

## **Nearly 100,000 citizens submit comments opposing dangerous mining lease renewals near Boundary Waters Wilderness**

*Despite unlawful renewal process and shortened comment period, Americans spoke loudly in defense of their most popular Wilderness*

**ELY, MN**—Despite a shortened public comment period, technical glitches, and a month-long government shutdown, nearly 100,000 comments opposing Twin Metals lease renewals were submitted to the Department of Interior. While the renewal process [unlawfully engineered](#) by the Department of the Interior all but guarantees Chilean mining conglomerate Antofagasta's Twin Metals Project will continue to be fast-tracked through the environmental review process, the public outcry remains loud. The leases for dangerous mining near America's most popular Wilderness were [previously terminated](#) before being resurrected by the Trump Administration.

In total 94,387 citizens submitted comments opposing the lease renewals.

"The American people are outraged by this project and this process," said Jon Nelson of Duluth, co-chair of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. "The Boundary Waters are a priceless natural wonder and economic engine for Northeastern Minnesota, and the public will not stand by silently while the current administration rushes forward to put irreplaceable Wilderness at risk."

Over the last two years the Department of the Interior has [worked hand-in-hand](#) with Antofagasta and the mining industry to push through approvals for sulfide-ore mineral leases on the doorstep of Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness.

The nearly 100,000 comments were the result of a public awareness push by a coalition of organizations including the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, National Wildlife Federation, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters, The Wilderness Society, and others.

During previous public comment periods related to this project large numbers of Americans also spoke out in favor of protecting the Wilderness.

### **FOUR THINGS TO KNOW**

**1. Minnesota's Boundary Waters is irreplaceable.** Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness is a one-of-a-kind natural wonder. It is the most visited Wilderness area in the nation, drawing 155,000 visitors every year. At 1.1 million acres in size, it is the largest

Wilderness area east of the Rockies and north of the Everglades. The Boundary Waters offers 1,200 miles of canoe and kayak routes and 2,000 designated campsites and is home to some of the finest remote angling and hunting our country has to offer. Numerous youth and adult camps—such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Scouts, and Voyageurs Outward Bound School, utilize the Boundary Waters as the cornerstone of their programming. [It was recently highlighted by Forbes Magazine as one of the top 14 places to visit in 2019.](#)

**2. Protecting the Boundary Waters is the smart economic choice.** The Boundary Waters is major economic driver, helping generate more than 17,000 jobs and [\\$900 million in economic activity](#) every year. A [recent independent study from Harvard](#) University showed that protecting the Boundary Waters from the Twin Metals mine would result in dramatically more jobs and income over a year 20 year period.

**3. A vast majority of Minnesotans and Americans want the Boundary Waters protected from the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining.** [Seventy percent of Minnesotans](#) oppose sulfide-ore copper mining near the Boundary Waters. Over 94% of the 125,000 public comments on an earlier [proposed mining ban urged protection](#). Nearly 56,000 citizens submitted additional comments during a second comment period, in addition to the nearly 100,000 citizens who urged protection in the last month and a half. At each opportunity for comment, Americans have overwhelmingly urged protection of the Boundary Waters over mining interests.

**4. The Trump Administration is [suppressing important scientific information](#) about the danger sulfide-ore copper mining poses to the Boundary Waters.** The US Department of Agriculture [abruptly cancelled](#) a two year study on the impacts of copper mining on lands and communities near the Boundary Waters. The study would have shown the harm sulfide-ore copper mining would have done. The Trump administration has refused to make public the underlying ecological, public health, and economic reports prepared during the study. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [Toxics Release Inventory](#), metal mining is the [nation's #1 toxic polluter](#), and a wide body of [rigorous scientific literature](#) shows the near inevitability of pollution flowing into and severely damaging the Boundary Waters.

###