2021 IMPACT REPORT

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For the last nine years, the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters has been leading the effort to permanently protect the Boundary Waters. Despite the challenges of operating through the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021 brought real and lasting progress against the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining. We are closer than ever to protecting this priceless American crown jewel now and for future generations.

As you’ll see in the pages of this annual report, all factions of our multi-faceted approach operated at full speed in 2021, from federal advocacy trips and countless zoom meetings in Washington, D.C., to grassroots mobilization at home. Of note are the major successes of the last year:

- The Biden Administration initiated a mineral withdrawal process in October, which could result in a 20-year ban on sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters.
- A 90-day public comment period was met with a record-breaking number of nearly 250,000 comments submitted in support of Boundary Waters protections.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the comment process. 2022 will see the United States Forest Service draft and deliver an Environmental Assessment, taking into account public comments, science, economics, and more, as it decides whether or not to grant a 20-year moratorium on copper mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters.

Shortly after the close of 2021, we were met with the monumental news of the Biden Administration canceling the only two federal mineral leases within the Rainy River Watershed. These leases were held by Twin Metals Minnesota and its parent company, Chilean mining conglomerate Antofagasta. The leases were unlawfully renewed in 2019, and we’ve been fighting their presence in the watershed through litigation ever since. Our team is ecstatic to see the most immediate threat to the Boundary Waters nullified, but the work is far from over.

In tandem with administrative action, stalwart Boundary Waters champion, Representative Betty McCollum re-introduced her Boundary Waters Permanent Protection Bill, now HR 2794, on Earth Day 2021. With over 50 co-sponsors and growing, advancing this critical piece of legislation will be a central element of the Campaign’s agenda in 2022. This will ensure that the Boundary Waters is not just a 20-year Wilderness but a forever Wilderness.

All of this work is motivated by one powerful notion: there are some places that are too important and unique to be put at risk by destructive copper mining. The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters is working strategically on the state and federal levels, through legislation and litigation to ensure permanent protections for this one-of-a-kind place, and will continue to do so in 2022.

We are so grateful for your support, and for that of our Walter Mondale Legacy Fund donors. This support has meant everything to this movement and only becomes more important. From day one, the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters has been powered by people just like you. Thank you for your support, for helping us achieve incredible milestones in 2021, and for your dedication to see this through to the very end, when the Boundary Waters is truly protected from sulfide-ore copper mining for generations to come.

Jon Nelson & Jeff Soderstrom
Co-Chairs
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
Parent organization of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters
In a press release the Department of Interior (DOI) said Metals had applied for (and was denied last October). mineral leases now canceled and a third lease Twin no longer possible, because it requires the two federal locations on the edge of the Boundary Waters, is proposed sulfide-ore copper mine, which would have PLC, which owns Twin Metals Minnesota. Twin Metals’ Chilean copper mining multinational Antofagasta Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), and a blow to cancellation represents a win for the Boundary Waters leases that were unlawfully renewed in 2019. The administration announced the cancellation of two federal mineral leases in the Watershed. The DOI determined that the expired Twin Metals leases were unlawfully renewed by the prior administration. This renewal violated federal laws and regulations, including the two federal statutes that require the DOI to obtain U.S. Forest Service consent before leasing federal minerals on National Forest lands in Minnesota. In 2016, the U.S. Forest Service withheld its consent to the renewal of the Twin Metals leases because of the risk that sulfide-ore copper mining upstream would pose to the Boundary Waters; this decision still stands. The DOI Solicitor’s Office issued a legal opinion that underpins January’s big announcement.

Termination of Federal Mineral Leases in the Boundary Waters Watershed.

