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Rainbow family getting high marks for forest cleanup article

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POSTED: 07:26 PM MDT Jul 15, 2015 UPDATED: 11:16 AM MDT Jul 16, 2015

Forest Service pleased with Rainbow Gathering

- HILL CITY, S.D. -
- When the Rainbow Family of Living Light descended on the Black Hills for its annual celebration there were fears of crime waves and degraded forest resources.

Some Native Americans predicted the alternative lifestyle group would defile sacred sites.

But law enforcement officials now say the gathering caused little trouble.

U.S. Forest Service officers issued 56 misdemeanor tickets and made five felony arrests -- numbers a spokesperson called "much milder than expected."

And on Wednesday, as Rainbow members took care of final clean-up duties after the early July event held near Deerfield Lake, forest service officials walked the encampment site and gave high marks.

"Everything is looking really good here out at the gathering site," said U.S. Forest Service Resource Advisor Les Gonyer. "The family is doing a really good job of re-habbing. They said that they were going to clean up and they're doing a phenomenal job. They're exceeding my expectations. You know, if you come out here next year I bet you'd hardly be able to tell that they were even here."

And that is a point of pride said rainbow family members.

"A lot of people take the cleanup really seriously and spend a lot of time really meticulously making sure that the forest is cleaned and naturalized," said Lucid from Homer, Alaska.

Added Seth from Baton Rouge, La:

"We're really obsessive about it. We make things look really picture perfect.

We do a good job of it. We're more obsessive about it than the forest service is usually. They're always usually really excited about us because we're going above and beyond what they're expecting us to do."

Forest service officials said they expected a final report on the Rainbow gathering in about two months.

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