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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Protect the BWCA from Sulfide Mining Pollution: Northern Minnesota Federal Minerals Withdrawal EIS Project

Dear Northern Minnesota Federal Minerals Withdrawal EIS Project,

I strongly support the protection of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness ("Boundary Waters") through the proposed "withdrawal" of federal lands in the Rainy River Watershed from the federal mining program. Sulfide ore mining is unacceptably risky in the water-rich environment of Northeastern Minnesota, and the Boundary Waters are too sensitive and too important to justify this threat.

The Boundary Waters is America's most popular and water-rich Wilderness Area. Its 1.1 million acres contain more than 1,000 pristine lakes and 1,200 miles of river and stream, offering unmatched fishing, hunting, and other public lands wilderness recreational opportunities for all Americans to enjoy. Priceless and irreplaceable, the Boundary Waters must not be put at risk of perpetual pollution from the most toxic industry in America.

During the environmental review process, please be sure to thoroughly study and address the following:

-- Cleanest water quality in North America - The lakes, rivers, and streams of the Boundary Waters watershed are among the cleanest waters in North America, and are especially sensitive to acids and heavy-metals found in copper mine pollution;

-- America's most visited and accessible wilderness destination - The Boundary Waters is the most popular Wilderness Area in the U.S., and the largest east of the Rockies and north of the Everglades. Visitors travel through it by boat or canoe, and can choose routes to avoid having to carry their gear, making the Boundary Waters more accessible to families, children and people with physical limitations; and

-- Economics - The Boundary Waters supports a strong, sustainable, growing outdoor recreation industry in Minnesota. It is a principal driver of the \$850 Million, 17,000-job recreation economy in Northeastern Minnesota, it contributes to hundreds of manufacturing jobs, and it helps keep and attract talent to Minnesota.

I urge the Secretary of the Interior to protect and "withdraw" the approximately 234,328 acres of national forest lands in the Rainy River Watershed from the federal mining program for twenty years in order to protect the Boundary Waters from the threat of long term or perpetual sulfide-ore copper mining pollution and damage. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

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