

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Jeremy Drucker (612) 670-9650

SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

Rep. Betty McCollum Introduces Bipartisan Legislation to Protect Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness from Sulfide-Ore Copper Mining

(Washington DC)-- Today Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced bipartisan legislation to protect Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining. The *Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act* permanently protects 234,328 acres of federal land and waters within the Superior National Forest from risky sulfide-ore copper mining. The bill does **not** limit taconite or iron-ore mining anywhere in the State of Minnesota nor does it affect sulfide-ore copper mining projects *outside* the Rainy River Drainage Basin.

"Today is a good day for the hundreds of thousands of Americans who love the Boundary Waters," Said Tom Landwehr, Executive Director of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. **"Rep. McCollum's legislation is a necessary step to protect Minnesota's crown jewel and one of America's great national treasures. Sulfide-ore copper mining is one of the most toxic industries in America, and doesn't belong anywhere near the Boundary Waters. Unfortunately the Trump Administration has taken it upon themselves to ignore the law, ignore science, and fast track this risky mining near the Wilderness, and Rep. McCollum's bill is a welcome antidote."**

Seventy percent of Minnesotans [do not want](#) sulfide-ore copper near the Boundary Waters, and in 2017 over 180,000 people urged the federal government to withdraw the watershed of the Boundary Waters from the federal mining program--the same area Rep. McCollum's legislation addresses. The [science is clear on the threat](#) sulfide-ore copper mining poses to the Wilderness.

Rep. McCollum is the chief author, and is joined by Reps. Francis Rooney (R-FL), Fred Upton (R-MI), Dean Phillips (D-MN), Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) as original co-sponsors. Numerous leading Presidential candidates have already [pledged Boundary Waters protection](#).

What people are saying

The Wilderness Society

“This bill simply codifies common sense. We can’t allow a toxic mining operation in the headwaters of our nation’s most popular wilderness area. We applaud Rep. McCollum’s leadership and we call on Congress to pass this bill swiftly in the House and Senate,” said **Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society.**

League of Conservation Voters

“We applaud Congresswoman Betty McCollum for standing up for permanent protections for the Boundary Waters and fighting the Trump administration’s disgraceful attempts to allow toxic mining in one of the most pristine areas of our country,” said **Laura Forero, Legislative Representative for the League of Conservation Voters.** “The Boundary Waters is the most visited wilderness area nationwide, home to 1.1 million acres of pristine lakes and rivers as well as invaluable wildlife. We are in a nature crisis, losing a football field worth of natural areas every 30 seconds, and can simply not afford to imperil one of our country’s natural treasures and Minnesota’s outdoor recreation economy to line the pockets of Big Polluters.”

Earthjustice

“The Boundary Waters is a world-famous canoeing wilderness, a driver of Minnesota’s economy, and a home to one of the largest old-growth forests in the lower 48 states,” said **Erin Whalen, a staff attorney with Earthjustice working to protect the Boundary Waters.** “It’s one of our most visited wildernesses, providing a chance for new generations to experience the freedom that comes with being in a truly wild place. Representative McCollum and her colleagues deserve our thanks for taking a stand against this administration’s attempts to hand areas near this natural treasure over to mining interests. We support her legislation and will work with her to ensure its passage.”

Natural Resource Defense Council

“The Boundary Waters is one of the country’s gems, and with this kind of leadership from Rep. McCollum, we aim to protect it from the contamination dangerous mining could bring to this spectacular, pristine, wild space,” said **Jacob Eisenberg of NRDC’s Nature Program**.

National Parks Conservation Association

“NPCA thanks Chairwoman Betty McCollum (D-MN) and Representatives Francis Rooney (R-FL), Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) for fighting for the special places in northern Minnesota. This bipartisan bill would permanently protect Voyageurs National Park, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and the surrounding watershed from toxic sulfide-ore copper mining that would irreparably harm the waters this region depends on for drinking, world-class fishing and outdoor recreation. Pollution from sulfide mines as far away as 100 miles could flow downstream into the waters at Voyageurs threatening public health and the park’s fish, plants, wildlife and valued swimming and paddling. Threats like this are not new to national parks and similar efforts to protect the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone have been successful because public lands belong to all of us. Together, we must speak out to ensure the very values for which our parks were protected remain intact for generations to come” said **Ani Kame’enui, Deputy Vice President of Government Affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association**.

Voyageurs National Park Association

"Sulfide mine development in our watershed threatens the pristine lakes of Voyageurs National Park - a park that preserves the vast interconnected waterways once traveled by Voyageurs and Ojibwe, and today is enjoyed by over 240,000 anglers, kayakers, houseboaters and more. Scientific analysis tells us this type of industry will cause irreparable harm to the fabric of our aquatic ecosystems. We applaud Rep. McCollum for this proactive step" said **Christina Hausman Rhode, Executive Director of Voyageurs National Park Association**.

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