

Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters

American Canoe Association || American Rivers || Black Hills Clean Water Alliance || Center for Biological Diversity
Crow River Trail Guards || Defenders of Wildlife || Earthjustice || Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America || Environment Minnesota || Environmental Law & Policy Center
FORPA Forest Protection Allies || Freemans Explore LLC || Friends of Buckingham
Grand Riverkeeper/LEAD Agency, Inc. || Great Bear Foundation || Great Old Broads for Wilderness
John Huston – Polar Explorer || Klamath Forest Alliance || League of Conservation Voters
Malach Consulting || Izaak Walton League of America || Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Mining Impact Coalition of Wisconsin || MiningWatch Canada
MN Center for Environmental Advocacy || National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council || Okanogan Highlands Alliance || Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
Outdoor Industry Association || Sierra Club || Silver Valley Community Resource Center
The Conservation Alliance || The Lands Council || Virginia Community Rights Network || The Wilderness Society
Voyageur Outward Bound School || Voyageurs Conservancy || Weber Sustainability Consulting || Wild California
Wilderness Watch || Winter Wildlands Alliance

February 23rd, 2021

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the country, we, the undersigned organizations, urge you to join as an original cosponsor to the reintroduction of Representative McCollum's (D-MN) H.R. 5598, *The Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act*, which would permanently protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Voyageurs National Park, and their headwaters in the Superior National Forest from harmful and toxic sulfide-ore copper mining that would irreparably pollute this pristine watershed for future generations. The Act, which will soon be re-introduced in the 117th Congress, was introduced last session by Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) as H.R. 5598 and passed the Natural Resources House Committee in 2020.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (Boundary Waters) is Minnesota's Crown Jewel and is a national treasure of 1.1 million acres of pristine interconnected lakes and rivers in the Superior National Forest. The Boundary Waters is contiguous with and upstream of Canada's Quetico Park and Minnesota's Voyageurs National Park (Voyageurs). Enjoyed as the most visited national wilderness area in the nation, generations of Minnesotans and Americans have developed a lifelong love of nature through superb camping, fishing, canoeing, and hiking experiences. The Boundary Waters' tranquil lakes, forests, trails and more than 1,200 miles of canoe routes offer unparalleled recreation, but also provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife such as lake trout, moose and the federally-listed Canada lynx.

The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) supports a permanent ban on sulfide-ore copper mining in the Boundary Waters watershed, which is Ceded Territory under the Treaty of 1854. In the Ceded Territory, 3 individual Bands of the MCT have a legal interest in protecting natural resources and retain hunting, fishing and other usufructuary rights that extend throughout the entire northeast portion of the state of Minnesota under the 1854 Treaty of LaPointe. Such a ban would ensure that rights of the MCT's Bands to hunt, fish, and gather are respected.

Finally, the love for the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs also powers a strong and enduring outdoor recreation economy in Northeastern Minnesota responsible for 17,000 jobs and \$913 million in sales annually. An independent peer-reviewed economic study by Harvard Professor James Stock demonstrated that a ban on copper mining in the Boundary Waters watershed would result in more jobs and more income for the region. Sulfide-ore copper mining is a net negative for the regional economy.

This incredible region is now threatened by proposals from foreign mining companies to develop copper mines on nearby public lands. Antofagasta's Twin Metals seeks to develop a large sulfide-ore copper mine just upstream of the Boundary Waters. Mining is permanently banned in the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs. However, mining on lands next to rivers and lakes that flow directly into the Boundary Waters, Voyageurs, and Quetico would inevitably and permanently pollute these areas. The federal and state pollution regulations that would apply to the proposed mine are ill-suited to protect the pristine areas downstream. Peer-reviewed science proves that pollution from copper mining in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters would permanently damage it and downstream land and waters. Such damage would be permanent because it could not be fixed, mitigated, or remedied.

Banning sulfide-ore copper mining from public lands in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters would provide multiple benefits of the kind critical to addressing the climate and extinction crisis, including preserving carbon sequestration; avoiding the massive energy demand of large sulfide-ore copper mines and thus eliminating major new greenhouse gas sources; and preserving a 4.3-million-acre ecosystem that provides a refuge for species threatened by climate change.

Polling since 2015 has consistently shown that Minnesotans support a permanent ban on sulfide-ore copper mining next to the Boundary Waters. In July 2020, polling by national pollster Anzalone Liszt & Grove pegged support for a ban against copper mining near the Boundary Waters at 68% statewide; support was geographically and politically broad.

Today, our country has the opportunity to permanently protect one of the most pristine ecosystems and the cleanest water in the nation. The Boundary Waters, Quetico Park, and Voyageurs ecosystem are not just places, they are a way of life for scores of thousands of Minnesotans, Americans, Canadians, and visitors from across the globe who come to experience the beautiful lakes and unspoiled rivers. This is why permanent protection has the support of a wide coalition of organizations, individuals, businesses, and elected officials across the political spectrum representing, outdoor recreationists, conservationists, hunters and anglers, businesses, and many others.

This wild and special place deserves permanent protection from short term extractive interests that will ravage the land and pollute the water for the profit of a few, at the environmental, public health and economic cost of many. We implore you to join as an original cosponsor to *The Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act* to ensure this incredible region gets the permanent protection it deserves.

Sincerely the undersigned organizations,

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