Why Business, Manufacturing, and Wilderness Thrive Together in Minnesota

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Northern Minnesota is a hunting and fishing mecca and a world-class resource for canoers, boaters, campers, and families from across the country who love the outdoors. It’s also an enormous economic driver for Minnesota - America’s #1 most-popular wilderness area - and brings hundreds of thousands of visitors every year to our state, while providing a one-of-a-kind amenity that helps Minnesota businesses attract and retain talented people. Proposed sulfide-ore copper mining within the Boundary Waters watershed would severely damage Minnesota’s crown-jewel Wilderness and the enormous economic benefits it supports throughout the state.

The Boundary Waters Helps Make Minnesota a Great Place to Do Business

• It is America’s #1 most-visited Wilderness and a premier fishing & hunting destination. Together with Voyageurs National Park, it attracts 400,000-500,000 recreation visitors each year.
• In Northeastern Minnesota alone, tourism supports 17,000 jobs and $913 million in economic activity.
  The Superior National Forest, where mines would be sited, drives $500 million in regional economic activity every year.
• Across Minnesota, outdoor recreation, including fishing, hunting, and other wildlife recreation, generates $11.6 billion in consumer spending, supports 118,000 jobs, $3.4 billion in wages/salaries and $815 million in state/local tax revenue. The Boundary Waters is the biggest driver of this statewide economy, which benefits all kinds of businesses: manufacturers, restaurants, hotels, retailers and more.
• Sales at hospitality and leisure businesses in Northeastern Minnesota grew 83% from 1998-2014.
• 67% of Minnesotans oppose sulfide-ore mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters.

The Boundary Waters Supports Manufacturing Jobs in Minnesota

• Businesses like Wenonah Canoe, Northstar Canoe, Wintergreen Northern Ware, Duluth Pack, Frost River, Granite Gear, Steger Mukluks, Cooke Custom Sewing and others make and sell high-quality recreational gear and clothing, much of which is bought for and used in the Boundary Waters.

The Boundary Waters Helps Draw Top Talent to Minnesota

• The Boundary Waters plays a significant role in Minnesota’s attractiveness to businesses and talent seeking to locate or remain in a state with world-class outdoor recreation opportunities.
• Studies show areas with protected public lands are more successful at sustaining property values, attracting quality employees and high-wage employers, and securing entrepreneurial investment.

The Boundary Waters Supports a Sustainable Economy for Northeastern Minnesota

• In Minnesota’s Arrowhead Region, the Boundary Waters has driven steady, sustainable regional economic growth. Communities capitalizing on the Superior National Forest and Boundary Waters have drawn new investment, businesses, talent, and a diversified stable economy. Populations are steady, employment and personal income have risen, and the percent of families in poverty is low.
• A sulfide-ore copper mining district adjacent to the Boundary Waters, a water-rich ecosystem, would displace the sustainable economy that is dependent on clean water, a healthy national forest, and a world-class wilderness area – the Boundary Waters, Quetico Park, and Voyageurs National Park.
http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/outdoors/3700238-boundary-waters-use-down-slightly-over-past-five-years
2 Explore Minnesota 2015 Tourism and Minnesota’s Economy Factsheet.
http://www.exploreminnesota.com/industry-minnesota/research-reports/researchdetails/download.aspx?id=8025
3 This comes from a Star Tribune op-ed by former president of the Ely Chamber of Commerce Bill Forsberg Sr.
http://www.startribune.com/ely-s-tourism-doing-fine-thank-you/222750371/
4 Compilation of data obtained from Explore Minnesota/Minnesota Department of Revenue. 2005-2014 from Explore Minnesota Tourism & Minnesota's Economy factsheets; 1998-2004 from MN Dept of Revenue
http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/research_stats/Pages/Sales-and-Use-Tax-Statistics-and-Annual-Reports.aspx