On January 26, 2022, the Biden administration announced the cancellation of two federal mineral leases that were unlawfully renewed in 2019. The cancellation represents a win for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), and a blow to Chilean copper mining multinational Antofagasta PLC, which owns Twin Metals Minnesota. Twin Metals’ proposed sulfide-ore copper mine, which would have been located on the edge of the Boundary Waters, is no longer possible, because it requires the two federal mineral leases now canceled and a third lease Twin Metals had applied for (and was denied last October). In a press release the Department of Interior (DOI) said it determined that the expired Twin Metals leases were unlawfully renewed by the prior administration. This renewal violated federal laws and regulations, including the two federal statutes that require the DOI to obtain U.S. Forest Service consent before leasing federal minerals on National Forest lands in Minnesota. In 2016, the U.S. Forest Service withheld its consent to the renewal of the Twin Metals leases because of the risk that sulfide-ore copper mining upstream would pose to the Boundary Waters; this decision still stands. The DOI Solicitor’s Office issued a legal opinion that underpins January’s big announcement.
Beyond our work with Representative Betty McCollum, in “usual” times we are in Washington D.C. about once per month meeting with Congressional members and agencies to advocate for the Administrative 20 year mining ban and McCollum’s bill that would make the ban permanent. Despite COVID we still held over 60 meetings with Congressional members throughout the year. Our biggest highlight was the opportunity for our Kids for the Boundary Waters organization meeting virtually with Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Senator Tina Smith. We continue to fight for the future of the Boundary Waters to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same opportunities of this cherished Wilderness.

**Kids for the Boundary Waters Speak Up**

During the recent comment periods, the outreach team led a series of instructional webinars to help supporters craft their State and Federal comments that were submitted to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Bureau of Land Management. Towards the end of the Federal comment period, the team also encouraged supporters to sign up to attend up to three Public Listening Sessions hosted by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

*Record Breaking Comment Period!*  

248,000 comments were submitted supporting the ban on risky mining near the Boundary Waters.

2-1 Pro-Boundary Waters speakers outnumbered the pro-sulfide copper mining speakers 2-1.

**How We Continue to Work Towards Permanent Protections**

82,000 Comments
While 2021 was not without challenges surrounding COVID, the outreach team was incredibly delighted to restart in person events this year and re-engage with our Campaign’s supporters. The feeling of joy was mutual among our team of volunteers, who were excited to get back to assisting with outreach. The Campaign hosted a variety of successful outreach events, and had a strong presence in Northern Minnesota and The Twin Cities. Our team re-engaged with current supporters, and reached thousands of new Boundary Waters supporters.

The community showed up in support of the Boundary Waters in so many ways this past year. From Market Fest in White Bear Lake, James J. Hill Days in Wayzata, signatures at Midwest Mountaineering Expo, and even paddling the lakes in the Boundary Waters floatilla! Overall, the outreach team continues to focus on finding new and creative ways to empower and engage our supporters during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are incredibly appreciative of our dedicated base of supporters, ambassadors, and volunteers who work against the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining on the edge of the Boundary Waters. We look forward to scheduling more events in 2022, and look forward to connecting with people around the state, the region, and the nation!

In 2021, we launched the Podcast to Save the Boundary Waters. The podcast features Wilderness canoeists, business owners, elected officials, retired miners and other storytellers, to emphasize why it’s so important to protect the Boundary Waters. The podcast functions as a tool for current and new supporters to gain a more intimate level of stewardship, education, and engagement with the Campaign to Save The Boundary Waters through thoughtful storytelling. There are currently two seasons that you can listen to, with more yet to come!

Boundary Waters Connect is Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness’ (NMW) economic and community development program. At NMW we are committed to fostering sustainable wilderness edge communities where you can live, work, and play. We seek to connect people and resources in ways that make our local economies grow and our communities welcome and vibrant.

Our work reinforces our belief that strong rural communities and wilderness enjoy a unique, mutually beneficial, and supportive relationship.

Currently, Boundary Waters Connect has launched or is underway with a number of initiatives related to new resident recruitment. Boundary Waters Connect is also now the organizer of Ely’s popular Tuesday Group lecture series.

If you would like to be more informed about NMW’s ever-growing work contact Lacey Squier (lacey@savetheboundarywaters.org)
Our Campaign Manager, Alex Falconer has completed the first known attempt to run “The Boundary Waters Traverse!” On May 22, 2021 Alex ran over 110 miles in 38 hrs 15 mins and 3 seconds, through the heart of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness to connect the Border Route and Kekekabic Trail!

