

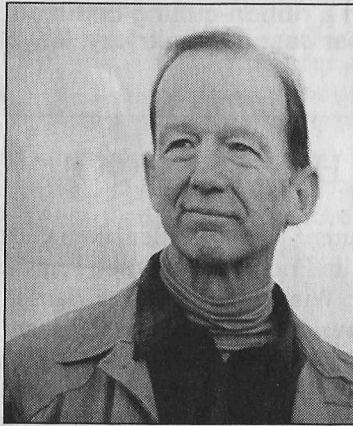
MINING CONCERNS

Teddy Roosevelt IV weighs in against mining near BWCA

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REGIONAL— Just over a century ago, the powerful industrialist Edward Backus proposed a series of massive hydroelectric dams that would have flooded a vast swath of northeastern Minnesota's canoe country to power more and larger paper mills at International Falls. At the time, few thought that anything or anyone could stop the wealthy and well-connected Backus.

Yet a young man named Ernest Oberholtzer, armed only with a pen and his wits, was able to defeat Backus in a classic David versus Goliath struggle that generated popular support for protection of the border lakes region for its recreational value. Oberholtzer's unlikely triumph paved the way for creation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park.



Theodore Roosevelt IV

Theodore Roosevelt IV, the great grandson of the former U.S. president, said he sees a similar dynamic in the current fight between wilderness supporters and large, international mining companies that aim to extract copper-nickel along the edge of the BWCAW. Roosevelt was in Minnesota last week to kick off the formation of Sportsmen for the Boundary

Waters, an affiliate of the Ely-based Boundary Waters Trust and the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters.

"I'm here because I wanted to add my voice to the chorus," said Roosevelt, who lives and works in New York City as an investment banker. "I do so with the clear knowledge that if these mines are allowed to proceed, we know with certainty that it would be catastrophic for the Boundary Waters," he said.

While Roosevelt has never traveled in the Boundary Waters, he said he worked as a canoe guide some summers in Canada, where the terrain is very similar. "It's part of the same Canadian Shield, where there's very little soil buffering," he said. "When I was first asked to come here, it really resonated with me."

President Theodore Roosevelt established the Superior National Forest back in 1909, and he was a strong advo-

cate of protecting the nation's natural resources, including wilderness areas. That's a tradition that his great-grandson carries on today through his involvement in a number of environmental causes.

During a talk last Thursday in Minneapolis, Roosevelt said he was impressed at the degree of interest in the topic. "I had a wonderful opportunity to talk to mostly hunters and fishermen, legislative assistants, and environmentalists. Many said they were new to the issue, but were interested to learn more and to get involved," he said.

It's that kind of outreach, said Roosevelt, that allowed Oberholtzer to overcome the money and connections of Edward Backus. "He understood that the recreational value of this area was greater than flooding the region would bring," said Roosevelt.

"I think you can make the

same case with mining." Roosevelt said many modern mines are now so automated that they employ few workers. "This will create relatively few jobs," he said, while most tourism jobs, like guiding and outfitting, are labor intensive and difficult to outsource or automate. "I don't think I want to hire a robot to be my guide out in the Boundary Waters," he said.

As an investment banker, Roosevelt said he understands the necessity of extractive industries, like mining, and oil and gas. "We're not saying no more mining or oil drilling, but there is a time and a place and this is not one of them."

"Obviously we will still continue to do these things, but let's use our brains and do it in the right places. We don't want to destroy the country by untrammeled exploitation."