



Frequently Asked Questions About Water Quality on the Black Hills

- **WHY IS WATER QUALITY IMPORTANT ON THE BLACK HILLS?**

Healthy streams on the Black Hills mean clean and healthy streams to fish in, safe drinking water, clean streams to recreate in, and overall a healthy forest. It is imperative that for our health and for the health of our natural world, the Forest Service and others protect our water quality.

- **DOESN'T CLOSING AND OBLITERATING ROADS BENEFIT WATER QUALITY?**

Not if the Forest Service is proposing to construct or reconstruct roads at the same time. When roads are constructed or reconstructed, a new source of water pollution is created. Earth moving activities, road use, and the existence of an exposed road surface cause sediment to be transported to streams (i.e., sedimentation), leading to increased sediment levels, stream temperatures, and other problems.¹

- **DOESN'T A REDUCTION IN ROAD DENSITY BENEFIT WATER QUALITY?**

Scientists studying the environmental impacts of roads have determined a road density of just 1.55 miles per square mile increases sedimentation rates more than four times natural levels.² The Forest Service is proposing a road density of nearly 3 miles per square mile, leading to sedimentation rates nearly 8 times higher than natural levels. Given that many streams are suffering from excessive sediment, even small road density reductions are not enough to correct water quality problems.

- **DON'T BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES BENEFIT WATER QUALITY?**

Best Management Practices, or BMPs, implemented during logging and road construction have been utilized for many years on the Black Hills National Forest, yet water quality problems associated with logging and road construction activities plague nearly every stream on the forest.³

- **DOESN'T ROAD RECONSTRUCTION BENEFIT WATER QUALITY?**

Reconstructing roads usually does little to address water quality problems. The Forest Service concludes that the mere existence of a road is "the greatest source and delivery system of sediment to [stream] channels."⁴ A reconstructed road will continue to produce sediment and create water quality problems.

- **OTHER ACTIVITIES ALSO CAUSE WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS, WHY ARE LOGGING AND ROAD CONSTRUCTION BEING SINGLED OUT?**

The Forest Service is obligated by law to ensure all its forest management activities do not further degrade streams that are already suffering water quality problems. Regardless of the source or sources of the problem, the agency is required to ensure its logging and road construction do not make water quality worse than it already is.

¹ See, 1997 Black Hills National Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, pp. III 72-74 and III-87-88.

² Waters, T.F. 1995. Sediment in Streams: Sources, Biological Effects, Controls. American Fisheries Society Monograph 7.

³ See, SDDENR's 2002 South Dakota Report to Congress: 305(b) Water Quality Assessment.

⁴ See Footnote 1, pp. III 73.