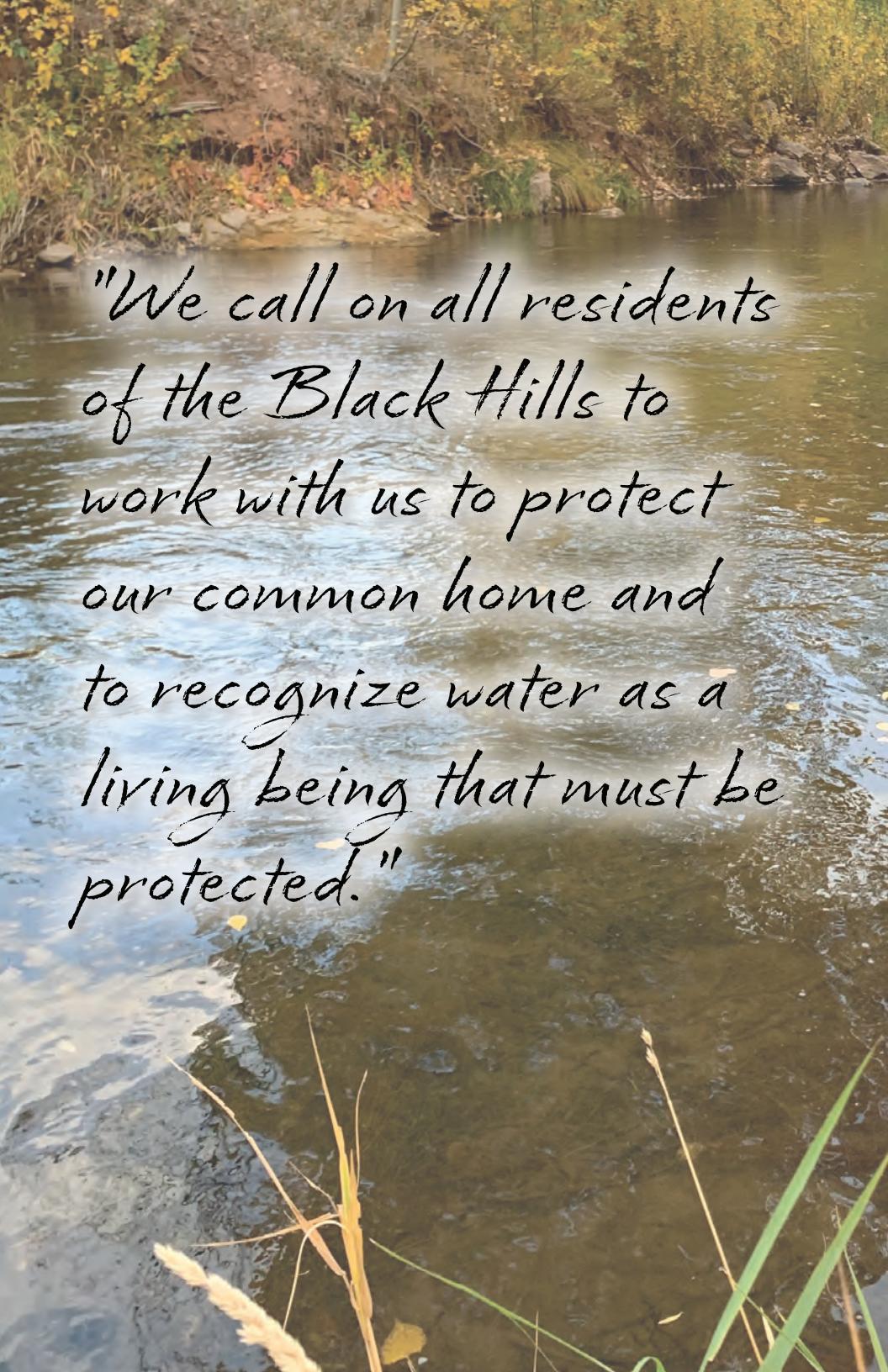


# LITHIUM MINING AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN THE BLACK HILLS: THE “GREEN ENERGY REVOLUTION” HITS HOME!

