



Corey Fisher
Public Land Policy Director

June 3, 2022

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal, Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Pete Stauber, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
House Committee on Natural Resources
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

RE: Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act (H.R. 2794)

Dear Chairman Lowenthal and Ranking Member Stauber:

On behalf of our 340,000 members and supporters across the country, Trout Unlimited writes to express our support for the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act (H.R. 2794) and to thank you for holding a hearing to fully and fairly evaluate this important piece of legislation and related issues, including critical minerals.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) is home to sensitive populations of native lake trout and is the most-visited Wilderness Area in the United States. Over 150,000 anglers and outdoor enthusiasts visit the BWCA annually, supporting small businesses, lodges, outfitters and guide services that employ 17,000 people in the region. However, the area is seeing renewed interest in mineral development, including a proposed sulfide-ore copper mine upstream of the BWCAW. Sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed could cause detrimental effects on fish and recreational fishing, including lakes, streams supporting coldwater fisheries. A federal mineral withdrawal for the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest would prevent these impacts and ensure that the BWCAW remains a special part of our natural heritage for generations to come.

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 potential cumulative effects related to mineral development from sulfide-ore copper mining operations, including acid mine drainage (AMD) and accidental discharges of wastewater contaminated with heavy metals, pose a very real threat to fish, wildlife and downstream water quality. Trout Unlimited is not categorically opposed to mining, but the risk to this ecosystem outweighs the potential social and economic benefits of mineral development. While modern mining has made laudable improvements in safety, operations and reclamation, the mining industry's track record is not perfect, nor can it be expected to be perfect in such a water-rich and pristine environment. For BWCAW watershed, the only responsible mining is no mining.

At the hearing on May 24th, much attention was paid to the issue of critical minerals and meeting the nation's need for minerals like cobalt and nickel that are the raw materials of renewable energy technologies. While this is a significant issue that Trout Unlimited takes seriously, the U.S. can meet these needs without putting at risk important water and public land resources, like those in the Boundary Waters. We must prioritize and fully utilize alternatives, such as recycling, substitutes to

Our mission is to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon.

National Office: 1777 N Kent St., Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22209

T: (406) 546-2979 cfisher@tu.org www.tu.org

critical minerals, reprocessing old mine waste piles and ash material, and engineering advancements to reduce use and need for new mines.

Additionally, abandoned mine cleanups have the potential to not only make the environment cleaner, but to also produce minerals like nickel and rare earths that are present in mine waste. Investing in research and development will help to deploy these technologies economically at scale and this is a key part of the critical minerals puzzle moving forward. Moreover, supplies from allied nations and from foreign mines certified by third-party auditors are part of a secure supply chain. Simply put, mining is not appropriate in all locations, and our demand for critical minerals doesn't mean that we have to jeopardize special places like the Boundary Waters.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our continued support for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and again, thank you for holding a hearing on this bill. We maintain that the protection of the withdrawal area in the Superior National Forest ensures that hunting and fishing opportunities continue for future generations, and the recreation-based economy in the region remains a key economic driver for Minnesota. We encourage a swift markup of the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act and for Congress to pass this critical legislation into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corey Fisher', written in a cursive style.

Corey Fisher