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**13-YEAR OLD BATTLING LEUKEMIA HELPS DELIVER 60,000+ PETITIONS FROM ACROSS THE U.S.  
URGING PROTECTION OF NATION'S MOST POPULAR WILDERNESS**

**Washington, DC (March 25, 2015)** –The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, and its lead group Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, today held a press conference at Environment America to deliver more than 60,000 petitions calling for the protection of Minnesota’s Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, which is currently threatened by sulfide-ore copper mining proposals on national forest lands adjacent to the Wilderness and along waterways that flow into the Wilderness.

Joseph Goldstein, 13-year-old from Illinois who is battling acute lymphoblastic leukemia, participated in the petition delivery as part of his wish to save the Boundary Waters and said: “These petitions represent thousands of people like me who love exploring and playing in the beautiful woods and clear waters of the Boundary Waters. My experiences in the Boundary Waters have taught and given me so much, and I want to ensure this beautiful, wild place remains, unspoiled, for my siblings, friends and the next generation. Wilderness is important, and there isn’t much of it left. Mining has no place on the edge of a national treasure, and I’m proud to join my voice with thousands of others in urging our leaders to permanently protect the Boundary Waters.”

“Since we launched this petition drive, tens of thousands of individuals in Minnesota and across the nation stood up to support our efforts,” said Rebecca Rom, third-generation Ely resident and Chair of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. “It’s clear that people don’t want this dangerous type of mining near the Boundary Waters, and we look forward to successfully protecting this space.”

The petition drive was boosted by a 101-day, 2,000-mile journey from Minnesota to Washington, D.C., by 2014 *National Geographic* Adventurers of the Year Dave and Amy Freeman from Ely, Minnesota. Partner organizations American Rivers, Earthworks and Environment America continue to collect signatures of support.

“When we started the Paddle to DC, we wanted to spread the word across the country about the risks facing the Boundary Waters,” said Dave Freeman. “The support we received along the way was inspiring, from people signing our canoe to telling us stories about their own connections to the Wilderness. We’re proud to know that so many people have joined to support permanently protecting the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining.”

The Boundary Waters is one of America’s most accessible and most visited Wilderness areas. It allows people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to benefit from the challenge, solitude and excitement of Wilderness travel. The Boundary Waters also provide critical habitat for wildlife, including several endangered and threatened species.

State and federal governments have long recognized that mining outside of the Wilderness is harmful to the Wilderness. The Boundary Waters has historically been protected from mining, but the 1978

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act left the southern border vulnerable. A total of 243,000 acres of federal metallic mineral interests are available for potential sulfide-ore copper mining development. Twin Metals Minnesota proposes a sulfide-ore copper mine on the unprotected edge of the Wilderness along lakes and streams that flow north into the Wilderness, posing an imminent threat to the region.

“Allowing America's most polluting industry on the very edge of this Wilderness would violate a sacred trust to preserve the natural splendor of the Boundary Waters for future generations,” said Jason Zabokrtsky of Ely Outfitting Company & Boundary Waters Guide Service. “And it would jeopardize sustainable Wilderness-edge businesses like mine that depend on tourism for our livelihoods. These petitions represent those who paddle and swim in the pure waters of the BWCA. These petitions represent those who make the Boundary Waters America's most visited Wilderness and their desire to protect it from mining.”

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. A single mine in this watershed will continually pollute the Wilderness for at least 500 years.

"Some places are too precious to be mined. Near the nation's most popular Wilderness is one of them," said Earthworks Policy Advocate Aaron Mintzes. He continued, "Government documents show more than 75 percent of all modern mines pollute water. That's a risk we simply should not take with the Boundary Waters Wilderness."

Mining operations often create a boom-and-bust cycle for the communities where they are located, but 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. Sulfide-ore copper mining also threatens the existing sustainable economy of these communities.

“American Rivers listed the Boundary Waters as one of America’s Most Endangered Rivers® in 2013 due to the threat that sulfide mining poses to the rivers, wildlife and communities in this area. This beautiful place should not be permanently damaged for the short-term gain of a few mining interests,” says Jessie Thomas-Blate of American Rivers, the organization which began the petition drive.

Tourism in northeastern Minnesota supports 18,000 jobs and brings in \$850 million in sales annually. The Boundary Waters is 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 this area into an industrial mining district would irrevocably harm those people that make their living through Wilderness experiences and those who call the edge of the Wilderness home.

“Hikers, paddlers and other visitors to the Boundary Waters are always careful to leave the lakes and forest in the same pristine condition they found them,” said Sarah Frost, Outreach Director with Environment America. “Why should we permit sulfide mining right next door, along with the toxic pollution it will leave behind?”

This spring the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters will continue its efforts to share the importance of protecting the Wilderness. The Bike Tour to Save the Boundary Waters launches April 2 led by three instructors from Voyageurs Outward Bound School who will ride from Winona, Minnesota to Ely, Minnesota. On the ride, the instructors will connect with people at campuses and communities across the state to raise awareness of the risk to the Boundary Waters.

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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).