A Special Report by:  
*Black Hills*  
**Clean Water Alliance**

Published  
December  
2023



"We call on all residents of the Black Hills to work with us to protect our common home and to recognize water as a living being that must be protected."

## LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

On November 4 and 5, 2023, thirty people from 15 organizations gathered in Rapid City, SD.

The event was the “Lithium Mining and the Climate Crisis in the Black Hills:

The ‘Green Energy Revolution’ Hits Home” Conference. The Conference was hosted by Black Hills Clean Water Alliance, a regional nonprofit group. Their goal was to create solutions for two of the most difficult environmental issues the area faced: a lithium mining rush in the face of minimal state regulation and the climate crisis, which was already having clear impacts in the area.



These two issues are inextricably related. The federal government is spending billions of dollars pushing lithium mining for batteries for electric vehicles – actions that it believes will minimize climate change. In response, a number of lithium mining operators and projects have sprung up in the Black Hills in the last year or two. Some are from overseas, some are supported by overseas companies, and some are regional.

However, while lithium batteries may lower tailpipe emissions, they are not a solution to the climate crisis, which is fed by carbon emissions. This is because mining is a major contributor to carbon emissions, contributing somewhere between ten percent and 36 percent of total carbon emissions worldwide. The variation in estimates is a product of the varying assumptions made by different researchers, but it is clear that mining is a problem for those who wish to reduce carbon emissions.





Lithium mining is also a dirty process, stripping the ground of vegetation, polluting water, and driving away wildlife. Processing lithium uses large amounts of energy (more carbon emissions) and toxic acids. Lithium is also a hazardous substance. It threatens human health in a variety of ways, including by inhalation, skin contact, eye contact, and spontaneous fires.

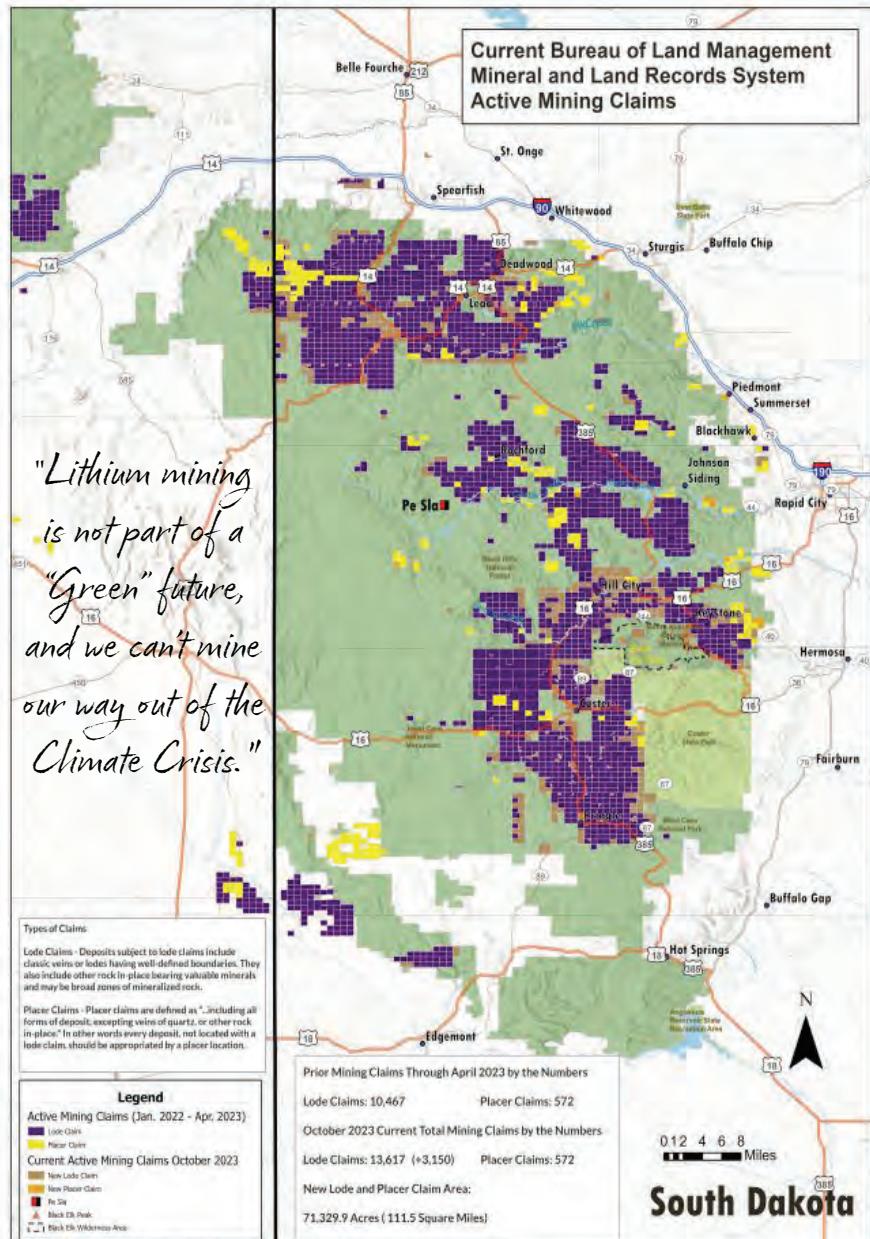
Bottom line: if electric vehicles using lithium batteries are the basis for the fight against climate change and the 'Green Energy Revolution,' then that revolution is not very "green."

