



July 9, 2008

The Honorable Betty McCollum
United States House of Representatives
1714 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2304

Dear Congresswoman McCollum:

Enclosed is a letter the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness are submitting on behalf of a coalition of groups opposing legislation that would authorize the sale of National Forest land in Minnesota to a mining company. We hope you will find the letter informative and will join us in opposing this legislation.

If you have any questions, please contact our Policy Director, Brian Pasko, at 612-332-9630 or brian@friends-bwca.org.

Sincerely,

Ron Meador
Executive Director



July 9, 2008

The Honorable Michele Bachmann
United States House of Representatives
412 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2306

Dear Congresswoman Bachmann:

Our coalition of groups representing thousands of Minnesota households and diverse perspectives has united to oppose special-interest legislation that would fast-track the sale of public land for a private mining operation in northern Minnesota. This bill would circumvent long-established procedures by directing the sale before any environmental review of the land exchange and without any analysis of the public's benefit.

H.R. 4292, also known as the Superior National Forest Land Adjustment Act of 2007, which has been introduced by Representative James Oberstar, would authorize the sale of approximately 6,700 acres of land owned by the U.S. Forest Service to a privately-owned mining corporation (PolyMet Mining Corp.) for the purpose of constructing a copper-nickel strip mine. While our groups hold different views on mining and its future in northern Minnesota, we are firmly united in the conviction that H.R. 4292 would establish a poor public lands policy here in Minnesota and nationwide.

The proposed legislation would carve out an exception to the law for a single private corporation, rather than following a long-established and well-tested U.S. Forest Service land exchange process.

H.R. 4292 would create a dangerous precedent for the disposal of Minnesota's public lands to mining corporations. This is of particular concern because precious metal exploration is actively occurring on wide swaths of Forest Service land and other valuable forest lands, including

pristine lands and critical wetlands very near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park.

This legislation would undermine open processes that provide your constituents the opportunity for meaningful public participation in decisions regarding Minnesota's public lands.

In addition, the sale of this land would provide a huge windfall to a private corporation while divesting the Forest Service and other Federal agencies of their responsibility to oversee mineral extraction and appropriate replacement of public lands sold to private parties.

PolyMet's NorthMet Mine proposal is the first copper-nickel strip mine proposed in our state. The proposal is highly controversial due to potential impacts on wetlands, habitat, water quality and tribal rights. We are not seeking federal legislation to prevent development of the mine. Our purpose in opposing H.R. 4292 is to insist that Congress decline to short-circuit a fair, open and time-tested process for balancing public and private interests in evaluating proposals to dispose of public land.

The undersigned groups and the many citizens they represent respectfully request your opposition to H.R. 4292 or any similar proposal. If we can provide your office with additional information or be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to call upon us individually or collectively.

Sincerely,

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Indigenous Environmental Network
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Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
Save Lake Superior Association
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
The Wilderness Society



July 9, 2008

The Honorable Norm Coleman
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2303

Dear Senator Coleman:

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The proposed legislation would carve out an exception to the law for a single private corporation, rather than following a long-established and well-tested U.S. Forest Service land exchange process.

H.R. 4292 or any Senate version of this legislation would create a dangerous precedent for the disposal of Minnesota's public lands to mining corporations. This is of particular concern because precious metal exploration is actively occurring on wide swaths of Forest Service land

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July 9, 2008

The Honorable Keith Ellison
United States House of Representatives
1130 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2305

Dear Congressman Ellison:

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July 9, 2008

The Honorable John Kline
United States House of Representatives
1429 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2302

Dear Congressman Kline:

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July 9, 2008

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2304

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

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July 9, 2008

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
United States House of Representatives
2211 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2307

Dear Congressman Peterson:

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July 9, 2008

The Honorable Jim Ramstad
United States House of Representatives
103 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2303

Dear Congressman Ramstad:

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July 9, 2008

The Honorable Tim Walz
United States House of Representatives
1529 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2301

Dear Congressman Walz:

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