

Timeline of Key Events Leading to Proposed Sulfide-Ore Copper Mining on Superior National Forest Lands in the Boundary Waters Watershed

1873	Public domain lands in Minnesota withdrawn from General Mining Law of 1872
1909	Superior National Forest (NF) established and Boundary Waters Treaty signed by Canada and the U.S., requiring neither country pollute boundary waters or waters that flow across the boundary
1946	Congress authorizes mineral leasing on acquired national forest lands in Minnesota where leasing will not interfere with primary purposes for which the land was acquired
1950	Contemplating mining types (granite, gravel, and iron) that would not diminish recreational uses, Congress allows mineral leasing on Minnesota's public domain national forest lands, but only with Forest Service (USFS) consent
1964	Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness designated by the Wilderness Act
1966	BLM issues to predecessor of Twin Metals Minnesota two federal preference right mineral leases (MNES 1352 and MNES 1353) covering nearly 5,000 acres of the Superior NF adjacent to the Wilderness for a primary term of 20 years
1978	Boundary Waters Wilderness Act bans mining within the Wilderness and establishes a 220,000-acre Mining Protection Zone along entry corridors
1989 & 2004	MNES 1352 and 1353 renewed for 10 year periods
Oct. 2012	Twin Metals applies for a third 10-year renewal of 1352 and 1353
May 2012	BLM issues 28 prospecting permits on the Superior NF in the Boundary Waters watershed
Mar. 8, 2016	Solicitor of the Department of the Interior (DOI) Hilary Tompkins issues a legal opinion finding that BLM has discretion to grant or deny Twin Metals' lease renewal application
Dec. 14, 2016	Following public comment and meetings, USFS withholds consent to renew MNES 1352 & 1353
Dec. 15, 2016	BLM rejects Twin Metals' application for renewal of MNES 1352 and 1353; the leases expire
Jan. 13, 2017	USFS files an application to withdraw from mineral leasing approximately 234,000 acres of Superior NF lands in the Boundary Waters watershed, initiating a 2-year segregation, and issues a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS)
Mar.-Aug. 2017	USFS receives more than 125,000 public comments on the proposed withdrawal; ~98% of the > 81,000 unique comments and 94% of the > 44,000 form comments favor the withdrawal
Dec. 22, 2017	Daniel Jorjani, Acting Principal Deputy Solicitor of the DOI, retracts the 2016 Tompkins opinion and issues a new legal opinion concluding BLM lacked discretion to deny Twin Metals' lease renewal application
Jan.-Feb. 2018	USFS downgrades withdrawal study to an environmental assessment (EA) and receives 56,000 more comments in a second comment period; ~98% of the > 180,000 comments favor withdrawal
May 2, 2018	BLM rescinds its December 2016 rejection of the renewal of MNES 1352 and 1353 and reinstates the expired leases and Twin Metals' renewal application
June 2018	Three lawsuits filed in federal district court in DC challenging the reinstatement decision

Sept. 6, 2018 Following announcements by President Trump and Vice President Pence at rallies in Duluth, MN, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue announces the USFS is cancelling its withdrawal application; USFS work on the EA supporting its withdrawal proposal is terminated

Dec. 20, 2018 BLM announces its intent to renew MNES 1352 and 1353 and releases an EA on the proposed addition of terms and conditions to the leases for a 38-day public comment period

May 15, 2019 BLM renews MNES 1352 and 1353 and posts updated list of 39 pending mineral applications

Nov. 22, 2019 State of MN announces it will not participate in federal environmental review of forthcoming mine plan of operations and will instead conduct its own process

Dec. 18, 2019 Twin Metals submits a mine plan to BLM and the MN Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR)

Jan. 15, 2020 Rep. McCollum introduces Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act to permanently withdraw the watershed from new mineral leases and prospecting permits

Mar. 17, 2020 Federal district court judge upholds May 2018 reinstatement of MNES 1352 and 1353; plaintiffs subsequently file a notice of appeal with the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals

May 1, 2020 BLM extends 13 Twin Metals prospecting permits covering approximately 15,000 acres, including permits that overlap with the company's third preference right lease application (PRLA)

May 1, 2020 BLM and USFS sign a Memorandum of Understanding making the BLM the lead agency for purposes of preparing an EIS for the proposed Twin Metals MPO and PRLA

May 6, 2020 Conservation groups and nine wilderness-dependent businesses file a lawsuit in federal district court in DC challenging the May 2019 renewal of 1352 and 1353

June 30, 2020 BLM publishes NOI to prepare an EIS on Twin Metals' mine plan and lease application

Aug. 6, 2020 Conservation groups file federal lawsuit challenging May 2020 extension of prospecting permits

Nov. 30, 2020 BLM moves for voluntary remand of its decision to extend 13 Twin Metals prospecting permits

Oct. 20, 2021 USDA and DOI announce a USFS application to withdraw from mineral leasing 225,378 acres of Superior NF lands, and commit to finishing the study of the Boundary Waters watershed

Oct. 21, 2021 BLM publishes notice of the USFS' mineral withdrawal application, initiating a 2-year segregation and a 90-day comment period; BLM rejects pending Preference Right Lease Applications (PRLA), prospecting permit applications in segregated area

Dec. 8, 2021 BLM rejects Twin Metals' mine plan as incomplete, because it relies on a rejected federal PRLA

Jan. 19, 2022 The USFS mineral withdrawal comment period closes with > 270,000 comments in support

Jan. 25, 2022 DOI Principal Deputy Solicitor issues a legal opinion that rescinds the Jorjani opinion, and finds the 2019 renewals of leases MNES 1352 and 1353 were improperly issued and subject to cancellation

Jan. 26, 2022 DOI cancels federal mineral leases MNES 1352 and 1353

Feb. 15, 2022 MNDNR terminates environmental review of Twin Metals' still-incomplete mine plan

Feb. 22, 2022 Federal District Court dismisses as moot the lawsuit challenging renewal of MNES 1352 & 1353

Mar. 17, 2022 Federal Court of Appeals dismisses as moot the appeal challenging reinstatement of MNES 1352 & 1353, and vacates the Mar. 17, 2020 District Court decision