

For Immediate Release

January 19, 2021

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# SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

## **ICYMI: [Twin Metals opponents hopeful in wake of political changes](#)**

**Ely, MN--** Last week US. Rep. Betty McCollum, state legislators, and the campaign to Save the Boundary Waters held a press conference outlining the path to permanent protection for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Allowing copper mining in the watershed of the Wilderness would forever degrade the ecosystem and the landscape, resulting in water, air, noise, and light pollution, loss of habitat and wildlife, and damage to the regional amenity-based economy.

After the [lawlessness and corruption](#) of the Trump years a new administration committed to science and the rule of law is preparing to take office, which offers new hope for permanently protecting America's most visited Wilderness.

The Timberjay's Marshall Helmberger writes:

**While top officials with Antofagasta, Twin Metals' parent company, appeared to hold considerable sway over the Trump administration, that's unlikely to be the case with the incoming Biden administration. Indeed, both Tom Vilsack, the incoming Secretary of Agriculture, who oversees the U.S. Forest Service, and Debra Haaland, the incoming Secretary of the Interior, who will oversee federal mineral leasing, are on record as skeptics of the Twin Metals proposal.**

**Haaland, who will be the first Native American to head the Interior Department, voted in support of McCollum's Boundary Waters protection measure when she first introduced it last year. Vilsack has publicly expressed his belief that copper-nickel mining with the BWCAW watershed poses an unacceptable risk to both the wilderness and the wilderness-based economy that has grown up around**

**it. As agriculture secretary under Obama, it was Vilsack who ultimately greenlighted the decision by the Forest Service to veto renewal of the Twin Metals' leases. In an op-ed he penned in honor of the 40th anniversary of the Boundary Waters Wilderness Act, Vilsack wrote of that decision, noting: "What stood out most was not only that the Boundary Waters is a priceless wilderness (although it certainly is that), but also that it was the right decision to make for the economic development of the region."**

**Opponents of the Twin Metals mine have pointed to economic analyses that suggest the economic pluses of a copper-nickel mine could easily be offset by its negative impacts on the amenity-based economic development already in place in the Ely area. That's a point that was reiterated by Steve Piragis, who operates Piragis Northwoods Company, one of Ely's largest private employers. "Copper-nickel mining, wherever it exists, is a problem for surrounding ecosystems and the businesses that depend on it," he said. "Businesses that have grown up around the Boundary Waters have been sustainable for over a century."**

Nearly 70 percent of Minnesotans [support permanently protecting](#) the Boundary Waters by banning sulfide-ore copper mining on Superior National Forest lands in the watershed of the Wilderness. This includes more than two-thirds of Independents and a plurality (43%) of Republicans; more Republicans oppose copper mining near the Boundary Waters than support it.

You can read the full piece [here](#).

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