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Statement on US Forest Service Decision to Downgrade Study on Risks to the BWCA

Ely, MN - Today the [U.S. Forest Service significantly downgraded](#) the study of risks posed by sulfide-ore copper mining to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Officials had formerly planned a comprehensive, in-depth scientific and economic Environmental Impact Statement of the Boundary Waters watershed under scenarios with copper mining and no copper mining. The former plan showed respect for Minnesotan's strong interest in careful decision-making when it comes to the Boundary Waters and its vital role in driving Minnesota's economy and defining America's public lands and outdoor heritage. Now, the Forest Service has reduced that process to a simple Environmental Assessment that includes less opportunity for public input and little room for rigorous scientific analysis.

The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters issued the following statement:

"There's no room for shortcuts when it comes to the Boundary Waters," said Campaign Manager Doug Niemela. "We are very concerned about the U.S. Forest Service's decision to downgrade the study on the risks to the Boundary Waters from an Environmental Impact Statement to an Environmental Assessment. All Americans, no matter how they feel about this issue, deserve the most thorough and rigorous analysis possible to determine the risks of sulfide-ore copper mining near the Boundary Waters.

While the U.S. Forest Service has acknowledged that protecting the Wilderness through a land withdrawal has no environmental downsides, the other alternatives being considered - such as converting the Superior National Forest in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters to a sulfide-ore copper mining district - would have catastrophic consequences for one of this nation's crown jewels."

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