

As the danger intensifies, 170 businesses and organizations urge the federal government to protect the Boundary Waters Wilderness

These organizations join Minnesota's Governor Dayton, other elected officials, four Minnesota and First Nation Chippewa tribes, thousands of medical professionals, and more than 50 scientists in urging protection.

ELY, MN—In response to federal actions paving the way for dangerous sulfide-ore copper mining near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, over 170 businesses, outdoor sporting groups, and conservation organizations, including Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Patagonia, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters, the the Boundary Waters Business Coalition, and the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, sent distinct letters to the U.S. Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior urging protection of America's world-class lakeland wilderness from sulfide-ore copper mining.

The three separate letters were in response to the May 2 reinstatement of two long-expired mineral leases of national public lands near the Boundary Waters. The lease reinstatements are contrary to a two-year federal moratorium while the U.S. Forest Service conducts a study of risks from proposed sulfide-ore copper mining on public lands in the Boundary Waters watershed. This study will be used to determine if copper mining should be banned from public lands near the Boundary Waters for 20 years. The signatories strongly urge the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to immediately suspend all mining decisions during the study.

Land Tawney, President and CEO of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, said, “The Boundary Waters forms a part of our public lands heritage whose importance is impossible to quantify, providing opportunities to hunt, fish, canoe, hike and camp in a wilderness setting that is accessible to all. Folks from 5 to 95 years old can experience this world-class resource. For years now, hunters, anglers, and others have been engaged in exposing the threat posed by the proposals to develop large-scale mines within the Boundary Waters watershed. We’re not about to back down now. These iconic public lands must be conserved.”

The Boundary Waters is America’s most visited wilderness. Its outstanding fish and wildlife habitat make it a cornerstone of Minnesota’s outdoor sporting heritage. This glacially-carved landscape of 1.1 million acres of interconnected waterways, healthy forests, and diverse wildlife attracts over 155,000 adventure-seeking visitors each year. The Boundary Waters has 1,200 miles of canoe routes, more than 1,100 lakes, and 2,000 designated campsites. Outdoor recreationists from around the world come to the Boundary Waters for paddling, fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, observing wildlife, dogsledding, snowshoeing, skiing, and immersion in the spectacular landscape.

“The Boundary Waters is a national treasure - a crown jewel of our public lands system, owned by every single American,” said Lisa Pike Sheehy, Vice President of Environmental Activism for Patagonia. “Thousands of paddlers, anglers, and hunters visit the Boundary Waters every year to enjoy some of the cleanest water on earth. We simply can't afford to let a foreign mining conglomerate with a long history of pollution put an industrial copper mining pit less than a mile from one of America's most popular wilderness areas.”

“The Boundary Waters is a prime example of what we as outdoorsmen need to protect,” stated Ryan Callaghan, Director of Conservation and Public Relations at First Lite. “Not only does the Boundary Waters supply clean water but also a huge variety of outdoor

pursuits accessible from a wide range of skill levels. You don't have to look any further than Butte, Montana and the Clark Fork watershed to see how copper mining has negatively impacted outdoors people."

The threat that toxic pollution from sulfide-ore copper mining would contaminate the Boundary Waters increased Thursday, May 24, 2018, when Twin Metals Minnesota announced that it wants to build mine facilities even closer to the wilderness than previously proposed. If allowed to mine, it would locate a processing plant, a major source of water pollution, on the banks of Birch Lake, a popular fishing and recreation lake that flows into the Boundary Waters.

"The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is the most visited wilderness area in America, helping to support 18,000 jobs and pumping \$852 million in sales revenue to the region. This should be reason enough for the administration to push pause on the rush to approve controversial new mineral leases there and wait for sound scientific studies of the potential impact to be completed," said Amy Roberts, Outdoor Industry Association Executive Director. "The administration shouldn't be in the business of fast-tracking the interests of mineral developers at the expense of wildlife, outdoor recreation, rural economies and the future of our public lands."

The ever-increasing number of businesses, organizations, and supporters joining the three Coalitions shows their determination to achieve permanent protection for the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining.

###

Letters from the Three Coalitions

[Sporting Group Letter](#)

[Conservation Group Letter](#)

[Boundary Waters Business Coalition Letter](#)

Media Contacts:

Lauren Eggert, Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters: (612) 845-7658

lauren@savetheboundarywaters.org

Corley Kenna, Patagonia ActionWorks: (202) 320-3921

corley.kenna@patagonia.com

Katie McKalip, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers: (406) 240-9262

mckalip@backcountryhunters.org

Lukas Leaf, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters: (612) 270-6805

lukas@sportsmenfortheboundarywaters.org