

May 10, 2022

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Zac McCrary, Luke Martin; Impact Research

Re: **Minnesotans Support Permanent Protections for the Boundary Waters from the Risks of Sulfide-Ore Copper Mining**

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Minnesotans are deeply connected to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and it remains a uniquely popular and loved resource in an age of polarization. Since 2015, polling has consistently shown that due to this deep connection, voters in Minnesota are strongly opposed to sulfide-ore copper mining on the edge of the Boundary Waters and in its watershed. Voters support taconite mining and sulfide-ore copper mining in areas of the state that don't pose a risk to the pristine Boundary Waters. Voters readily reject mining industry arguments that the watershed of the Boundary Waters is specifically needed to fulfill the nation's critical mineral needs. As a result, Minnesotans support several legislative and administrative actions that would increase protections for the Boundary Waters, including permanent protection.

- **The Boundary Waters is uniquely popular and well-regarded in Minnesota.** Favorability for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is near unanimous across the state with 86% statewide who are favorable, including 70% who are very favorable. More than 2-in-3 Minnesotans (67%) say they have personally been to the Boundary Waters including 9% who visit every year.
- **By a 2-1 margin, Minnesotans oppose sulfide-ore copper mining on the edge of the Boundary Waters (60% oppose vs. 31% support).** A strong majority of voters have been consistently opposed to sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters since pollsters began asking this question in 2015. Even among the 31% who would currently support sulfide-ore copper mining on the edge of the Boundary Waters, their support is soft - just 12% strongly support it, and nearly 2-in-3 supporters (63%) say their support is contingent on an environmental analysis that finds that sulfide-ore copper mining in the Boundary Water's watershed could be done without risk to the Boundary Waters.
- **Minnesotans overwhelmingly support a broad array of legislative and administrative actions to protect the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining, including legislation to permanently protect the Boundary Waters:**

These findings are based on the results of a multi-modal poll of likely 2022 voters in Minnesota conducted by Impact Research. The statewide sample consists of N=600 responses, collected utilizing landline, cellphone, and text-to-web interviews between March 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

- **Minnesotans support legislation to permanently protect the Boundary Waters from the risks associated with sulfide-ore copper mining by a 35-point margin (63% support vs 28% oppose).**  
Permanent protections are also a winning issue with undecided voters (58% support), Independents who support them by a 7-point margin, and in the new 8th Congressional District (56% support). After hearing arguments from both sides of the issue, support for permanent protections increases to 67% among all likely Minnesota voters.
- **By a 19-point margin (45% support vs 26% oppose), Minnesotans agree that the state should update its nonferrous mining rules to better protect the Boundary Waters.** Minnesota's nonferrous mining rules have not been updated in 30 years, and currently allow for levels of pollution that would contaminate the Boundary Waters. Updating the state's rules would allow for the application of modern science to protect the Boundary Waters.
- **Minnesota voters reject the false choice between mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters for critical minerals needed for national security or clean energy purposes and protecting the Boundary Waters.** In testing responses to statements about mining for critical minerals in the watershed of the Boundary Waters for national security or a green economy, voters agree by double-digit margins that we don't have to choose between critical minerals and protecting the Boundary Waters. By working with our allies such as Canada, Norway, and Australia and increasing recycling in our own country, we can have both critical minerals the nation needs and preserve the legacy of the Boundary Waters.
- **Minnesotans are not anti-mining in general.** A majority of voters support taconite mining (61%) and sulfide-ore copper mining in areas where it would not pose any danger to the Boundary Waters or its watershed (53%). However, there is overwhelming opposition to sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters due to pollution and contamination risks. Opposition to mining in the Boundary Waters cuts through demographic, geographic, and ideological lines, making their protection a clear political winner for elected leaders in Minnesota.