



RISKS FROM SULFIDE-ORE COPPER MINING

Mining on the Wilderness edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Poses Unacceptable Risks to the Wilderness and its Surrounding Communities.

- 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 Minnesota, 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. Large waste piles made up of rock, soil and remnants will 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.
- In Aug. 2014, a tailings dam breach at the Mount Polley copper and gold mine in British Columbia released [24 million cubic meters](#) of toxic mine waste 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.
- In 2012, Flambeau Mining Company, which operated a sulfide mine in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, 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." This mine was initially touted as a model for environmentally safe mining, however, recent [reports show](#) that claim to be false.
- The Boundary Waters is a significant driver of the economy in northeastern Minnesota, where tourism overall generates [\\$913 million in revenue](#) and supports more than 17,000 local 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.

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