



Faith Leaders for the Boundary Waters

We, as People of Faith and the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, acknowledge environmental stewardship of creation as central to our mission as faith and advocacy organizations.

We affirm the connection between creation, the wellbeing of humanity and the necessity of sustainability. As people of faith, we recognize many people turn to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness for spiritual inspiration, renewal or insight. Native Americans have found the land to be a source of spiritual sustenance for millennia. Central figures in organized religions worldwide have had core mystical experiences in wild places. The list includes Jesus, Moses, Buddha, and Mohammed.

The Boundary Waters is where generations of children developed a lifelong love of nature that brought them back as adults. Action is needed to ensure future generations can enjoy the pristine waters, world-renowned angling and incomparable scenery in the Boundary Waters that so many have come to know and cherish.

The pristine waters and unspoiled forests of the Boundary Waters provide critical habitat for wildlife, including several threatened and sensitive species such as the Canada lynx, gray wolf and moose.

Sulfide-ore copper mining, a risky type of mining that has never been permitted in Minnesota, has been proposed within the Boundary Waters watershed by Twin Metals, owned by Chilean mining company Antofagasta. Byproducts of sulfide-ore copper mining include hazardous pollutants such as sulfuric acid and heavy metals. While the proposed sulfide-ore copper mines are not within the Boundary Waters, pollution from them will flow into the Wilderness and its interconnected waterways. Gigantic waste piles would be stored along the South Kawishiwi River and Birch Lake. Vast quantities of tailings would be generated and transported through pipelines in the Boundary Waters watershed.

We recognize the dire consequences sulfide-ore copper mining has caused. In August 2014, the Mount Polley copper and gold mine in British Columbia had a tailings dam breach that released 4.5 million cubic meters of toxic slurry into a lake and river system that was a priceless salmon spawning area. Around the same time, a mine in Mexico spilled 40,000 cubic meters of copper sulfate acid solution into two rivers, wiping out the water supply for a vast rural area that depended on the river water for domestic use and agriculture.

We recognize the Flambeau mine, a sulfide mine in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, is not an environmentally successful model mine as has been claimed. In 2012 Flambeau Mining Company was found guilty of 11 counts of contaminating the water. Discharge from the Flambeau mine has contaminated a tributary stream of the Flambeau River. The tributary now contains levels of copper and zinc that exceed the acute toxicity standards for aquatic life. It is considered one of the EPA's "impaired waters."



We recognize the sustainability of Boundary Waters as the economic lifeblood of northeastern Minnesota's lucrative tourism industry. Northeastern Minnesota tourism overall generates \$850 million in revenue and supports more than 18,000 jobs annually. The Superior National Forest generates \$500 million in economic activity annually, of which \$100 million is attributed to the Boundary Waters. Lakeshore private property with an assessed property value of \$318 million is located on the path of pollution from the proposed Twin Metals mine. Studies have shown that property values drop sharply if mines are developed nearby.

We recognize the immense amount of scripture that demands responsible environmental stewardship:

I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Genesis 9:11-13 Hebrew/Christian Scripture

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? [Yet] ... you have given them dominion over the works of your hands.

Psalms 8:3-4, 6a Christian/Hebrew Scripture

O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of any-one lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do.

Quran 5:8 (Asad) Muslim Scripture

Take from this world only to the measure of your needs, and forego that which exceedeth them. Observe equity in all your judgements, and transgress not the bounds of justice, nor be of them that stray from its path."

Bahá'u'lláh, Súriy-i-Mulúk §19, Bahai Scripture

Judging by the power usage estimated by consulting engineers for Twin Metals Minnesota, the Twin Metals project has the potential to generate at least 781,491 metric tons of CO₂-equivalent every year.

Annual TMM CO₂ Emissions:

- 1/5 of the total CO₂ released from the average U.S. coal-fired power plant for one year
- It would take a whole year for 640,000 acres of U.S. forest to sequester the same amount of carbon
- Equal to greenhouse gas emissions from adding 164,524 passenger vehicles to the roads for one year

Over 30-year life-of-mine for Twin Metals:

- Equals total CO₂ emissions from 6.2 average U.S. coal-fired power plant for one year
- It would take a million acres of U.S. forests over 19 years to sequester the same amount of carbon

- Equal to greenhouse gas emissions from adding nearly 5 million passenger vehicles to the roads for one year

Our faith shows us that this issue goes beyond the evidence; that it transcends the science; that it lifts our demand for action to the highest level of importance. For us, addressing the unsustainability sulfide mining, its impact to climate change and its impacts on people and the earth, is an important part of who we are and what we are called to do. Acting on behalf of all that the Creator has created, we speak truth to our leaders with the hope that sulfide-ore copper mining is removed from Northern Minnesota.

It is clear that we have both the responsibility and the opportunity to act. By increasing access to and availability of clean energy in our state, we can simultaneously reduce the impact of climate change caused by sulfide-ore copper mining on our planet and promote the health and well-being of all Minnesotans.

We commit ourselves to action – to changing our habits, our choices and the way we see the world – to learning and teaching our families, friends, and faiths – to conserving the limited resources of our home, planet Earth, and preserving the climate conditions upon which life depends.

In this spirit, we call upon our leaders, those of our faiths, and all people of Earth to accept the reality of the common danger we face, the imperative and responsibility for immediate and decisive action, and the opportunity to change.

Signed:

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