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Organization:

Title:

Comments: United States Forest Service,

As a long time resident of the state of Minnesota, and a current resident at the most costly copper sulfide mine remediation site presently being operated (Holden, WA), it is my strong recommendation that a full environmental impact statement be drafted before proceeding with this federal withdrawal process.

My concern primarily rests in the potential environmental and economic impacts that a sulfide ore mine would have on Northern Minnesota. Specifically I am concerned about the release of heavy metals, sulfuric acid, and other mining associated contaminants into the rainy river watershed. Additionally I am concerned about the costs of mitigating the release of such contaminants on behalf of the company potentially conducting the mining, the federal government, or the local government. Current federal and state water quality laws require such a company to either mitigate pollutants while mining or remediate any contaminants after extraction- a cost that is often harmful to cooperate longevity and a former for increased metal prices that may harm our consumer economy.

Drawing from my own experience as a resident at a large former copper-sulfide mine, I would like to bring to light several potential costs to the government and corporate interests that would likely result from a mine operating on a similar ore complex in the rainy river drainage:

- a. Potentially hundreds of millions to billions of dollars in reclamation and remedial costs
- b. Legal repercussions from state, federal, and tribal entities, as well as private entities
- c. Substantial losses in market share and stock value as a result of poor environmental management and record
- d. Irreversible harm to the environment associated with said company name and supporting agencies
- E. The release of millions of metric tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere, and the likely future economic repercussions

It is therefore my strong recommendation that the following measures be taken:

1. Prepare a rigorous and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement that thoroughly studies the devastating impacts of sulfide-ore copper mining on Superior National Forest lands in the Rainy River Drainage Basin. Provide the scientific, economic, and social basis for a withdrawal of 234,328 acres of Superior National Forest lands. Document why only removal of these lands from the federal mineral leasing program would protect the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs.
2. Submit a strong recommendation to Interior Secretary Zinke asking that the Department of Interior order the removal of 234,328 acres of Superior National Forest lands from the federal mineral leasing program for 20-years, the maximum period allowed by law.

Sincerely,

Travis Houle