

PROTECT MINNESOTA'S BOUNDARY WATERS WILDERNESS

From Metal Sulfide Mining

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area is a unique wilderness area that covers over one million acres within the Superior National Forest in northeastern Minnesota. It contains over a thousand lakes and attracts more than a quarter million visitors each year, making it the most visited wilderness area in the United States. Visitors come to experience its remote wilderness character – its untouched forests and spectacular chain of freshwater lakes – through canoeing, camping, and fishing. It is even one of National Geographic's 50 "Destinations of a Lifetime."

The Boundary Waters Wilderness is also the economic engine for the region. In 2012, tourism provided 12% of northeastern Minnesota jobs, while mining provided only 3.3%. The U.S. Forest Service has also estimated that the Superior National Forest contributes \$500 million to the regional economy each year, of which \$100 million is attributed to the Boundary Waters.



Sulfide Mining Activity in Northeastern Minnesota

Using best information available 10.1.2011

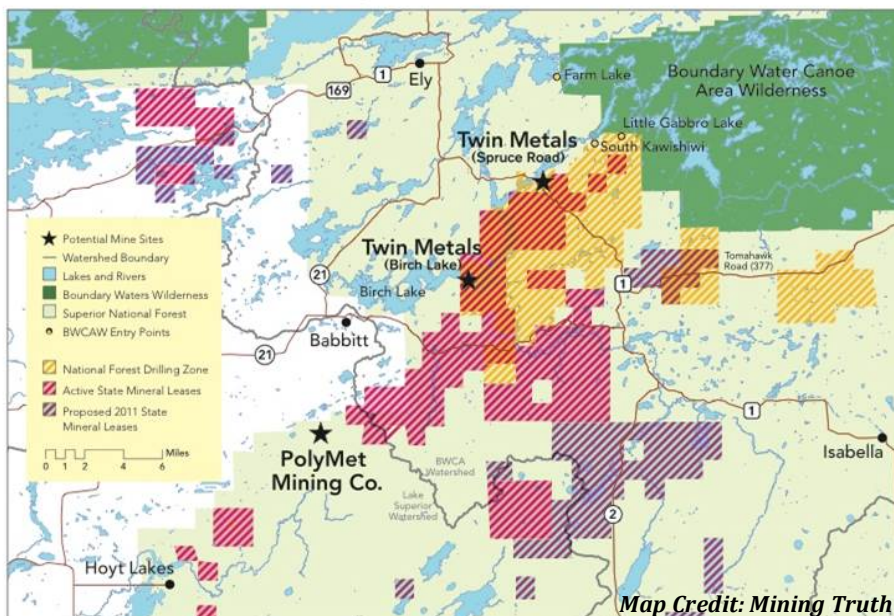


Photo Credit: Jeff Hagglund

This unique ecosystem is now at risk from large-scale sulfide mining, with multiple proposed sulfide mines in the region. Multinational mining corporations plan to mine copper, nickel, and other metals from sulfide ores. The **Twin Metals Mine**, a copper-sulfide mine that would be the largest underground mine in Minnesota history, is proposed near Birch Lake, southeast of Ely, MN. This proposed mine is within the Superior National Forest and **just three miles from the Boundary Waters**, in the Kawishiwi watershed that feeds directly into the Wilderness Area.



Protect Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness from Metal Sulfide Mining

Threat of Metal Sulfide Mining

The proposed Twin Metals Mine poses a significant and persistent risk to water quality and, in turn, the economic and ecological health of the region.

- In northern Minnesota, copper, nickel, and other metals are embedded in rock that contain sulfide. When sulfide minerals are exposed to air and water, they react to form sulfuric acid in a process known as acid mine drainage, which is highly toxic to fish and other aquatic life if uncontrolled.
- A University of Minnesota scientist, Lawrence A. Baker, Ph.D., has determined that, "the potential impacts of the proposed mine are high because this is a very large mine located in an ecologically sensitive area," and "rivers and lakes in this region are poorly buffered, making them highly sensitive to acidic mine drainage (AMD)."



The Boundary Waters Wilderness Needs Lasting Protection

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is a national treasure and an internationally significant ecosystem, with high recreational, ecological, cultural, and economic value. Local businesses and citizens who have strong connections to the Boundary Waters and rely on revenue generated by tourism have voiced strong opposition to the proposed sulfide mines within the Superior National Forest.

Paul Schurke, co-owner of Wintergreen Dogsled Lodge with his wife Sue, told the Twin Cities Blog,

"the South Kawishiwi River and the many lakes it flows through, including the one our lodge is on, is the lifeblood of our region's tourism economy. If metal sulfide mining pollutes the Kawishiwi watershed as it has 40 percent of the watersheds in the western U.S., it will devastate our community and damage the Boundary Waters, our nation's most popular and beloved wilderness area." *April 17, 2013*



Canoeists travel 2000 miles to deliver message of protection to White House. *Photo Credit: Nate Ptacek*



Photo Credit: River Point Outfitting Co.

The Solution

Earthworks is working with our partners in Minnesota to secure lasting protection for the Boundary Waters by securing a 20-year mineral withdrawal for public lands within the watershed.

