

For Immediate Release

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SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

Rep. Betty McCollum Re-introduces Legislation to Permanently Protect Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness from Sulfide-Ore Copper Mining

(Washington DC)-- Today, on Earth Day 2021, Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) re-introduced [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.

"Today is a good day for the millions 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 critical to permanently 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."**

Nearly seventy percent of Minnesotans [do not want](#) sulfide-ore copper mining 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.

The Boundary Waters is the most heavily visited wilderness area in the United States, attracting more than 155,000 visitors from all over the world and helps drive more than [\\$900 million](#) in annual economic activity that helps support over 17,000 jobs. [A peer-reviewed independent study](#) from Harvard University showed that protecting the Boundary Waters from a proposed Twin Metals sulfide-ore copper mine would result in dramatically more jobs and more income over a 20-year period.

In 2016 the US Forest Service terminated Chilean mining conglomerate Antofagasta's Twin Metals project on the doorstep of the Boundary Waters after a multi-year review determined that sulfide-ore copper mining posed an unacceptable risk of irreparable harm to the Wilderness. The Forest Service began a study to withdraw federal minerals in the watershed of the Boundary Waters from mining for twenty years. The Trump administration unlawfully overturned those decisions and began fast-tracking the project. The Biden administration has issued a stay on litigation regarding Twin Metals and is currently reviewing the project.

American Rivers recently listed the Boundary Waters as the third most endangered river in America, and permanent protection for the Wilderness is a top priority for conservation and sportsmen groups across the country.

Rep. McCollum is the chief author, and is joined by over 30 other sponsors including Reps. Dean Phillips and Ilhan Omar from Minnesota, Natural Resources Committee Chair Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), and Subcommittee Chair Alan Lowenthal (D-CA).

What people are saying

The Wilderness Society

This bill is common sense that is grounded in science. We can't allow a toxic mining operation in the headwaters of our nation's most visited wilderness area. Permanently protecting the Boundary Waters is a critical step forward in our national efforts to combat the climate and extinction crisis by protecting landscapes like this one, which supports a pristine watershed and a thriving ecosystem. 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.**

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 **Elizabeth Forsyth, 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 to protect this area near this natural treasure from being handed over to mining interests. We support her legislation and will work with her to ensure its passage.”

National Parks Conservation Association

“Chairwoman Betty McCollum continues to fight for the protection of our public lands and waters in Minnesota and beyond. 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. Pollution from as far as 100 miles away could flow downstream into Voyageurs, threatening public health, world-class fishing and recreation. Taking action today will ensure long-term protection for generations to come” said **Christine Goepfert, Midwest Associate Director for the National Parks Conservation Association**

Voyageurs Conservancy

"Sulfide mine development in our watershed threatens the pristine lakes and wetlands 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, campers, kayakers, houseboaters and more. Scientific analysis tells us this type of industry will cause irreparable harm to our aquatic ecosystems. We applaud Rep. McCollum for this bipartisan bill," said **Christina Hausman Rhode, Executive Director of Voyageurs Conservancy.**

The Conservation Alliance

“There is absolutely no place for a sulfide-ore copper mine anywhere near the Boundary Waters, not now, not ever. We applaud Rep. McCollum’s leadership and we call on Congress to act quickly to pass this important bill.” said **Brady Robinson, Executive Director of The Conservation Alliance**

Outdoor Industry Association

“This past year has shown the outdoor industry is an important and resilient part of the economy and American life,” said **Lise Aangeenbrug, executive director of Outdoor Industry Association**. “In Minnesota alone, outdoor recreation accounts for 2.4% of the state’s GDP and powers thousands of jobs across the state. But, to keep the industry thriving, we have to ensure outdoor spaces like the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs National Park are protected. This bill would ensure Minnesotans can enjoy these precious natural resources for decades to come, as well as provide a boost for the local economy. We commend Rep. McCollum for her leadership on this legislation and her commitment to Minnesota’s public lands and waters.”

Outdoor Alliance

"The Boundary Waters is one of the most popular recreation destinations in the country, particularly for canoeing, and we are grateful for Rep. McCollum's leadership in working to protect this beloved area from mining pollution to the Boundary Waters and surrounding landscape" said **Louis Geltman, Policy Director, Outdoor Alliance**

Natural Resources Defense Council

“The Boundary Waters is one of America's most treasured wilderness areas, and thanks to Representative McCollum, there is an opportunity to permanently protect the region from the harm that expanded mining poses to this national treasure.” said **Bobby McEnaney, NRDC – Nature Program**

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