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SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

ICYMI

[Former Interior Secretary Jewell; Ted Roosevelt IV: A great northern forest in Minnesota can help our world remain livable](#)

Yesterday former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Ted Roosevelt IV, the great grandson of former president Theodore Roosevelt, urged the Biden administration to protect Minnesota's Boundary Waters from the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining in a commentary published in the MN Reformer. The piece points out the critical importance of keeping the Boundary Waters pristine and intact for climate adaptation and resilience, and calls on our leaders to take steps to protect this priceless Wilderness for future generations. The Biden administration is currently reviewing the immediate threat to the Wilderness, Chilean mining conglomerate Antofagasta's Twin Metals project.

From the piece:

If our society is to have the resilience necessary to ward off the worst effects of climate change, and if we are to save a reasonably representative population of the wildlife that shares the Earth with us, we must protect our remaining healthy, diverse ecosystems.

The administration of President Joe Biden understands this. Biden's executive order on tackling the climate crisis establishes a goal of conserving at least 30% of the nation's lands and waters by 2030, a plan since named "America the Beautiful..."

...Crucially, the Rainy River Headwaters is not an isolated island of habitat. Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park — similar in size to the Boundary Waters — is adjacent at the border, and the 220,000-acre Voyageurs National Park is just to the west in Minnesota. Altogether, the Rainy River Headwaters and the rest of the Quetico-Superior Ecosystem cover about 4.3 million acres. Analysis by two major national conservation organizations, The Wilderness Society and The Nature Conservancy, shows that the Quetico-Superior has characteristics — including this connectedness of wild areas, an especially high degree of wildness, and diversity of species and ecosystem types — that make it one of the most important regions in the United States for helping maintain biodiversity in the face of the climate and extinction crisis.

The Rainy River Headwaters is the linchpin of the health of the Quetico-Superior. Wetlands and streams originating from precipitation falling there flow into the heart of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, then downstream to Quetico and Voyageurs.

The last thing that this watershed needs is to be the location of a massive industrial copper mining development, but that is precisely what a mining industry behemoth is proposing. Thousands of acres of processing plants, waste rock piles, tailings piles, roads, railroads, pipelines, power lines, ventilation stacks and other infrastructure would destroy terrestrial and wetland habitat and risk feeding mining pollution directly into waterways flowing into the Wilderness and beyond.

The administration of former President Donald Trump did everything it could to advance the mine proposal, including ignoring consistent lease interpretation that had been followed by every administration beginning with former President Ronald Reagan. The Trump administration flouted the law and buried scientific studies that show the risk of mining copper in the Rainy River Headwaters.

Fortunately, Minnesota political leaders recognize that the Rainy River Headwaters is a unique and priceless place, and they have acted accordingly. U.S. Sen. Tina Smith has written to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to ask them to resume a study to determine whether a 20-year administrative moratorium

on mining activity should be imposed on federal lands and minerals in the Rainy River Basin, which includes the Headwaters...

... Now the Biden administration and Congress can join the pantheon of this nation's great conservationists. By prohibiting copper mining in the Rainy River Headwaters and taking an important leap forward in the America the Beautiful plan by conserving this vital ecosystem and all the species it nurtures, our leaders can protect this precious and irreplaceable natural wonder not just for now, but for generations to follow.

You can read the full piece [here](#).