



Dear Interior Deputy Secretary Bernhardt:

Last month you met with 40 of us, youth from eight states and two countries, who are members of Kids for The Boundary Waters. We flew to Washington, D.C. to meet with elected and appointed officials in defense of America's most visited wilderness, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. We are writing today to express our disappointment in the actions taken by the BLM on December 20th – under direction of the Department of Interior – to unlawfully renew mineral leases for foreign mining giant, Antofagasta, that were cancelled two years ago.

Antofagasta seeks to exploit our nation's minerals in the Superior National Forest of Minnesota. Proposed mine sites are adjacent to the Boundary Waters, within the watershed and along lakes and rivers that flow into the 1.1 million acre Wilderness. The toxic acid runoff from these mines would poison the Wilderness lakes, rivers, wetlands, wildlife, and woods. Sulfide-ore copper mining has never been done in Minnesota, "the Land of 10,000 Lakes," and with good reason: everywhere it has been done – even in the most arid ecosystems - it has caused environmental damage, usually on a massive scale. The Environmental Protection Agency lists hardrock mining as America's largest generator of toxic releases.

We all know the end result of these mines on the Boundary Waters: America's most popular wilderness – her clean waters, wildlife, and woods – irreversibly poisoned, damaged, and destroyed.

Allowing this mining would be a betrayal of our generation. All of us – and hundreds of thousands of other kids – have grown up paddling in the Boundary Waters – with friends and families and through camps and outdoor programs such as the five popular YMCA Boundary Waters camps, Camp Koochiching, the Northern Lakes Girl Scout Base, the Northern Tier Boy Scout High Adventure Canoe Base, and Voyageur Outward Bound School. We cut our teeth on the wonders of the natural world in this place, the greatest protected canoe country wilderness in the world.

While you may promote Every Kid Outdoors, this is a meaningless and cruel gesture unless the Interior Department fulfills its promise of wilderness protection for the Boundary Waters. And the only way to fulfill this promise is to say no to copper mining in this place.

Once again, we Kids for The Boundary Waters ask you again to stop. Stop advancing dangerous mining that will benefit only a foreign mining company. Join us in advocating for permanent protection of public lands in the watershed of the Boundary Waters from copper mining. Only this will ensure that the Boundary Waters remains one of the greatest landscapes for outdoor adventures in the nation.

Over the last two years, agency studies on how to best protect the Boundary Waters have been abruptly cancelled, previous scientific analysis has been ignored, economic impact data has been disregarded, long-expired federal mineral leases have been summarily reinstated, and longstanding environmental precedent and laws have been defied.

During our meeting you heard from just eight of the 40 Kids in our group. Our stories were honest and heartfelt, and included a first-hand account of the wholly destructive nature of this type of mining from a teen who took the time to fly all the way from Peru to share his story.

In response to our well-researched, scientific- and economically-based request, you had no response other than to offer us cookies. We don't want cookies. We want you and the Department of the Interior to do your jobs to protect America's Boundary Waters.

Kids for the Boundary Waters is committed to doing everything possible to defend the Boundary Waters. The fight for the Boundary Waters is most especially about us KIDS who will lose something priceless and inherit the mess if this mine is built. This is our future – our water, our public lands, our resources, our health, and *our country* are at stake. ***Not this mine. Not in this place. Not Ever.***

Respectfully Submitted,

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President, Kids for The Boundary Waters

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