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10 December 2021

F. David Radford, Deputy State Director of Geospatial Services
BLM Eastern States Office
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Falls Church, VA 22041

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OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

RE: Superior National Forest Withdrawal Application in protection of BWCAW

Dear Mr. Radford and Bureau of Land Management,

It took two of my grand-daughters to remind me of how the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) can change us for life. They took their first trip to the Boundary Waters this summer with three other teen-aged girls and a seasoned counselor in two canoes out of YMCA Camp Widjiwagan near Ely, MN. Idyllic days, then an early morning put-in to head back. A weather shift. Unexpected headwinds. Whitecaps coming from every direction. Novice paddlers, paddling with all their might to head into the wind to avoid capsizing, all the while trying to keep away from the water grasses and deadheads along the shore. It felt like an eternity, but they made it to the portage. Exhausted and exhilarated, they knew they had just pushed their boundaries and exceeded their limits. They felt a new self-assurance that comes with realizing you were tested and made it. And they made it together—each relying on one another. They learned about equity, sharing, and responsibility.

My grand-daughters are the third generation in our family to begin what will likely become a lifelong connection with this million-acre preserve. My former husband had introduced me to the BWCAW and it became a part of every summer and some winters for the two of us and our two sons. Now grown and married with children, our sons have introduced their families to the Boundary Waters and so the heritage continues.

Much is made of the beauty of the BWCA—and deservedly—but there are many, many beautiful places on Earth, too numerous to even count. It is more than physical beauty that makes the wilderness experience here in Minnesota so remarkable and irreplaceable in the modern world. The one salient feature that allows this experience is the abundance and purity of its waters: some 1,200 miles of canoe routes traverse them. Water is the one thing that is irreplaceable and necessary and what dictates the "rules" about entering the region. You are going to travel on, drink from, and cook with the water from its 1,000 lakes.

As you may or may not know, there are no motors allowed in the BWCAW proper. There are zero modern amenities. No transmission lines, no electricity, no cell-phone towers, no roads, no vehicles, including no airplanes overhead (flights below 4000 feet were banned in 1949 by President Harry Truman). There are no stores, no motels or resorts, no restaurants. You must paddle and portage all your own equipment, including your food, tent, sleeping bags, clothes, and canoe. You travel by lake map, hiking on land across portages/pathways cut in the woods to the next lake. En route, you must care for yourself and care for others in your party. You are literally "all in this together."

The woods and waters are filled with wild animals. You need to learn to live with that knowledge and that you share this place with them. You learn respect. You learn patience when you have to sit out a thunderstorm. You learn ingenuity when something on your tent breaks and you have to make a new one from whatever grows on the island where you are camping. You can't be lazy and neglect to hang your food where bears cannot climb to get it, or you go hungry. You can't dump junk in the lake, because that is the water that you will need to drink and use for cooking. You learn to clean-up after yourself because you come to appreciate arriving at a clean campsite. No glass containers are allowed in, and you have to pack-out all plastics and trash.

When you come home, you carry these lessons with you. You understand the value of clean water: one cannot survive without it nor can the animals and plants that depend upon it. The patience, ingenuity, and appreciation of relationships in the natural world come home with you, too. And for nearly everyone, they come home with their souls soothed by being part of the rhythm of gliding across a lake and walking on soft earthen paths through the

boreal forest. The stillness of the night with no outside disturbance from roads, trains, or planes is memorable, most especially for any of us coming from dense urban areas. And if you are fortunate enough to see an Aurora Borealis display, you realize how remote you are from the lights of the city.

I am older now, 75, with arthritic knees. My most recent trip to the BWCA was a few years ago with one of my sons and my two then-young grandsons, already veteran campers. To be present with my oldest grandchildren when they experienced this magical place for the first time I can only describe as an honor. They played with tiny frogs the size of my thumbnail, became master campfire-builders, made art and structures from sticks and leaves, went skinny-dipping for the first time, learned to paddle and portage, and never even missed their phones.

I could leave you at this point with my personal story, but I had another relationship to the BWCA for many years in my life. I was Deputy Director of Tourism for the State of Minnesota and I would be remiss not to mention the economic benefit to the state and nation of this pristine wilderness. This is not just a treasure for Minnesotans, it is a treasure for people from all over the world who come to Minnesota for this experience. No matter where we marketed throughout the United States and internationally--Germany, England, Japan, etc.--the response was always the same. They wanted to know about visiting the BWCAW and, of course, the legendary Mississippi River. One of our strongest selling points was how accessible the Boundary Waters is for people of all ages and abilities. Minnesota pioneered in wilderness experiences for people with disabilities; for economically disadvantaged peoples, especially inner-city youth; and for older individuals. That work continues. It has set an example for more inclusive eco-tourism nationally.

The benefits to the surrounding Minnesota communities that support the BWCAW and the North Woods tourism economy are myriad, not only with increased employment and business income, but with the amenities and lifestyle that come with living in a thriving travel destination that upholds protection of the natural environment for everyone. This translates to increased tax revenue to the State. Minnesota's second largest industry, after Agriculture, is Tourism.

Our nation, our Congress must finally provide permanent protection from environmental degradation to the BWCAW in furtherance of that begun with its creation by our federal government in 1926, made part of the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1964, and extended with the BWCAW Act of 1978. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness's place in our society is firmly established; the need to continue its protection and preservation for future generations is increasingly critical. We must do this now to avoid potential damage to or destruction of the Boundary Waters and its watershed that we hold dear. Prohibiting all toxic mining operations in its environs is a necessary first step. The risk of contaminating the Rainy River Watershed if sulfide-ore copper mining is allowed is simply too great.

Together with Save the Boundary Waters, I urge the Bureau of Land Management to take immediate steps to withdraw the 225,378 acres of national forest lands from mining leasing that the USDA Forest Service deems necessary to protect the Boundary Waters from the threat of endless toxic mining pollution.

Taking into consideration that the Bureau of Land Management's mission is "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations," a BLM decision to certify the withdrawal is a move that is consistent with that mission. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Bonnie (Richter) Hayskar

Sent by email to BLM_ES_Lands@blm.gov

cc: President Joe Biden

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland ✓

Governor Tim Walz

Senator Amy Klobuchar

Senator Tina Smith