

SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

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Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk tells Twin Metals boosters state review process can't stop risky mining near the Boundary Waters; promises them he'll "influence" process to push it through

Comments show why the short-circuited federal review is so critical for ensuring Boundary Waters Protection and the need for Governor Walz to intervene

Ely, MN--At the Ely-area Community Economic Development Joint Powers Board meeting on Monday Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk told a group of Twin Metals boosters that Minnesota's environmental review process isn't designed to stop projects, and that once state agencies begin environmental review of Twin Metals proposal it will not be stopped. The comments by one of Twin Metals' biggest supporters that the state environmental review process is inadequate to stop a mine that all evidence shows will pollute the Boundary Waters reveals how the Trump Administration's corruption of the federal review process puts the Wilderness at immediate, existential risk. It is clear from these comments that Governor Walz needs to intervene if the Boundary Waters is to be protected.

At the meeting Bakk [said](#):

"Once Twin Metals submits a mine plan that the Governor doesn't somehow get in the way of that and the environmental permitting doesn't start, because there we can actually have some impact to make sure that PCA and DNR starts the environmental review process for the Twin Metals plan when it's submitted. Because there is a tremendous amount of pressure on the governor to not let Twin Metals get started on the environmental review, **because the truth is environmental review process is not intended to stop projects. It's intended to mitigate impacts, so once they start down that road of applying for those permits its pretty hard to stop. Now it might**

take a decade or more, but the process isn't intended to stop projects, so the challenge is going to be making sure the Walz Administration gets his departments working on the permits once we have a mine plan because that's where we can have some influence."

Twin Metals intends to submit a plan this month, which could trigger the state's environmental review and permitting processes, which are inadequate to protect the pristine Wilderness.

In response to the comments, former Department of Natural Resource Commissioner and current Save the Boundary Waters Executive Director Tom Landwehr said:

"Sen. Bakk's comments clearly show why the state's environmental review process should be put on hold until the full federal environmental review of this project is completed and current litigation challenging the Trump Administration's illegal actions is finished. The federal review - which killed this project once - is an essential part of the review process and should not be subverted. The Boundary Waters is Minnesota's crown jewel and it will take leadership from Governor Walz and other state leaders to take action to permanently protect this national treasure."

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1. Minnesotans want the Boundary Waters protected from sulfide-ore copper mining.

Seventy percent of Minnesotans [are opposed to copper mining near the Boundary Waters](#). During a public comment period, over 180,000 Americans voiced support for Boundary Waters protection. Nearly a dozen presidential candidates, including Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, and Pete Buttigieg support Boundary Waters protection

2. Current state standards and processes are not sufficient to protect the Boundary Waters. The BWCA is the most heavily visited wilderness area in the United States, attracting more than 155,000 visitors from all over the world and helps drive more than [\\$900 million](#) in economic activity every year and over 17,000 jobs. [A recent independent study](#) from Harvard University showed that protecting the Boundary Waters from the Twin Metals mine would result in dramatically more jobs and income over a 20-year period.

[Current state standards and processes](#) do not look at economic, cultural, health or socio-economic impacts of a mine, and allow for significant amounts of air and water pollution. This is not even taking into account the risk of catastrophic spills or major leaks, which are common with this type of risky mining.

3. The Trump Administration is putting politics before science and established environmental law by rigging the federal review process to fast track the Twin Metal project.

In 2016, the U.S. Forest Service terminated the mining project after a [thorough scientific review](#) determined the mine posed an almost certain risk of “irreparable harm” to the Wilderness. Since then, the Trump administration has used [unlawful maneuvers](#) and [suppressed scientific evidence](#) in order to fast-track the project. They have denied calls from Congress, the press, and the public to [hand over](#) critical information on the risk sulfide-ore mining poses to the Boundary Waters.

4. Twin Metals spent a million dollars lobbying the Trump Administration and rented a house Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump to revive the project after it was terminated.

The owner of the Twin Metals mining project near the Boundary Waters was “[losing a fight](#)” with the federal government in the final months of the Obama administration. However, the Trump Administration [revived the project](#) after its owner, Andronico Luksic, bought a Washington, DC, mansion and rented it to Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump.

5. Antofagasta, the parent company of Twin Metals, has a history of environmental pollution and political corruption in its homeland. Antofagasta was [found guilty by the Chilean Supreme Court of harming residents](#) of a community when Antofagasta located its tailings dam upstream, polluting the groundwater and blocking a critical source of water on which the community depended. [They were responsible for the highest number of toxic spills](#) in the region of Coquimbo, including one spill which dumped 13,000 liters of copper concentrate directly into a river. They faced a fine of \$23.8 million and closure of its biggest copper mine in Chile over [violations of its environmental permit, including water pollution](#). Antofagasta has been implicated in a number of bribery and corruption scandals, including with a [high-ranking Chilean cabinet minister](#), a questionable [\\$10 million dollar loan to the daughter-in-law of the Chilean president](#), and [tax fraud](#).