ELY - Dozens of people filled the front yard at Sustainable Ely on a cold, drizzly Sunday afternoon to welcome three Outward Bound instructors as they crossed the finish line marking the end of an 800-plus-mile bicycle journey to create awareness about the environmental dangers of mining near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

The Voyageur Outward Bound School instructors, Erin McCleary, Iggy Perillo and Lisa Pugh left Winona on April 2 to pedal across the state to Ely after a ride that took them to towns and campuses throughout the state where they participated in community events and encouraged petition signatures online and on the Wenonah canoe they pulled along with them on their ride.

Their mission was to support the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters and efforts to protect the BWCA from the threat of proposed sulfide-ore copper mining. The riders collected more than 5,000 signatures.

Cyclist Megan Bauer-Erickson joined the team to ride from Duluth to Ely, replacing Iggy Perillo for that last leg of the journey.

Sustainable Ely is a project of Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, an Ely-based environmental organization that works on issues impacting wilderness, and is headquarters of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters.

The Sustainable Ely project was developed to build support among visitors and residents of Ely to create a national movement to protect the clean water, clean air and forest landscapes of the watersheds of the Kawishiwi River, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and Lake Superior from toxic pollution caused by mining copper, nickel and other metals from sulfide-bearing ore.

For more information, visit www.savetheboundarywaters.org.