



File Code: 2360; 1950**Date:** September 19, 2024**Route To:****Subject:** Soliciting Comments for Pactola Reservoir – Rapid Creek Watershed Withdrawal Project**To:** Interested Party

Dear Interested Party,

The USDA Forest Service (USFS) is now inviting comments on the draft environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact for the Pactola Reservoir – Rapid Creek Watershed Withdrawal project, located in Pennington County, South Dakota, within the Mystic Ranger District of the Black Hills National Forest.

The USFS submitted an application to the Bureau of Land Management requesting the Secretary of the Interior withdraw approximately 20,574 acres of National Forest System lands administered by the Black Hills National Forest, from all forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws; location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and operation of the mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights, for a term of 20 years. If the Secretary of the Interior were to approve the withdrawal, National Forest System lands in the withdrawal application area would be closed to sale or exchange, and no new mining claims or mineral or geothermal leases would be authorized for the term of the withdrawal. The withdrawal would not affect disposal of mineral materials. Non-federal lands and minerals would not be subject to the withdrawal.

The purpose of the requested withdrawal is to protect and preserve cultural and natural resources of the Pactola Reservoir – Rapid Creek Watershed, including municipal water for Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base, from the known and potential adverse environmental impacts that may arise from exploration and development of federally owned minerals.

How to Submit Comments

The draft environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact for the Pactola Reservoir – Rapid Creek Watershed Withdrawal Project are available at the USFS project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/blackhills/?project=63876>.

Comments on the draft environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact will be accepted until October 21, 2024. Electronic comments must be submitted at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=63876>. Written comments may be submitted by mail or hand delivered to Shawn Cochran, Forest Supervisor, Black Hills National Forest at 1019 N. 5th Street, Custer, SD 57730. Business hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm, excluding federal holidays. Comments sent by email will not be accepted.



It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted. All comments received, including names and addresses of commenters will become part of the project file and will be available for public inspection. The Responsible Official for this decision is the Secretary of the Interior. Neither the request for the withdrawal to the Secretary, nor the decision by the Secretary is subject to the USFS pre-decisional administrative review (objection) process under 36 CFR Part 218 or the administrative appeal process at 43 CFR Part 4 or 36 CFR Part 214.

Public Meeting

The USDA Forest Service will host a virtual public meeting at 6 p.m. MDT on Wednesday, September 25. The meeting will include a short presentation about the withdrawal application and draft environmental assessment, information about how to submit comments, and a question-and-answer session. The virtual meeting will be a Microsoft Teams live event available at <https://bit.ly/3ZjTWaW>. For inquiries about accessibility or to request accommodations, please contact Scott Jacobson at scott.j.jacobson@usda.gov. The public meeting will be recorded and posted on the USFS project website.

We appreciate your interest and involvement with this project.

Sincerely,



SHAWN COCHRAN
Forest Supervisor