

BWCAW - SNF Land Exchange Fact Sheet

Congressman Cravaack Giving Away Superior National Forest to Mining Companies

Will Senators Franken, and Klobuchar Do the Same?

Alert! Congressman Cravaack Introduces Special Favors Bill for the Benefit of Multinational Mining Corporations Bill Will Allow Tens of Thousands of Acres of Protected SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST Public Lands to be Strip Mined!

Bad Deal for the Nation and Minnesota's School Children, Good Deal for the Mining Companies

Senators Franken and Klobuchar should refrain from introducing any kind of school trust land exchange legislation within the U.S. Senate. Legislation already introduced by Representative Cravaack, **Minnesota Education Investment and Employment Act H.R. 5544** is moving through the Republican led House that would exchange large tracts of Superior National Forest with State lands currently located within the boundaries of the BWCAW. The areas slated for exchange are being aggressively explored for minerals. Removing them from Federal ownership would remove Federal protections regarding the surface area, and would facilitate the opening of a copper sulfide strip mining district within the Lake Superior watershed, the Superior National Forest and bordering the BWCAW. The reasons are as follows:



Acid Mine Drainage in a Lake

- **Included in H.R.5544** are parcels designated in Minnesota SF 1750, with priority to the Mesabi Purchase Unit. Changing these parcels from Federal to State ownership would be a strip mining give-away to mining companies currently exploring for copper-nickel sulfide deposits: Teck Cominco, Twin Metals, Encampment Resources, and PolyMet. [See Map](#)
- **PolyMet's** proposed copper-nickel open pits, though not on school trust lands, would be located upon what is now Superior National Forest. According to Forest Service comments in PolyMet's Draft EIS, "It is the position of the United States that the mineral rights reserved ... do not include the right to open pit mine the National Forest lands." A Federal land exchange would be a windfall to PolyMet and other companies seeking to strip mine the low-grade disseminated ores of the Arrowhead.
- **The** Minnesota State Constitution does not require school trust lands to generate income. However, it does stipulate that any income generated from school trust lands must go to the trust.
- **According to the** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Lands and Minerals Divisions, if the mineral rights on school trust lands are held by **private** mining interests, they will not generate money for the school trust fund. Of the 41,000 acres identified thus far in behind closed door negotiations, less than 1% contain school trust land mineral rights - most are held by private mineral interest.
- **Any** revenues generated by an exchange and subsequent mining are highly unpredictable and questionable since the vast majority of areas considered for exchange have the mineral estate severed and held by private mineral interests (e.g. RGGS Lands & Minerals owns mineral rights at the proposed PolyMet Mine site where the Forest Service prohibits strip mining on protected National Forest lands).
- **The** specific acreage and location of land to be exchanged is ambiguous and unspecified.
- **H.R. 5544** shows no sign of being in the public interest, as required by Federal law and is bad public policy.
- **The** laws of the land established to protect the Superior National Forest, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, the Lake Superior watershed and the entire State of Minnesota, would be weakened by this legislation, and bypassed through land exchanges.
- **The** approximately 100,000 acres of severed mineral rights remaining on land exchanged from within the BWCAW allow for the potential of future land exchanges, and the continued dismantling of Superior National Forest.
- **Any** land exchange bill would set a precedent for future special favor land exchange legislation demanded by mining companies. The disposition and divestiture of Federally held land should and must allow for

the public to have input to the process. Current Federal law allows for this. This bill would remove public input to the process, for publicly held National Forest Service land.

- Existing law has been carefully considered and implemented over decades. Passage of this bill would supersede, for one special interest, previously enacted law intended to protect and preserve public land.
- Too secretive for general public scrutiny. The so-called hybrid land exchange compromise was developed by a legislative committee, that included the mining interests. Missing in the legislative fast tracking is [Native American Tribal consultation](#) as well as any public input and participation.
- Turning the Arrowhead Region of Minnesota into a sulfide mining district would be destroying the existing lake district and its current economy and real estate base. Mining displaces existing economic development and diminishes the use of the land for other purposes.
- It is known that mining in sulfide ores creates water pollution that requires perpetual treatment, that such treatment is extremely costly, and that treated water does not have the same characteristics as the original water quality of the watershed.
- The mining of less-than-1% ores leaves behind 99% waste rock. Such mining is energy, fuel, and resource intensive—generating a greenhouse gas footprint that far exceeds any benefit the metals have in the wind and solar industries. Such renewable energy industries need to use recycled metals.
- The destruction of wetlands and forests for mining purposes destroys their carbon (and mercury) sequestration values, and contributes to local/global climate change.
- The current economy and character of Minnesota's Arrowhead will be exchanged for a minimal number of mining jobs that will last only as long as the market will sustain the mining of such marginal highly disseminated low grade ores. Job number prospects are based entirely on mining company speculation and have no way of being verified.
- The bill abrogates the Federal government's responsibility to consider the negative effects of the pollution that will be caused as a result of the economic activity enabled by the exchange. The EPA has identified pollution from hardrock mining as the most pervasive form of water pollution in the USA. Removing Federal review and public scrutiny from development of these lands within the Superior National Forest would be blatantly irresponsible and a perpetual threat to public health & safety in northeast Minnesota.

It is probable that Senators Franken and Klobuchar do not wish to leave behind as part of their Senatorial legacy the dismantling of Superior National Forest and degradation of the BWCAW and Lake Superior watersheds. A far better choice would be a complete sale of state lands within the BWCAW to the Federal government, thus generating money for the school trust fund without destroying our natural treasures for future generations of school children. Alternatively the school trust could collect a percent of the BWCAW user fee currently charged to wilderness visitors by the U.S. Forest Service. With the BWCAW user fee scenario, the State would continue to own the land in the Boundary Waters and would continue to have a voice in management decisions. The history of sulfide mining is one of toxic environmental degradation with no evidence that mining for copper, nickel, and other non-ferrous metals in the water-rich environment of northeast Minnesota can be done without harming our water resources, our health, and the ecology of our land.

Please phone & e-mail Senators [Franken](#) and [Klobuchar](#) and ask them to oppose any kind of special favors land exchange legislation that benefits multinational mining interests.

Senator Franken:

(202) 224-5641 (D.C. office)
(651) 221-1016 (St. Paul office)

Senator Klobuchar:

(202) 224-3244 (D.C. office)
(612) 727-5220 (Minneapolis office)

[Don't give lands to mining companies in the name of schoolchildren](#) MinnPost.com [Web Action Alert](#)

[Minnesota's 8th District Congressman Chip Cravaack invents his own definition of truth](#) Duluth Reader

Save Our Sky Blue Waters www.sosbluewater.org

Save Lake Superior Association www.savelakesuperior.org

Friends of the Cloquet Valley State Forest www.friendscvsvf.org