At the same time, something must be done to reduce climate change and its impacts on western South Dakota and the Black Hills. The area is already seeing seasonal shifts, more drought, and increased floods and tornadoes. If nothing is done, the future holds greater impacts, most of them negatively effecting the current occupants, economy, wildlife, and water resources.



The Conference stepped into this conflicted landscape. This report is about what happened.

To begin, study the current mining claims map on the next page that now shows 293,000 acres of active mining claims in the Black Hills. These claims could potentially become large-scale mines run by companies seeking lithium, uranium, and rare earths elements for this "Green Energy" Revolution, as well as gold for jewelry! Imagine what the landscape would look like. Imagine how contaminated the clean water would become. This is why we now make our Declaration (see pg 4 & 5) to protect the sacred Black Hills and promote alternatives to lithium mining. We hope you will join us.



<b>Strategic Mapping Provided by:</b>  Mato Oshika Analytics LLC ©2023 All Rights Reserved.	<b>South Dakota Study Area</b> BLM Mining Claims Paha Sapa (Black Hills, South Dakota) October 2, 2023
 <b>Black Hills Clean Water Alliance</b> <a href="http://www.bhcleanwateralliance.org">www.bhcleanwateralliance.org</a>	<b>MAPBOOK</b> BLM Mining Claims Lode Claims / Placer Claim Updated Claims Q3 2023

# DECLARATION ON LITHIUM MINING AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN THE BLACK HILLS

WE, RESIDENTS OF LAKOTA TREATY TERRITORY LIVING IN WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA, GATHERED TOGETHER ON NOVEMBER 4-5, 2023, IN THE SACRED BLACK HILLS, DECLARE THE FOLLOWING:

