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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 14, 2016

### **Citing Risk to Wilderness, US Forest Service Considering Not Renewing Sulfide-Ore Mining Leases That Threaten Minnesota's Iconic Boundary Waters**

Yesterday, the US Forest Service (USFS) announced it was considering protecting Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from the threat of sulfide-ore copper mining by withholding consent to the renewal of two mineral leases. The leases, held by Twin Metals Minnesota, which is owned by the Chilean mining giant Antofagasta, expired nearly two and a half years ago on Dec. 31, 2013, and are up for renewal.

"The Boundary Waters Wilderness is a world-class fishing, hunting and all-around outdoors destination," said Scott Hed, outreach director for Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters. "Its water is some of the cleanest on this earth and the Wilderness is a major driver in the economy of Northern Minnesota. The Forest Service's announcement recognizes the significance of the Boundary Waters as a unique and pristine ecosystem and acknowledges the serious dangers posed by sulfide-ore copper mining."

In the announcement, the USFS said that as it considers withholding consent on the leases it would allow for public input before any final decision is made. An open house will be held on July 13 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth Minnesota. Anglers and hunters need to plan to be in Duluth to stand up for this north country gem.

While the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the holder of the Twin Metals leases, because the land in question is in the Superior National Forest, the USFS has a right of consent to any lease renewal. In a letter sent last Monday, the BLM asked the USFS whether it would grant or withhold consent for renewal of the leases.

Mineral leases held by Twin Metals were issued in 1966, before any environmental regulations existed, including the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the law that requires environmental impacts to be considered before decisions are made where mines can be sited. These leases have never undergone environmental review, and sportsmen know that this area deserves to be critically reviewed before being placed at risk.

In addition to denying the leases, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters is also urging the US Forest Service to ask Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to withdraw the federally-owned minerals within the Boundary Waters watershed from the federal mineral leasing program. This would protect the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining for twenty years.

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Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters was formed to help gain permanent protection for the Boundary Waters. More information available at [SportsmenfortheBoundaryWaters.org](http://SportsmenfortheBoundaryWaters.org). Contact Jeremy Drucker, [jeremy@savetheboundarywaters.org](mailto:jeremy@savetheboundarywaters.org), (612) 670-9650.