

Questions for the Record by Republican Members  
Responses by Mr. Tom Tidwell, June 3, 2022

Questions from Rep. Tiffany to Mr. Tom Tidwell, Former Chief, U.S. Forest Service

1. During the hearing you suggested that Arizona or other arid regions might be better areas to mine than northern Minnesota. What projects in Arizona or elsewhere in the United States do you support that can produce nickel and cobalt which are key metals to power the clean energy revolution?

Answer: There are several operating copper mines in Arizona, Utah and Nevada that are located in arid areas that when leaks, spills or blowing dust occur there is at least some opportunity to remediate without permanently contaminating ground water and surface water which would be extremely difficult if even possible in the water dominated headwaters of the Boundary Waters. I would not oppose mining in Arizona and other locations when; 1) in places where risks can be minimized, monitoring can be effective, and remediation can be quick and complete; 2) it is environmentally and economically feasible, where the required science-based analysis, including ground water impact analysis and modeling, have been completed and approvals from the various Federal and State and local government agencies have been granted and; 3) financial assurances and adequate bonding is in place to guarantee that the mining proponent has the financial means to cover costs for remediation and reclamation for the life of the project and beyond to insure the public taxpayers do not have to cover the cost.

With nickel and cobalt, there are copper and nickel reserves in Minnesota that are outside of the headwaters of the Boundary Waters including 14 out of 19 deposits in the Duluth complex and the high-grade deposits in the Mid-Continent Rift. There is an operating nickel mine in Michigan. There are also cobalt deposits and proposed mines in other states such as Idaho. However, United States has very little nickel deposits and known reserves would make up a very small percentage of United States annual consumption. Twin Metals' projection that nickel recovered as a by-product of its proposed copper mine would only potentially produce 3.6% of apparent US annual consumption of nickel and 1.5 percent of cobalt. There are reports that through recycling and recovery through smelting and refining, the United States could recover as much nickel and cobalt as we have mineral reserves. In addition, Canada has 28 times the nickel reserves as the United States along with other trading partners (Norway, Finland, and Australia). (USGS OFR-1127, p.5). The United States currently imports 57% of its cobalt needs from Canada, Norway, Japan and Finland. (USGS OFR-1127. p.29)

2. Are you currently being compensated, or have you ever been compensated by Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness or any environmental organization who opposes mining in Minnesota? If yes, please list compensation from each organization per year for the last three years.

Answer: No. I have not been compensated by Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness or any environmental organization. Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness has reimbursed me for airfare and hotel stays to attend Congressional hearings in 2020 and in 2022.

3. Attached and submitted for the record:

1. May 28, 2022 Editorial by the Star Tribune
2. May 23, Commentary in the Duluth News Tribune by Tom Tidwell