From: michelle.billmaier@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Michelle Billmaier
To: Lands, BLM_ES
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In support of the "Superior National Forest Withdrawal Application"
Date: Saturday, December 18, 2021 12:26:57 AM

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Dear Bureau of Land Management & U.S. Forest Service,

I'm writing in support of the application to withdraw 225,378 acres of land from new mineral leasing in the Rainy River Watershed near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness for 20 years. This action will not only safeguard the Boundary Waters from toxic mining pollution, but also downstream areas like Voyageurs National Park and Canada's Quetico Provincial Park.

Specifically, please ensure the review process for the mineral withdrawal addresses the likely effects of sulfide-ore mining on water quality and cleanliness in the watershed; the surrounding lands and waters that make up the ancestral home of the Ojibwe people; habitat for wildlife like black bears, beavers, lynx and moose; and the economic outlook in the region, which relies on Boundary Waters as the nation's most visited wilderness areas and a major driver of the outdoor recreation economy.

Ever since the federal government issued mining leases at the doorstep of the Boundary Waters in 1966, setting off decades' worth of lease renewal and re-renewal, development in the area has been a bad idea. The type of mining that is being proposed here would discharge sulfuric acid, sulfates and toxic heavy metals into otherwise pristine air and water that is uniquely vulnerable to pollution. This would contaminate the watershed, potentially for thousands of years. The hard-rock mining industry is one of the most toxic and polluting in existence, and it would be effectively impossible to reliably guard against leaks and other accidents—or to effectively clean them up once they occur.

Once again, I support a 20-year mineral withdrawal in the Rainy River Watershed and encourage a thorough review of the potential impacts of mining in the area.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Michelle Billmaier
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