

May 14, 2021

The Honorable Raul Grijalva Chairman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

We, the undersigned conservation, hunting and fishing organizations write to express our support for Rep. Betty McCollum' (D-MN) Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act (H.R. 2794). H.R. 2794 would withdraw 234,328 acres of public land and waters in the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest in the State of Minnesota from proposed sulfide-ore copper mining upstream.

We encourage the House Natural Resources Committee to support the legislation. 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.

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 BWCAW 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 BWCAW would cause long-term declines in fish abundance, species number and genetic diversity, help facilitate the establishment of invasive species and may render fish unfit for human consumption.

The undersigned coalition is not opposed to mining on all public lands, and fully supports remediation efforts of abandoned mine lands for the purposes of expanding public access for hunting and fishing, and the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat. We recognize the importance of priority landscapes, such as the BWCAW, to the long-term conservation of fish and game, which contribute to world-class hunting and fishing opportunities in the United States. BWCAW is an iconic American landscape that is too valuable, and requires permanent protection to ensure future generations have access to hunt and fish on public lands.

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 unimpeded for future generations, and the recreation-based economy in the region remains a key economic driver for Minnesotans and the region. We encourage your support for the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Bass Angler Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.)

Fly Fishers International

International Game Fish Association

Izaak Walton League of North America

Minnesota Conservation Federation

Minnesota Council of Trout Unlimited

National Deer Association

National Wildlife Federation

North American Falconer's Association

North American Grouse Partnership

Orion, The Hunter's Institute

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Trout Unlimited

Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters