



Greetings from your Black Hills National Forest:

The Forest Service has submitted an application requesting the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw approximately 20,574 acres of lands administered by the Black Hills National Forest Service in Pennington County, South Dakota, from all forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws, mining laws, and mineral and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights (Figure 1).

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. If the Secretary of the Interior were to grant the withdrawal, no new mining claims or issuance of new mineral or geothermal leases would be authorized on the withdrawn lands for a term of 20 years.

The Bureau of Land Management published a notice in the Federal Register on March 21, 2023, announcing its receipt of the Forest Service's application for the withdrawal. The notice in the Federal Register initiated a 2-year segregation of the lands from disposal under mining and mineral and geothermal leasing laws. The Federal Register notice also initiated a 90-day comment period and announced that the agencies would hold a public meeting regarding the requested withdrawal.

Per Bureau of Land Management withdrawal regulations (43 CFR Part 2300), the Forest Service, as the applicant of the withdrawal, will prepare the environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to inform the Secretary of the Interior's consideration of the withdrawal. The 90-day comment period initiated by the Bureau of Land Management will also serve as the scoping comment period for the environmental analysis process. Comments submitted to the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management will be considered.

Comments will be accepted for 90 days following the publication of the Notice of Withdrawal Application in the Federal Register. The notice was published on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, and the comment period closes on June 20, 2023. Electronic comments may be submitted to <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?project=NP-3479>. Written comments may be submitted to Bryan Karchut, Black Hills National Forest, 1019 N. 5th Street, Custer, SD 57730. Electronic comments are encouraged. Comments sent by email will not be accepted.

Black Hills National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management will host a public meeting to discuss the requested withdrawal on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, from 4:00-8:00 p.m. at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel, 2111 North Lacrosse Street, Rapid City, SD. All interested in the stewardship of these lands and waters are invited to participate. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management staff will present information about the requested withdrawal and be on hand to answer questions for the duration of the meeting. Maps and other information will be available for viewing. Comment stations will be available at the public meeting for those who want to submit an electronic comment for the official record.

For further information on the requested withdrawal, please contact Elysia Retzlaff, project manager, at elysia.retzlaff@usda.gov or visit the project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=63876>.

Sincerely,
/s/ BRYAN KARCHUT
Acting Forest Supervisor

Enclosures
[Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek Watershed Withdrawal Scoping Letter.pdf](#)
[Pactola Reservoir-Rapid Creek Watershed Withdrawal Figure 1.pdf](#)