



United States Department of Agriculture

**Forest Service**

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# News Release

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## Public input sought for mining lease renewals

**DULUTH, Minnesota** (JUNE 13, 2016) – The U.S. Forest Service is announcing a 30-day period for public input and a listening session to better understand public views related to two proposed mining lease renewals. The leases, MNES-01352 and MNES-01353, are currently held by Twin Metals Minnesota and are located within the same watershed as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) on the Superior National Forest in northeastern Minnesota. On June 6, 2016 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) requested that the Forest Service provide a decision on whether it consents or does not consent to the renewal of the leases. The public input period and listening session will help Forest Service decision makers improve their understanding of public views related to the leases.

A final determination on consent has not been made. However, the Forest Service is deeply concerned by the location of the leases within the same watershed as the BWCAW, and by the inherent risks associated with potential copper, nickel and other sulfide mining operations within that watershed. Those risks exist during all phases of mine development, implementation and long-term closure and remediation. Potential impacts to water resources include changes in water quantity and quality, contamination from acid mine drainage, and seepage of tailings water, tailings basin failures and waste rock treatment locations. Based on these concerns, the Forest Service is considering withholding consent for lease renewal. A response letter to the BLM with the Forest Service's final consent determination will be sent following the close of the public input period and the agency's examination of the issue.

The public input period will begin June 20, 2016 and run through July 20, 2016. Comments may be mailed to the Superior National Forest, 8901 Grand Ave Place, Duluth, MN 55808; or emailed to [TwinMetalsLeaseInput@fs.fed.us](mailto:TwinMetalsLeaseInput@fs.fed.us). The listening session will be held July 13, 2016 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center and will be live streamed on the internet. The session will begin with a short presentation to describe the status of the leases, and the determination to be made

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regarding consent. Due to the anticipated high level of interest, the opportunity to provide a verbal comment during the listening session will be based on a lottery system in order to objectively identify attendees who will be given the opportunity to provide a three minute oral presentation. Written input will not be accepted at the session. Updates and additional information about the listening session will be available at the [Superior National Forest website](#).

The U.S. Forest Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a mission of sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service's Eastern Region includes 20 states in the Midwest and East, stretching from Maine, to Maryland, to Missouri, to Minnesota. There are 17 national forests and one national tallgrass prairie in the Eastern Region. For more information, visit [www.fs.usda.gov/R9](http://www.fs.usda.gov/R9).

The U.S. Forest Service manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Public lands the Forest Service manages contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$7.2 billion per year. The agency has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 80 percent of the 850 million forested acres within the U.S., of which 100 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live. For more information, visit [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us).

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