such as misapplying Categorical Exclusions to falsely claim there are no significant environmental impacts. This reveals how so-called environmental safeguards are designed to be ignored when they stand in the way of settler-colonial interests - furthering land theft, erasure, extraction, and ongoing Indigenous genocide. The agency responsible for protecting the environment allowed this project to skip thorough study and limited community feedback, showing the ongoing colonial disregard for Indigenous voices and land.

This illegal project is not only exploitative and extractive but also threatens endangered species and damages the land, water, and environment. It disrupts tribal sacred sites and cultural practices, harms local economies and tourism, and brings in "man camps" that are directly linked to the disappearance, trafficking, and murder of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. MMIWG2S

As you can see this project is illegal on many fronts and furthers land and resource theft, cultural erasure, and genocide, and must be stopped.