The run was broken into 7 segments where Alex was assisted by trail runners, his family, podcaster, supporters and coworkers. Many helped supply multiple aid stations along the way with food, water and additional care.

110 miles
38 hrs 15 min 3 sec
The Boundary Waters Legacy Celebration

In October of 2021 we held the Boundary Waters Legacy Celebration. An evening to celebrate and remember those who have Championed the effort to save the Boundary Waters. Though there are many, we specifically honored the memory and work of Vice President Walter Mondale. Vice President Mondale’s legacy was one of tireless and vocal support of the Boundary Waters.

Many of you gathered, both virtually and in-person to celebrate Vice President Mondale’s memory and to commit to carrying on the work of his legacy through the Walter Mondale Legacy Fund - pledging over $200,000 of support for 2021 and 2022. We are so grateful for all of those who continue to commit to carrying the fight to save the Boundary Waters forward.

Grants

2021 has been a challenging year for non-profit organizations and those who provide grants. We are especially grateful for the support of these funders in 2021:

- The Manitou Fund
- Albrecht Family Foundation
- Edward R. Bazinet Charitable Foundation
- In Faith Community Foundation
- Leuthold Family Foundation
- Mortenson Family Foundation
- Patagonia
- The Conservation Alliance
- Quetico Superior Foundation

“When I was younger, I thought it would calm down with time, but it hasn’t… There’s something about the moral elements of this fight that makes it different. It’s not just another fight - it’s basic to who we are.”

-Vice President Walter Mondale

The audit of the Campaign’s 2021 financials will be completed in mid-2022. The figures above are unaudited, but correspond to internal records. To see audited financial information from 2020, please contact info@savetheboundarywaters.org

Every year on this Minnesota non-profit “giving holiday”, Boundary Waters lovers from across the country come together to support the Campaign, with impressive results. We continue to be amazed at the response and support we receive.

GIVE TO THE MAX DAY
November 18, 2021

#5 in Large MN Organizations

Over 1,429 donors

$150,000 in matching funds

$158,000 raised
Save the Boundary Waters is recognized as one of the most effective public lands campaigns in America today. Our goal is to permanently protect the Boundary Waters Wilderness from sulfide-ore copper mining.

Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness (NMW), which leads the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, was formed in 1996 to continue working to protect the Boundary Waters and other wild places against ever-increasing public and commercial pressures so that the area’s wild character will remain intact for future generations.

In August 2012, NMW had its first meetings with conservation groups in Minnesota, urging the formation of a national movement to protect the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining. It had its first meetings with members of Congress in Washington, DC in November 2012. By September 2013, the national coalition, called the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, was formed. It is led and funded by NMW.

Today, NMW is the largest conservation organization in Minnesota that focuses on protecting and preserving the Boundary Waters and greater Quetico-Superior region.

Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness and the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in all aspects of the organization as we work to protect this special place for everyone and for generations to come.

One outcome of our commitment is our new DEIJ small-grants program we started in 2021. We intend to support and build mutually-beneficial relationships with people or communities that often get disenfranchised within and excluded from the effort to protect the Boundary Waters due to their race, sexuality, ability, size, gender identity or expression, religion, culture, or anything else.

In 2021 we supported 8 projects through our new DEIJ small grants program:

- Circle Of Discipline - Boundary Waters camping trip with inner-city youth & young adults
- Ely Folk School - Traditional Anishinaabe winter storytelling nights series
- Victoria Carpenter - Short film by founder of Flip the Script queer film fest, featuring two-spirit Lakota poet Brave Crow
- Kyle Rucker/Ruck B Music - Film for elementary students featuring young Black adventurer
- Vermilion Community College - LGBTQ+ student group winter Boundary Waters activities
- Voyageur Outward Bound School - Scholarship for Black leader’s dogsled expedition
- Wilderness Canoe Base - Trip for LGBTQ+ Augsburg College students
- YMCA Camp Menogyn - DEIJ consultant & summer camp evaluation and training

