

Potential Sulfide-Ore Copper Mining on Superior National Forest Lands in the Boundary Waters Watershed:
Timeline of Key Benchmarks & Potential Next Steps

1873	Public domain lands in Minnesota withdrawn from General Mining Law of 1872
1909	Superior National Forest established
1909	Boundary Waters Treaty signed by Canada and the United States, requiring that neither country pollute boundary waters or waters that flow across the boundary
1946	Congress authorizes mineral leasing on acquired national forest lands in Minnesota where leasing will not interfere with primary purposes for which the land was acquired
1950	Contemplating granite, gravel, and iron ore mining that would not interfere with recreational uses, Congress authorizes mineral leasing on public domain national forest lands in Minnesota upon Forest Service consent
1964	Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness designated by the Wilderness Act
1966	BLM issues to predecessor of Twin Metals Minnesota two federal preference right mineral leases (MNES 1352 and MNES 1353) covering nearly 5,000 acres of the Superior National Forest adjacent to the Wilderness for a primary term of 20 years
1978	Boundary Waters Wilderness Act bans mining within the Wilderness and establishes a 220,000-acre Mining Protection Zone along entry corridors
1989 & 2004	1352 and 1353 renewed for 10 year periods
Oct. 2012	Twin Metals applies for a third 10-year renewal of 1352 and 1353
May 2012	BLM issues 28 prospecting permits covering over 38,000 acres of the Superior National Forest in the Boundary Waters watershed
Mar. 8, 2016	Solicitor of the Department of the Interior Hilary Tompkins issues a legal opinion finding that BLM has discretion to grant or deny Twin Metals' lease renewal application
Dec. 14, 2016	Following a 30-day public comment period and two public meetings, Forest Service issues decision withholding its consent to renew 1352 and 1353
Dec. 15, 2016	BLM denies renewal of 1352 and 1353, and the leases expire
Jan. 13, 2017	Forest Service files an application to withdraw from mineral leasing approximately 234,000 acres of Superior National Forest lands in the Boundary Waters watershed, initiating a 2-year segregation, and issues a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement
Mar.-Aug. 2017	Forest Service holds three public meetings and receives more than 125,000 public comments on the proposed withdrawal, with approximately 98% of the over 81,000 unique comments and 94% of the over 44,000 form comments favoring withdrawal
Dec. 22, 2017	Acting Principal Deputy Solicitor of the Department of the Interior Daniel Jorjani issues a legal opinion withdrawing and replacing the Tompkins opinion and finding that BLM lacked discretion to deny Twin Metals' lease renewal application

- Jan. 26, 2018 Forest Service downgrades withdrawal study from an environmental impact statement to an environmental assessment and initiates a second public comment period
- Feb. 28, 2018 Forest Service receives an additional nearly 56,000 comments in favor of withdrawal; altogether approximately 98% of the over 180,000 comments received favored withdrawal
- May 2, 2018 BLM rescinds its December 2016 denial of the renewal of 1352 and 1353 and reinstates the expired leases and Twin Metals' renewal application
- June 2018 Three lawsuits filed in federal district court in DC challenging the reinstatement decision
- Sept. 6, 2018 Following announcements by President Trump and Vice President Pence at rallies in Duluth, MN, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announces in a press release that the Forest Service is cancelling its application for withdrawal, and the public process and development of an environmental assessment are terminated
- Dec. 20, 2018 BLM announces its intent to renew 1352 and 1353 and releases an environmental assessment on the proposed addition of terms and conditions to the leases for a 38-day public comment period that spans the 35-day partial government shutdown
- May 15, 2019 BLM renews 1352 and 1353 and posts updated list of 39 pending preference right lease and prospecting permit applications
- June 20, 2019 The Wilderness Society sues the Trump Administration for its failure to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests for the cancelled withdrawal study documents
- Nov. 22, 2019 State of MN announces it will not participate in federal environmental review of forthcoming mine plan of operations and will instead conduct its own process
- Dec. 17, 2019 A provision in the House appropriations bill for 2020 that would have compelled the Forest Service to complete the cancelled withdrawal study was removed from the final spending bill at the last minute following White House interference
- Dec. 18, 2019 Twin Metals submits its mine plan of operations to BLM and scoping environmental assessment worksheet to the MN Department of Natural Resources
- Jan. 15, 2020 Rep. McCollum introduces Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act to permanently withdraw the watershed from new mineral leases and prospecting permits

Potential Next Steps

- Additional Forest Service and/or BLM authorizations for exploration activities on 1352 and 1353
- Federal and State environmental review processes of mine plan of operations and associated permitting decisions
- BLM issuance of 1-3 new preference right leases; Forest Service consent required
- BLM issuance of new prospecting permits or extension of existing prospecting permits; Forest Service consent required