- ▷ We are from fifteen organizations, and come from the diverse communities, ages, and genders representative of our homeland.
- ▷ Half of us identify as descendants of the Great Sioux Nation, and half of us identify as being from other ethnic backgrounds.
- ▷ We are extremely alarmed about the future of the Black Hills region's natural landscapes, waters, and inhabitants, as:
  - Extreme weather brought on by the worldwide Climate Crisis is here, documented by the number of floods, the number and ferocity of tornadoes, and the number of other extreme weather events showing marked increases in recent decades.
  - Drought is the constant companion of those of us who live in this semi-arid region, and the forecast impacts of climate change include increasing drought.
  - These impacts of the Climate Crisis damage our area's waters, economy, health, welfare, and the safety of our communities and our future.
  - One proposed solution to combat the Climate Crisis in the United States is to shift from fossil fuels to electric vehicles in a misguided and shortsighted attempt at creating a "Green" Energy Transition.
  - A wholesale change to electric vehicles would generally reduce tailpipe emissions in urban areas, but increase electrical-generation pollution in rural areas, like ours, until such time as renewable energy sources generate most of our electricity.
  - Electric vehicles require large amounts of natural resources to manufacture the batteries they run on, including mining for lithium, with hundreds of pounds of lithium required for each vehicle's battery, and huge quantities of water.
  - Mining is one of the largest single contributors to carbon emissions worldwide, thus increasing the severity of the Climate Crisis.
  - There are at least nine lithium mining prospectors and operators in the Black Hills, with five licensed mines and a number of exploration projects.
  - Mining in the Black Hills threatens an entire area held sacred by indigenous nations across the Great Plains, and which also includes specific sites that are critical to Lakota ceremonies, culture, history, sustenance, and life cycles.
  - Like all mining, lithium mining threatens water, landscapes, cultural resources, wildlife, and human health and safety.
  - There are alternatives to lithium mining, such as battery manufacture process changes, reduction in resources use, and recycling.
  - Lithium mining is not part of a "Green" future, and we can't mine our way out of the Climate Crisis.
  - Lithium mining in the Black Hills increases the Climate Crisis and damages our area's water, economy, health, welfare, and the safety of our communities and future.
- ▷ One solution alone cannot fix the complexity of the climate crisis – the solutions must come from the processes, companies, and areas that have contributed to the climate crisis – in other words from all communities, including ours.
- ▷ Therefore, we declare our resolution to work together to both reduce climate change's impacts and halt lithium mining in the Black Hills.
- ▷ We call on all residents of the Black Hills to work with us to protect our common home and to recognize water as a living being that must be protected.
- ▷ We call on all people across Lakota Treaty Territory and beyond to support these efforts to protect water.

## LITHIUM MINING AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN THE BLACK HILLS: THE “GREEN ENERGY REVOLUTION” HITS HOME

# Planning for the Future

### ACTION PLAN - SUMMARY

#### BUILDING ALLIANCES

Support development of community-driven solutions, regular meetings, multi-community public education actions, and other opportunities to build alliances among all audiences in the Black Hills and western South Dakota.



Create a comprehensive plan to hold the federal executive and legislative branches accountable for the impacts of their attempts to solve the climate crisis on tribal and rural areas.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



Focusing on the principles embodied in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, continue to do outreach and to work as diverse organizations around the rights of water, Lakota treaty issues, tribal consultation, and cultural resource issues in responding to proposed climate resilience and mining-related projects in the Black Hills region.

## CULTURE

• • • •

Hold prayer walks and vigils, host a wacipi in the Black Hills, and create youth-focused events on the relationships between climate change and lithium mining issues.



## PUBLIC EDUCATION

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Develop public education materials on such topics as culture and connection to the land, mining, the climate crisis in western South Dakota, alternatives to the lithium rush, and protection of communities and the environment.

## MEDIA

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In collaboration with the Public Education and Environmental Justice groups, develop and execute a one-year mass media and social media campaign designed to reach diverse audiences.



## LEGAL

• • •

Explore and implement opportunities to take legal action that minimize the negative impacts of the climate crisis and lithium mining in the Black Hills.



# FUNDRAISING



Develop and implement a three-year budget for a Climate / Lithium Mining Crisis project based on the objectives that arose from the “Lithium Mining and the Climate Crisis in the Black Hills” conference.



# LEGISLATIVE\*



Explore and implement opportunities to strengthen local, state, and federal laws for protection of Black Hills land and water and minimization of the impacts of the climate crisis in our region.

