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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Protect the BWCA from sulfide mining pollution

Dear U.S. Forest Service ("USFS") and Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") -

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.

I urge the Secretary of the Interior to protect and "withdraw" the approximately 234,000 acres of national forest lands in the Rainy River Watershed from the federal mining program for twenty years because:

- The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is America's most visited and accessible wilderness destination attracting more than 150,000 visitors annually, including those with disabilities and/or mobility challenges;

- The Boundary Waters is a principle driver of the \$850 million, 17,000-job recreation economy in Northeastern Minnesota. This important wilderness area is critical to the sustained, long-term economic health of the region; and

- The lakes, rivers, and streams of the Boundary Waters are among the cleanest in North America. They are also especially sensitive to acids and heavy-metals found in copper mine pollution.

Threats posed by sulfide mining are unjustifiable in such an ecologically sensitive and important place. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Jean E & William C Hayes

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