

Administration Reverses Boundary Waters Mining Ban; Minnesota BHA Pushes Back

Public lands sportsmen unite to oppose development within wilderness area watershed

ELY, Minn. – A Trump administration decision to reopen lands near the Boundary Waters Wilderness to industrial mining drew strong criticism from Backcountry Hunters & Anglers members in Minnesota today. Announced abruptly by the administration just days before Christmas, the decision resurrects a controversial proposal by an international mining company to develop large-scale copper mines within the Boundary Waters watershed.

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, which has a large, established chapter in Minnesota and members all over North America who treasure Minnesota's backcountry lands, is strongly invested in the future of the Boundary Waters, the nation's most-visited wilderness.

"We are shocked and frankly furious with the Trump administration and Secretary Zinke's decision to renew the Twin Metals mining leases," said BHA MN Chapter Co-chair Aaron Hebeisen, who lives in Mora. "This announcement comes as a slap in the face to the Roosevelt legacy that the administration has claimed they want to perpetuate. Since their actions seem to speak louder than their words, you can bet ours will, too – and they will be heard."

"The renewal of the hard rock mining leases near the Boundary Waters is a dire threat to my family's outdoor life," said BHA MN Chapter Co-chair Erik Jensen, a Minneapolis resident. "I'm taking my 13-year-old daughter there this spring to fish walleyes and see pictographs painted by Ojibwe hunters long ago. She's so eager to go she's helping pay for it with babysitting money."

"The fact that the Interior Department lacked the courage even to issue a press release on this decision shows that they know it's the wrong choice," said Erik Packard of Rosemount, treasurer of MN BHA and founder of Veterans for Wilderness. "They are too cowardly to face the people who do not want to risk damaging the Boundary Waters because they know it's wrong."

"Interior Secretary Zinke says he wants to emulate Theodore Roosevelt," said Lukas Leaf, a MN BHA board member and outreach coordinator for Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters, "but this shameful decision goes against everything Roosevelt stood for. This is clearly a Christmas present to a foreign mining company and the most anti-public lands representatives in Congress. It's up to us to defend our public lands, waters and sporting heritage."

BHA President and CEO Land Tawney, who will be in Minnesota next week to keynote a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources event, offered the following summation:

"Allowing a foreign owned mining company that pays no royalties to take minerals from our public lands – our lands – is bad enough. Permitting mining a quarter-mile from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, the most visited wilderness in America, is despicable. And their decision to announce this on the Friday before Christmas? Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and President Donald Trump should be ashamed. This is a sad day for our conservation legacy, and Theodore Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave."

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<http://www.backcountryhunters.org/>

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers · 725 W Alder, Suite 11, Missoula, MT 59802, United States