*\*NOTE: Lobbying and any electoral activities will be conducted and funded separately from 501(c)(3) funds.*

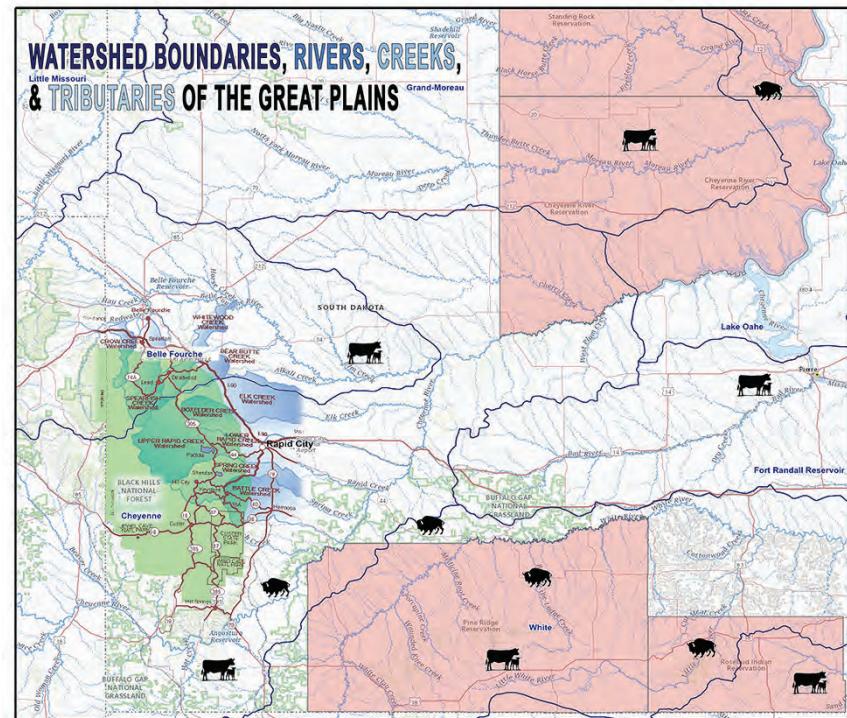
## Members of These Organizations

### Were Present:

- ▷ Black Hills Clean Water Alliance
- ▷ Dakota Rural Action - Black Hills Chapter
- ▷ Earthstream Media
- ▷ Earthworks
- ▷ Generations Indigenous Ways
- ▷ Great Basin Resource Watch
- ▷ Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance
- ▷ Lakota People's Law Project
- ▷ NDN Collective
- ▷ Oglala Lakota College
- ▷ Preserve French Creek
- ▷ Red Cloud Community
- ▷ Sicangu Oyate Land Office
- ▷ Sierra Club
- ▷ Uniting Resilience

## The Black Hills are the headwaters for the northern Great Plains.

The Hills and the surrounding areas of western South Dakota face many challenges, including increased flooding and violent storms from climate change, entrenched poverty, and large-scale open pit mining. Currently, over 20% of the land in the Black Hills is under active mining claims (see pg 3), and lithium mining for electric vehicle batteries is underway – and being promoted heavily as a “solution” for the climate crisis. However, violent storms mixed with toxic mining will have dire consequences for our region.



USGS The National Map; National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau

