

Feb. 3, 2020

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Paul Gosar
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resource
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Lowenthal and Ranking Member Gosar:

We, the undersigned conservation, hunting and fishing organizations write to express our support for Reps. Betty McCollum (D-MN) and Francis Rooney's (R-FL) bipartisan Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act (H.R. 5598). H.R. 5598 withdraws 234,328 acres of public land and waters in the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest in the State of Minnesota from:

- (1) all forms of mineral entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws;
- (2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and
- (3) operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

We encourage you to consider the legislation in the House Natural Resources Committee.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), the most-visited Wilderness Area in the United States, is visited by thousands of hunters and anglers annually and benefits small businesses, lodges, outfitters and guide services that employ 17,000 people in the region. However, a proposed sulfide-ore copper mine is threatening the watershed of the BWCAW. Sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed would cause detrimental effects for hunting, angling, fish and wildlife and the local recreation industry. The mine could also diminish the quality of drinking water and affect human health nearby. A federal mineral withdrawal in the Superior National Forest is not only appropriate, but is the best way to ensure conservation efforts in the watershed continue unimpeded.

Our support for this legislation stems from concerns related to proposed sulfide-ore copper mining upstream of the BWCAW, Voyageurs National Park, and Canada's Quetico Provincial Park. The cumulative effects related to mineral development from proposed sulfide-ore copper mine sites, including acid mine drainage (AMD) and accidental discharges of wastewater contaminated with heavy metals, pose a threat to fish, wildlife and water quality downstream. The diversity and value of fish in the Boundary Waters are a direct result of past efforts to maintain the pristine nature and ecological integrity of the region. Scientific literature is clear – AMD and heavy metals released during the sulfide-ore copper mining process in the watershed of the Boundary Waters cause long-term declines in fish abundance, species number, genetic

diversity, help facilitate the establishment of invasive species, and may render fish unfit for human consumption.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The protection of the withdrawal area in the Superior National Forest ensures that hunting and fishing opportunities continue for future generations, and the recreation-based economy in the region remains a key economic driver for Minnesota. We encourage you to support the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act and consider it in committee.

Sincerely,

American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Sportfishing Association
American Woodcock Society
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.)
Fly Fishers International
Izaak Walton League of America
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Minnesota Trout Unlimited
National Deer Alliance
National Wildlife Federation
Quality Deer Management Association
Ruffed Grouse Society
Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

Cc: House Natural Resources Chairman Raul Grijalva and Ranking Member Rob Bishop