In January of 2022, we chose 7 projects for our initial funding round this year:

- Big City Mountaineers
- Boyz N The Wood
- Cast Outdoors Adventures
- Wilderness Canoe Base
- Kokoro Project
- Loppet Expeditions
- YMCA Camp Northern Lights

Our Vision

We unite people to advocate for the protection of wilderness and wild places, especially the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the greater Quetico-Superior Ecosystem. We envision a future where people understand the value of wild protected lands, and are unified to forever protect the Boundary Waters Wilderness and the greater Quetico-Superior Ecosystem as vital components of a healthy and resilient planet.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Justice

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MEET THE TEAM

The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, led by Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness based in the Wilderness-edge town of Ely, Minnesota, is a broad national coalition of 400+ organizations and businesses who are dedicated to securing permanent protection for the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining.

NMW Staff

Alex Falconer
Campaign Manager

Jeremy Drucker
Senior Advisor

Lacey Squier
Boundary Waters Connect Manager

Levi Lexvold
Ely Coordinator

Libby London
Digital Content & Strategy Manager

Lisa Pugh
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Northern Regional Organizer

Matt Norton
Policy & Science Director

Megan Wind
Creative Content Manager

Niki Bohne
Director Of Finance And Administration

Roberto Heredia
Regional Organizer

Samantha Chadwick
Associate Director

Sydney Jordan
Organizing Director

2021 NMW Board of Directors

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Ann McNally
Becky Rom, Vice-chair
Bill Hohengarten
David Miller, Treasurer
Diane Hofstede

Dodd Cosgrove, Secretary
Heather Meier
Hunt Greene
Jason Zabokrtsky
Jeff Soderstrom, Co-Chair
Jon Nelson, Co-chair

Mia Divecha
Paul Schurke
Steve Piragis
Stephen Snyder
Tadd Johnson
Lawson Gerdes

WHY WE CAN’T STOP NOW

This year, we have a once-in-a generation opportunity to finally make the Boundary Waters a forever wilderness. We are committed to ensuring the Boundary Waters is protected forever. Here are some ways you can continue to help:

1. Sign the petition
2. Tell your representative to protect the Boundary Waters
3. Share our cause with your friends on facebook, twitter, or instagram
4. Attend an event
5. Volunteer
6. Learn all the ways you can donate!

COALITION PARTNERS

The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters is a national coalition of more than 400 conservation organizations, hunting and fishing groups, and businesses. It is recognized as one of the most effective public lands advocacy campaigns in America. We have elevated the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining and the Boundary Waters/Quetico-Superior to the prominence of other national conservation priorities like Bears Ears and the Arctic Refuge. Collectively the coalition membership reaches millions of people across the country.
Garden Party Fundraiser
Join us for our annual Save the Boundary Waters Garden Party Fundraiser at the South Kawishiwi River Campground Pavilion to raise critical funds to permanently protect the Boundary Waters.

More information and registration to come. If you have questions, please contact:
info@savetheboundarywaters.org

Boundary Waters Gala
Join us the evening of Thursday, September 22, 2022, for our major annual event to celebrate Minnesota's crown jewel and support the work of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, featuring special guests, a silent auction, and more!

More information and registration to come. If you have questions, please contact:
info@savetheboundarywaters.org

UPCOMING MAJOR EVENTS

Garden Party Fundraiser
Kawishiwi River Campground Pavilion, Ely, MN
July 3rd 2022

Boundary Waters Gala
Niccollet Island Pavilion, Minneapolis, MN
September 22nd 2022

IN HONOR OF

Below is a list of beloved friends, family, and peers commemorated this year with a gift to the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters.

Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness (NMW)*
P.O. Box 625
Ely, MN 55731
218-365-7808

*NMW is the fiscal sponsor and lead organization for the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters

General inquiries: info@savetheboundarywaters.org

PHOTO: Nate Ptacek