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SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

RELEASE: Member of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisors, Patagonia Vice President, and Local Officials Discuss Economic Value of Permanently Protecting the Boundary Waters

The Boundary Waters sustains the livelihoods of thousands of Minnesotans and studies show that protecting the Wilderness from copper mining is the better economic choice for the sustainability of the region

[Watch the event here](#)

Ely, MN-- Today the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters hosted a zoom press event with Dr. James Stock, a Harvard economics professor and member of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisors; Patagonia Vice President Hans Cole; Duluth State Senator Jen McEwen; St. Louis County Commissioner Frank Jewell; and Ely business owner Steve Piragis. The event focused on the economic value of the Boundary Waters and why permanently protecting the Wilderness from copper mining is the better economic choice for the long term sustainability of the region.

"When we think about the Quetico Superior ecosystem and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, we evoke images of long paddles across sun-dappled lakes, the call of the loon or the sight of a soaring eagle, the heat of a campfire and the smell of a fry pan full of fish," said **Becky Rom, National Chair of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters**. "This wondrous country is a gift to our nation. It is also a major driver of the regional economy and that the development of a sulfide-ore copper mining district in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters threatens not only the Wilderness but also our way of life."

Located immediately adjacent to the Boundary Waters and next to rivers and streams that flow directly into the Wilderness, a Twin Metals sulfide-ore copper mine would release toxic metals and other contaminants into the air and water, jeopardizing the amenity-based Wilderness economy that supports local sustainable jobs and businesses.

"The Boundary Waters is the most visited wilderness area in the whole country," said **Patagonia Vice President Hans Cole**. "Over 150,000 people go there every year, and our customers are part of that wave of visitors. The Boundary Waters and connected Voyageurs National Park are also key players in an outdoor recreation economy in Minnesota that generates 99,000 jobs and yields around \$1.4B in state and local tax revenue."

In northeastern Minnesota the Boundary Waters [helps drive](#) over \$900 million in annual economic activity and more than 17,000 jobs. Sulfide-ore copper mining on the edge of the Wilderness will irreparably hurt this sustainable economic engine.

As the mining industry becomes increasingly automated, there is little evidence that the full-time jobs promised by Twin Metals for local workers would materialize. A [peer-reviewed economic study](#) by Professor Stock shows that over a twenty year period protecting the Boundary Waters from proposed sulfide-ore copper mining would result in more jobs and more income for the region.

"Mining increases jobs initially but after a while the adverse effects kick in," said **Dr. James Stock**. "Partly because of productivity in mining but also because of the adverse effect on tourism and the amenity economy. In 89% of cases copper mining ends up being a negative for jobs and a negative for incomes."

Local business owners will be some of the hardest hit.

"Our skin is in the game," said **Steve Piragis, owner of Northwoods Outfitters, a mainstreet Ely business**. "Our businesses, our employees, and our families would all be negatively impacted by the proposed mine. We certainly want to avoid the negative impacts to the environment but we also have to be concerned about the economic activity and the people around the edge of the Boundary Waters living off of the beauty and purity of that ecosystem."

St. Louis County Commissioner Frank Jewell observed that the Boundary Waters and northern Minnesota natural amenities are at the heart of Duluth's economic resurgence.

"I was drawn back to Northern Minnesota because I could live in Duluth and be in the woods within minutes. I could be in the Boundary Waters in an hour and a half. Over the last 40 years Duluth has expanded with tourism and new kinds of jobs, like breweries and art galleries. And this prompted young people to return to the communities around here they grew up in. It was these young people who started to generate a new energy and idea that northeastern Minnesota had something special. The Wilderness is part of what drives this idea."

Duluth State Senator Jen McEwen noted the broader implications for the economy in the question over whether or not to permanently protect the Wilderness from copper mining.

"We are at the beginning of a new era in our economics. An era of clean energy. An era of sustainability. Our ability in northern Minnesota to have a vibrant economy is going to depend on having clean water and natural resources that are protected."

Today's press event was part of the [100 days of Action to Save the Boundary Waters](#), a multi-week campaign to demonstrate to policymakers the overwhelming support to permanently protect the Boundary Waters Wilderness from the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining. The campaign consists of press events, videos, supporter actions, and more featuring voices from Minnesota and across the country of people that depend on the Boundary Waters for their livelihood, recreation, and clean water.

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