

Letter: Mining poses bigger threat to state's environment



Post Bulletin illustration

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Opinion

Rep. Brad Finstad and his colleagues must do more to protect Minnesota public land now and into the future.

"In our neck of the woods," they wrote, "summer months are the best time of the year to spend time outdoors recreating, enjoying time with family, and creating new memories, but this wildfire smoke makes it difficult to do all those things." Northern Minnesota's natural beauty attracts millions of people who visit year-round and contribute to a robust local economy.

If our delegation truly cares about Minnesotans' quality of life, they must stand against a proposed provision in the 2026 appropriations bill that would reinstate a Chilean mining company's ability to begin sulfide-ore copper mining near the Boundary Waters. It would also gut a 20-year mining ban and weaken protections in the Superior National Forest.

To add insult to injury, the copper the Chilean company is after will not stay in Minnesota or the United States. However, Minnesotans will be left with the toxic waste that will seep into the water, ground and air, poisoning plants, animals and people. Smoke from distant wildfires will be the least of our worries.

Sulfide-ore copper mining is the wrong type of mine in this special place that is the gateway to millions of acres of pristine wilderness connected by water.

Our representatives have a responsibility to protect our public land. They must vote down the provision that exploits Minnesotans with sulfide-ore copper mining.

Ilaya R. Hopkins, Rochester

OPINION LETTERS

Reader's View: Support bill against mining near Boundary Waters

Under the legislation, taconite mining can remain a central part of local economies.

Reader's View



Opinion by Lindsey Mahoney and Elisabeth Yorns, Saratoga Springs, New York

April 27, 2025 at 7:03 AM

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Opinion

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is in trouble. As locals, environmentalists, and humans with care for the future, it's our responsibility to mobilize toward protecting the wilderness. We urge Minnesota residents to take action to support the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection Act, [legislation introduced](#) April 9 by U.S. Sen. Tina Smith.

This landmark legislation would ban all new copper-nickel mining on federal land near the Boundary Waters. It would permanently protect 225,000 acres of federal lands in an effort to leave the wilderness untarnished and waters pristine. Projects that have yet to begin, such as the long-debated Twin Metals project near Ely, would not be able to move forward. With a 100% leakage rate, copper-ore mining puts the Boundary Waters at risk of environmental harm, including contamination from sulfuric acid, heavy metals, and sulfate pollution.

While supporters of mining in the region often cite existing taconite mining infrastructure as crucial for the local economy, the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection Act would only limit future mining plans and exploration. Under the legislation, taconite mining can remain a central part of local economies.

The legislation is not blind to the importance of balancing economic growth and environmental protection. Through protecting lands and waters, the recreation industry can continue to flourish and provide local jobs, existing alongside current taconite mining.

Take meaningful action by adding your name to a GreaterGood petition to "Stop The Toxic Mines Before They Poison The Boundary Waters Forever." Help it reach 30,000 signatures. By signing the petition in support of the [Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection Act](#), Minnesota residents can set a precedent of environmental protection in a time when our country prioritizes destructive economic growth over compromise.

Lindsey Mahoney and Elisabeth Yorns

Saratoga Springs, New York

MY VIEW

Save the Boundary Waters from Stauber, Trump

While growing up in Mankato, my first visit to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area was in 1978. What we Minnesotans should be proud of is that after all of these years, the BWCA's 1.1 million acres is still just as wild and scenic, with some of the cleanest, most pristine water in the world. Today, it's the most visited wilderness area in the U.S. and an economic engine for our state.

Outdoor recreation contributes significantly to Minnesota's economy, accounting for 2.8% of the state's GDP, with it supporting more than 96,000 jobs and bringing in over \$13.5 billion annually to the state economy. The BWCA says much about who we are as a state, preserving and protecting our land. However, this area, is now threatened by both Minnesota GOP Congressmen Pete Stauber's proposed legislation (H.R. 978), to literally hand over land at the headwaters of the BWCA to Chilean-owned mining giant Antofagasta, and the Trump administration's proposed executive order to rescind the 20-year mining ban for the watershed of the entire BWCA.

The intent of Stauber and Trump is to allow sulfide-ore copper mining — one of the most toxic polluting types of mining — in the fragile headwaters of the BWCA.

The current 20-year mining ban, signed by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland in 2023, was the result



Steve Klar
RETIRED ARCHITECT

of over a decade of very hard work by Minnesotans, based not upon politics, but irrefutable scientific and legal evidence. The U.S. Forest Service prepared an exhaustive environmental assessment that documented the high risk of harm to the BWCA, and the inability to mitigate or fix damage to this vast lakeland wilderness.

Currently, there are no safe measures anywhere in the world to contain the contaminants from sulfide-ore copper mining. What we fear most, would be that the extracted tailings piles would leach into the watershed and then pollute the entire BWCA, Quetico in Canada, and the remaining waterways all the way up to Hudson Bay. More simply stated, a complete environmental disaster!

The Minnesota DNR also weighed in by asking the Legislature to consider banning high-risk mine components such as rock waste piles, tailings piles, and more in the BWCA headwaters.

The DNR found that it's own regulations on light and noise from

mining were inadequate to protect the wilderness character of the BWCA.

What also makes no economic sense to any Minnesotan, is that after the raw minerals are mined, they then would be shipped to China for processing. After that we could buy back the finished product on the open world market. Therefore, a foreign company makes the majority of the money, and we are left spending Minnesota taxpayers dollars cleaning up a ruined and polluted wilderness environment, after the local mining subsidiary of Antofagasta files bankruptcy or goes out of business. The BWCA would become Minnesota's largest Superfund.

We as Minnesotans have the collective power to stop all of this and keep Trump and his "friends" out of our state. Currently, Sen. Steve Cwudzinski and Rep. Alex Falconer have introduced legislation (SF875 & HF309). This bill would permanently prohibit sulfide-ore copper mining only from the BWCA watershed.

It is important that everyone contact their local representatives and let them know that you support this bill. It is my hope, that this bill will be enacted because we can't expect any protection at the federal level.

Steve Klar is a retired architect who now splits time between Mankato and living on a lake in northern Minnesota.