

Response to Questions from Rep. Alan Lowenthal to Ms. Julia Ruelle, Board Member, Kids for the Boundary Waters
Julia Ruelle

1. You said in your testimony that your generation will have to deal with the ramifications of the choices the people in this room will make. And you are quite right, we should be making choices with futures generations in mind, not just corporations.

We know it is not entirely fair for us to ask you to speak on behalf of your entire generation, but what would you and your peers recommend to Congress regarding the future of the Boundary Waters? How can we best protect this place so close to your heart?

Thank you for your question, Mr. Lowenthal. I have been working with youth passionate about the future of the Boundary Waters for almost five years. We always wished for a bill that would permanently protect the Boundary Waters from the repercussions of the type of mining we are discussing. Representative McCollum's bill is exactly what we always wished for, and saw as a goal for the future. I am over the moon that this is now the bill on the table. Passing HR 2794 is the best way to protect this treasure for all generations.

Furthermore, protecting the Boundary Waters is central to another issue that is pressing for youth: climate change. Protecting the Boundary Waters as a major carbon sink is crucial to our response to the climate crisis. The Boundary Waters is dominantly a boreal forest, which "stores more carbon than any other terrestrial ecosystem - almost twice as much per acre as tropical rainforests" (Rom 2020). These forests are vulnerable to the acid mine drainage and physical destruction that would result from the proposed mine.

Additionally, the 2014 Pre-Feasibility Report for the proposed Twin Metals mine estimates 23,444,730 metric tons of carbon dioxide will be released over the 20 years of mining, which is equivalent to the annual greenhouse emissions of 5 million cars on the road. The metals extracted that would supposedly aid in the development of clean energy technologies are low-grade and can be extracted elsewhere at higher densities. Copper is abundant around the world and the US is already a strong importer of this mineral - it is not necessary to mine the low grade copper in this delicate location. The United States has strong trade relationships with Australia, Canada, and Norway to supply nickel and cobalt, which are both in extremely low percentages in this location, and therefore our country does not need this mine for economic security.

So, to address the climate crisis, it is crucial that we preserve the Boundary Waters Wilderness to sequester carbon from the atmosphere and mediate the already critical carbon dioxide emissions. Building this mine would doubly worsen the crisis by releasing a massive amount of carbon dioxide and destroying one of the best resources we have for climate resilience, all for low grade copper that will have an insignificant effect on the demand for copper in new technologies. For this reason, passing H.R. 2794 is crucial to protecting this special place as well as a powerful defense against the effects of climate change.