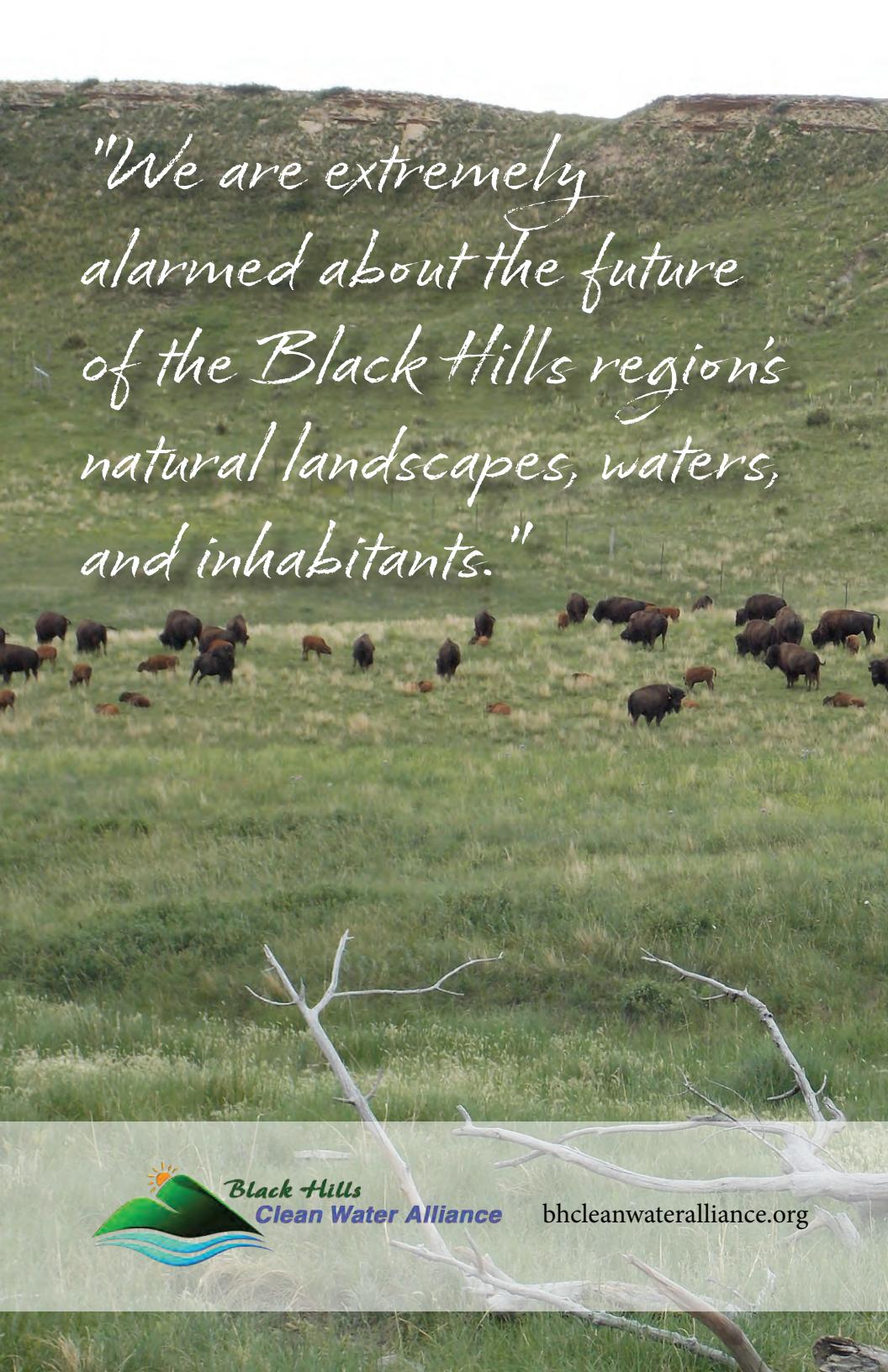
## CLIMATE CRISIS = SEVERE WEATHER EVENTS



The number of tornadoes in South Dakota rose 10% from 1951-1985 (871 tornadoes) to 1986-2020 (962 tornadoes). During the same time periods, the number of tornado injuries rose 36%, the number of tornado fatalities rose 28%, and the value of property damage rose 32%. The damage, fatalities, and injuries all rose at higher levels than the number of tornadoes, indicating stronger tornadoes.



According to the National Weather Service's Rapid City, SD, office, there were nineteen floods in the Black Hills in the 81 years between 1878 and 1959. There were thirteen in the 26 years between 1960 and 1985, and there were 62 in the 27.5 years between 1986 and May 2013. Even if we assume poor record-keeping and ignore the data before 1960, the acceleration in extreme weather events is striking. This equates to a 5-fold increase in 1986-2013, compared to in 1960-1985.



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