Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Robyn Cascade and I am a volunteer leader for the Northern San Juan chapter of the national organization Great Old Broads for Wilderness. I reside in the Uncompahgre Valley in southwest Colorado. We urge the BLM to accept the USFS application for mineral withdrawal in the Rainy River drainage for the maximum-allowed period of 20 years. Furthermore, we ask the BLM to terminate the two unlawfully reinstated and renewed Twin Metals leases and not approve or renew any leases. We urge you to take all measures within your authority to protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from sulfide-ore copper mining.

Here in the Uncompahgre Valley and where I lived previously in Leadville, Colorado the creeks and rivers run in shades of mustard yellow to brick orange due to pollution from mining. These creeks are lifeless. Leadville is a Superfund site. Agencies, local governments, taxpayers and non-profits continue the decades of cleanup and mitigation. Just over the pass near Silverton, the Animas River made national news in 2015 when a containment wall at Gold King Mine failed, flooding the river with contaminants. West of my home, a plethora of abandoned uranium mines continue to contaminate soils and water, while corporations who profited from these operations are long gone and absolved of responsibility for clean up. I am no stranger to the impacts of mining on ecosystems, communities and human health.

Minnesota is gifted with a natural treasure . In 2015, I enjoyed two weeks paddling and exploring the Boundary Waters . The beauty, tranquility, wildlife and intact ecosytems of this aquatic wonder are unmatched in our country and deserving of the greatest protection from encroachment.

Mining on adjacent federal lands would negatively impact this pristine environment as well as the economic value afforded by the Boundary Waters. Contaminants from mining will undoubtedly flow into the wilderness area under normal operating conditions. Even with no accidents, waste from sulfide-ore copper mining in contact with water creates sulfuric acid in which no species can survive. The devastation of such acid trickling into surface waters and reaching the Boundary Waters is unacceptable. Noise and light pollution will also negatively impact the region as will increased dust and vehicular traffic.

The economic benefits of mining in the region are short lived and will damage natural resources while current thriving economies based upon recreation, wildlife watching and the intrinsic values of healthy ecosystems will endure long into the future. My visit to the Boundary Waters and Eli (Elee) found me supporting outfitters and campgrounds, visiting museums, buying groceries and eating at restaurants. My dollars stayed in the community supporting a robust local economy. Extractive mining operations destroy the landscape and exploit local communities. Corporate profits leave the community and benefit multinationals and shareholders.

We urge the BLM to base their decision on the best available science and adopt the 20-year mineral withdrawal, deny new applications and renewals, and terminate the two Twin Metals leases that were unlawfully renewed. Thank you for your time and attention.