December 22, 2021

Dear BLM Staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed 20-year mineral withdrawal in the Boundary Waters watershed. I write to express my unequivocal support for the mineral withdrawal and 20-year ban on mining within the 225,378 acres of national forest lands adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW.) I unconditionally oppose any sulfide-ore copper mining in the project area in order to safeguard the BWCAW from pollution, impairment or destruction; to protect wildlife and ecosystem integrity; to ensure the continuation of a healthy recreation and tourism-based economy; and provide for human health and safety.

I live in the west where aridity is the rule and fresh water is precious. In 2015, a dream came true for me, as I was able to visit the Boundary Waters for the first time and paddle multiple lakes over a 10-day period during two separate canoe adventures. The cry of the loons, the starlit skies and the sound of waves lapping the shore will forever be etched in my memory until I return. Having experienced this natural wonder, I cannot imagine mining adjacent to this landscape. Such extraction in such close proximity to the wilderness area is unconscionable and irresponsible and places this critical ecosystem in danger. Even if there are no accidents, we know that waste from sulfide-ore copper mining in contact with moisture creates sulfuric acid. Waste waters are also contaminated with heavy metals. …And these toxic waters would flow into the wilderness area in spite of efforts to contain them. In addition, the light and noise pollution along with industrial infrastructure and waste piles would change the character of the area forever.

BWCAW is home to the federally listed Canada lynx (which I have had the pleasure of seeing first hand here in Colorado) and recently delisted gray wolf in addition to Minnesota’s species of special concern, the majestic moose. These are just a few examples of species that will be negatively impacted by any mining proposed by Twin Metals. Add to that list the lesser known or acknowledged insects, birds, amphibians, fish, and reptiles as well as botanical species and soil microbes, and you begin to realize the cumulative effects on ecosystem health. Please do not sacrifice this pristine wilderness for the corporate almighty dollar.

No doubt you are aware that the BWCAW is the most visited wilderness area in the nation with over 1000 lakes, 1200 miles of streams and rivers, and 1.1 million acres, providing innumerable ecosystem services and the source of a plethora of jobs and a robust economy. The residents of Minnesota as well as those of us across the globe who value the BWCAW are counting on you to protect this region now and into the future. Please adopt the proposed 20-year mineral withdrawal that would ban mining in the Boundary Waters watershed within the Superior National Forest. Please protect the intrinsic values of wild lands and waters found in the BWCAW and surrounding area, the dynamic and lucrative economies they support, and the health of Minnesotans and visitors to the region for generations to come. We are relying on the BLM to make decisions based upon scientific evidence and to not compromise ecological integrity and human health. In this time of climate disruption, our wild and intact ecosystems are more critical than ever.

Thank you for considering my comments in your decision making.

Robyn Cascade

Ridgway, Colorado