

Address:

Date:

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC

Re: Protection of a sacred place

Dear President Obama,

Under your Executive Authority to issue an Executive Order, would you please designate some 40,000 acres under the control of the US Forest Service in the Black Hills National Forest in South Dakota, as the Okawita Paha National Monument? This area is located in the middle of the Black Hills which are sacred to more than 30 Native American nations, and is also a part of the Great Sioux Reservation under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.

Any further actions on these lands by the U.S. Forest Service that would change their natural, sacred nature must be stopped. Native American people must be allowed to preserve spiritual traditions and cultural identities, and complete these practices in their rightful places. The Okawita Paha sacred area provides a place for traditional Native American spirituality and is unsuited for activities such as logging, prescribed burning, and building of roads. The Okawita

Protection of Sacred Places

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Paha sacred area is also the last place in the Black Hills that provides protection and sanctuary for wildlife.

If these lands became a National Monument and were transferred to management by the National Park Service, with an additional training program for Native American personnel to be co-managed as a sacred landscape and wildlife sanctuary, traditional Native American spiritual practices could be freely exercised again. The designation of these lands as the Okawita Paha National Monument, to be jointly managed by the United States and the Great Sioux Nation in recognition of the peace promised in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, would finally uphold the true essence of the Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

Mr. President, please seriously consider taking this historic step to protect one of the last sacred areas left to Native American people from all over North America. Your leadership could finally provide for true religious freedom for all Native American people.

Sincerely,

Signature