



Petition to oppose HR 4292: “Superior National Forest Land Adjustment Act of 2007

Rep. James Oberstar has introduced **HR 4292** which mandates the sale of 6,700 acres of Superior National Forest land near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness specifically for the purposes of strip mining, to PolyMet, Inc., a Canadian company hoping to open the first metallic sulfide copper strip mine in Minnesota. PolyMet’s strip mine plan calls for the destruction of 1,200 acres of wetlands. If permitted, this would be the single largest destruction of wetlands in Minnesota’s history.

The forced sale would be conducted without the normal public input and without environmental review of the land exchange. This is a separate requirement from the mine plan review and is contrary to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). No administrative appeal of the sale is allowed under HR 4292 and the Forest Service (USFS) would be responsible for the replacement of wetlands.

This legislation is a special favor for the benefit of a single Canadian mining company. This bill would bypass existing law and the normal process by which National Forest land is transferred to private entities through a proven land exchange process, which requires environmental review and verification that the swap is in the public’s interest. The mining company controls the mineral rights of this land, but the Forest Service owns the surface rights. The Forest Service says it cannot allow a strip mine on this forestland because of the environmental protections that currently protect the forest, water and wildlife located there. Because PolyMet’s plans call for a massively destructive open pit strip mine, PolyMet needs to privatize the USFS land before its plans for a copper strip mine can go forward.

The main purpose of this bill is to remove long standing environmental review and protections from public lands. This legislation would create a precedent by which the Superior National Forest could sell public lands each time a mine gets close to the permitting phase. This act relieves the Forest Service of their responsibilities to protect public lands in Minnesota. This could become a justification elsewhere; each time a federal land agency chooses to ignore its mandated management responsibilities in order to rapidly facilitate mining operations. Passage of HR 4292 would set a precedent for the sale of public lands to mining companies across the nation where the Forest Service does not own the mineral rights to its lands. Particularly, it would pave the way for the sale of public lands throughout Minnesota’s Arrowhead Region.

I, the undersigned, oppose HR 4292 or any legislation that would 1) set or reinforce a precedent of selling public land for private profit, 2) singles out one company for special treatment, 3) circumvents the National Environmental Policy Act and the land-exchange Environmental Impact Statement process, 4) removes environmental protections from public lands and places wetland replacement responsibility upon the USFS, 5) allows strip mining in National Forests, 6) eliminates public input and appeal.

Name (print)	Signature	Address	Phone	E-mail

(Please return to [Save Our Sky Blue Waters](http://www.sosbluewater.org), P.O. Box 3661 • Duluth, MN • 55803)

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