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**HISTORIC BILL CALLS FOR PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR THE BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS AND VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK**

*Announced by Congresswoman Betty McCollum, this bill aims to protect the Wilderness and National Park from industrial pollution*

**Washington, DC (April 14, 2015)** –The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, and its lead group Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, today praised Minnesota Congresswoman Betty McCollum for announcing the *National Park and Wilderness Waters Protection Act*. This bill takes a historic step toward completing permanent protection of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and enhancing protection for Voyageurs National Park by ensuring that risky mining operations are not permitted in places where they might pollute the areas’ priceless lakes, rivers and forests.

“This Act is crucial to protecting large portions of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park from acid mine drainage,” said Becky Rom, third-generation Ely resident and chair of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. “Sulfide-ore copper mining would do more harm than good to this beloved region. Allowing industrialized mining on the edge of the Boundary Waters would not only pollute water, it would also destroy National Forest lands in areas now used for hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, dogsledding, hiking, skiing, canoeing, logging and other activities.”

Yesterday, the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP), a statewide coalition of environmental and conservation nonprofits, shared the results of a poll conducted on voter attitudes toward sulfide-ore copper mining in northeastern Minnesota. The results show that a solid majority of Minnesotans opposes sulfide-ore copper mining “in areas near the Boundary Waters Wilderness.” In fact, 62% statewide opposed mining on the edge of the Boundary Waters and in northeastern Minnesota 61% were in opposition.

The Boundary Waters, America’s most visited Wilderness, is one of the most accessible Wilderness areas in the country. The Boundary Waters and Voyageurs National Park both provide critical habitat for wildlife, including several federally threatened species.

“The Boundary Waters is one of the few areas in the lower 48 where groups can truly experience a Wilderness where travel is unimpeded by roads and civilization,” said Suellen Sack, program director of the Voyageur Outward Bound School. “We take people of all ages and walks of life into the Wilderness to deliver our mission of changing lives through challenge and discovery.”

State and federal governments have long recognized that sulfide-ore copper mining near the Wilderness would be harmful to the Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park. While prior legislation included measures to protect the area from mining, the southern border of the Wilderness is vulnerable to damage caused by sulfide-ore copper mining. Proposed sulfide-ore

copper mines along the unprotected edge of the Wilderness pose an imminent threat to the region. The *National Park and Wilderness Waters Act* will rectify the gap in protection by permanently withdrawing federal lands from mineral leasing laws.

Sulfide-ore copper mining is a risky type of mining never before permitted in Minnesota. In the U.S. and around the world, sulfide-ore copper mines consistently pollute groundwater, rivers and lakes. When exposed to air and water, sulfides in the rock create acid mine drainage, which contains sulfuric acid, heavy metals and sulfates. Scientific studies show that these pollutants pose risks to human health and harm game fish, wild rice and loons, among others.

Sulfide-ore copper mining also threatens the existing sustainable economy of communities on the Wilderness edge. Mining operations often create a boom-and-bust cycle for the communities in which they are located. The Wilderness edge communities around the Boundary Waters depend on the clean water, clean air and forest landscape of the Wilderness to sustain local businesses and retain and attract residents.

“The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park are valuable destinations for anglers,” says Dave Zentner, a sportsman from Duluth, Minnesota. “Protecting the forests, lakes and rivers of the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs and the areas around these national landmarks keeps the Wilderness and National Park safe for fish and animals that call them home. This bill is a great step toward protecting these very special places.”

Tourism in northeastern Minnesota supports 18,000 jobs and brings in more than \$850 million in sales annually. The Boundary Waters and Voyageurs National Park are an important part of that. The Superior National Forest generates \$500 million of economic activity per year, of which \$100 million is attributed to the Boundary Waters. Turning that area into an industrial mining district would irrevocably harm those people that make their living through Wilderness experiences and the lives of those who call the edge of the Wilderness home.

“My husband, Steve Koschak, and I were born and raised in Ely, Minnesota, and for 39 years we have owned River Point Resort & Outfitting Co. on Birch Lake and the South Kawishiwi River,” says Jane Koschak. “Our resort and BWCA canoe outfitting facility is directly adjacent to the Boundary Waters and across the river from the Twin Metals proposed sulfide-ore copper mine. With 250,000 people visiting the Boundary Waters each season, this is one of our country’s jewels. Protecting its watershed from what the EPA calls the most toxic form of mining is essential.”

Tens of thousands of supporters have already lent their voices to protection of this special place and thanked Congresswoman Betty McCollum for her efforts to permanently protect the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs National Park from nearby sulfide-ore copper mining.

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The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters is a broad-based campaign led by **Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness**, which is based in Ely, Minnesota. To learn more about the Campaign, visit [savetheboundarywaters.org](http://savetheboundarywaters.org).