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SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

US Rep. Betty McCollum and state legislators join Save the Boundary Waters outlining the path to permanent protection for America's most visited Wilderness

Path includes executive action and federal and state legislation to be introduced this month

Watch the presser [here](#)

Ely, MN--Today U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum (MN-04), State Reps. Kelly Morrison and Jim Davnie, State Sen. Steve Cwodzinski, and small business owner Steve Piragis joined the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters for a zoom press conference outlining the path to permanent protection for Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness. Allowing copper mining in the watershed would forever change the ecosystem and the landscape, resulting in degraded water and air, noise pollution, loss of habitat and wildlife, and damage to the regional amenity-based economy. The path includes federal and state legislation, as well as executive action by the Biden Administration.

"Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is a national treasure that demands permanent protection," [said U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum](#) (MN-04). "It is clean and pristine because it is federally protected. A sulfide-ore copper mine located in the surrounding watershed would pollute not only those waters but the protected Wilderness itself. I thank and support the Minnesota legislators who are introducing a state counterpart bill to my federal bill that bans toxic copper mining on federal lands within the watershed of the Boundary Waters. Together, we can protect this special place for generations to come."

In 2016, the U.S. Forest Service determined that copper mining in the Boundary Waters watershed would pose an unacceptable risk of harm to the Boundary Waters and to the exceptional economic, ecological, and recreation benefits the Wilderness provides, and because the damage could not be fixed or mitigated, the degradation would be permanent.

A state companion bill permanently banning copper mining on state lands within the Boundary Waters watershed will also be introduced in the state legislature by state Reps. Morrison and Davnie, and by state Senator Steve Cwodzinski.

"The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is an incomparable and irreplaceable part of Minnesota's outdoor heritage and legacy," said State Rep. Kelly Morrison. **"It is a state and national treasure beloved by Minnesotans and Americans from across the country for its clean water, magnificent wildlife, and unmatched opportunities for year-round outdoor recreation. We have a duty to protect it for our children and future generations."**

In addition to the state and federal legislation, a key element to permanent protection includes completion of the mineral withdrawal study that was abruptly cancelled by the Trump administration.

"We know that allowing copper mining in the Boundary Waters watershed would forever degrade the ecosystem and the landscape," said Becky Rom, National Chair of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. **"It would pollute the water and the air, and lead to the loss of habitat and wildlife. By finishing the mineral withdrawal study the Biden administration will provide the American people with a definitive, fair, and comprehensive scientific and economic analysis of the harm that copper mining presents to the Boundary Waters."**

Both public and private [polling](#) over the last several years shows nearly 70% of Minnesotans support permanent protection for the Boundary Waters, including Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

"Protecting the Boundary Waters and its clean water is imperative," said State Senator Steve Cwodzinski. **"Minnesotans know that the value of clean water can't be measured in dollars and cents. In addition to permanently damaging the Boundary Waters and surrounding environment, water contamination from sulfide-ore copper mining risks the health of hundreds of thousands of individuals, children, and families who visit the Boundary Waters each year or who call the Arrowhead region home."**

Scientific modelling and empirical evidence make clear that sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters poses a near certain risk of contamination of these pristine waters. Researchers surveying sulfide-ore copper mines in North America found that every single mine has contaminated surrounding water and 92% have failed to adequately contain seepage from waste streams resulting in severe impacts to water quality.

"Sulfide-ore copper mining is identified every year by the EPA as the highest emitter of toxic material," said State Rep. Jim Davnie. **"Putting America's most toxic industry next to America's most visited Wilderness is sheer madness."**

Copper mining near the Boundary Waters is also a net negative for the local economy. An independent study by Harvard University economist and former member of President Obama's council of economic advisors James Stock found that over a twenty year period a ban on copper mining in the Wilderness watershed would result in more jobs and more income to the region than with copper mining .

"As a business owner I can tell you that a protected Boundary Waters is a golden goose," said Steve Piragis, owner of Piragis Northwoods, **"and this year was one of the best years we've ever had. A copper mine would kill my business and the small businesses of hundreds of others."**

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