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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To the Forest Service and Under Secretary Boren,

I oppose this action as proposed. While the mine is located in the Black Hills National Forest, it sits only 14 miles from Devils Tower (Matȟó Thípila), the first U.S. national monument and a sacred site for over 20 Northern Plains nations.

Devils Tower is iconic to Wyoming's identity as a state. It's featured on license plates, tourist pamphlets, and in the imagination of anyone who has ever pictured the Wyoming frontier. I have visited the Black Hills and was deeply moved by their ruggedness; the landscape fundamentally changed how I view South Dakota. Friends who have stood at the Tower's base describe a sense of wonder and sacredness that stays with you. That experience depends on dark skies, silence, and wildness remaining intact.

An open pit mine 14 miles away will not only pollute the area but permanently degrade the experience of visiting Devils Tower and the surrounding forest. Light pollution from mining operations will ruin the dark night skies. Heavy equipment, trucks, and industrial infrastructure will scar the scenery. And mining wastes, toxic dust, and the legacy of a radioactive lake left behind will poison this landscape for generations. You cannot blast and dig for seventeen years and tell visitors the experience hasn't changed.

I request the following immediate actions:

- Publish a Draft EIS: The current 30-day scoping window is the only formal public opportunity because the agency has waived the draft review and objection process (36 CFR 218). This departs from the 2016 process for this same site. We need a draft EIS and a chance to object before a final decision.
- Justify the Waiver of Objection Rights: Removing the right to appeal (because the Under Secretary is the signatory) is a major policy shift. The EIS must justify on the record why this project alone deserves to bypass standard administrative review.
- Analyze Alternatives to the Scenic Waiver: The project requires amending the Forest Plan to waive scenic integrity standards. Analyze whether the mine can be redesigned to meet existing standards rather than rewriting the rules to allow industrialization 14 miles from a national monument.
- Independent Species Surveys: Do not rely on the company's claim that endangered northern long-eared bats are absent. Conduct independent, current surveys before proceeding.
- Include Tribal Nations: More than 20 nations hold Devils Tower as sacred. They must be formally included as cooperating agencies in this review, not excluded.

This public land belongs to all of us. Do not fast-track a radioactive mine that sacrifices a world-class wild experience for short-term extraction. Restore the public process.