

**For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Jeremy Drucker (612) 670-9650

# SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

**\*ICYMI\***

## **[Minnesota Pollution Control Agency: sulfide-ore copper mining near Boundary Waters a threat to once-polluted Rainy River's recovery](#)**

**ELY, MN--** A new report from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, [\*The Rainy River: A recovering river now in need of protection\*](#), tracks the amazing turnaround of the great Northern Minnesota River. Once degraded by years of industrial pollution and untreated sewage, environmental protections created in the 1970's put the river on a course to become a world-class fishery with water quality graded as good to excellent. This turnaround is not guaranteed though. The report cites the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining as a key factor in whether the river will continue it's miraculous recovery.

Quoting the study MPR reporter Dan Kraker writes:

**While state regulators credit environmental protection laws for much of the Rainy River's recovery, it also benefits from its geography.**

**The Rainy River basin includes millions of acres of undeveloped wilderness on both sides of the border, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Quetico Provincial Park, which protect the river and help filter the water that flows into it.**

**The new MPCA report stresses that maintaining the health of the wetlands and forests that surround it is critical to maintaining the Rainy River's health.**

**“Any major changes in the land draining to the river, such as incentives to expand cropland on the Canadian side and proposals for [copper-nickel] mining on the U.S. side, will need careful consideration on how to protect the river from any negative impacts,” the report states.**

**Opponents of the proposed Twin Metals copper-nickel mine — which if approved would be built near Ely — have argued that any pollution that escapes into the nearby Boundary Waters would flow through Voyageurs National Park and into the Rainy River.**

In 2016 the US Forest Service [concluded](#) that a sulfide-ore copper mine, specifically Chilean mining conglomerate Antofagasta's Twin Metals, posed an unacceptable risk of irreparable harm to the Boundary Waters. Antofagasta is proposing to store over a hundred million tons of toxic waste on the shores of Birch Lake, which runs directly into the Wilderness. An [analysis](#) of 14 modern US copper mines found that all had spills and accidental discharges of pollution.

A [study](#) published in the *Journal of Hydrology* shows that pollution from the proposed mine sites would flow into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness even under the ordinary course of mining operations. The peer-reviewed study shows that contamination from the mine sites could significantly damage the Boundary Waters and that some areas should not be mined due to the risk to downstream waters. In the words of the study's author, Dr. Tom Meyers:

**“If sulfide mines are developed in the Rainy Headwaters, it is not a question of whether, but when, a leak will occur that will have major impacts on the water quality of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.”**

You can read the MPCA study [here](#).