

Congressman's View: Anti-mining, Anti-Northland bill demands to be rejected

From the column: "The Superior National Forest is a working forest, and its forest plan explicitly includes mining as a desired condition. The proposed Twin Metals mine is outside of both the wilderness area and the Mining Protection Area set up in the 1978 BWCA Act. It's in an industrial region with existing and former mine pits, logging roads, quarries and more."



Opinion by U.S. Congressman Pete Stauber

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As the member of Congress from Minnesota's 8th Congressional District, I am blessed to represent mining country. I'm proud of my constituents who work in our mines developing the resources we need for America's steel. The Duluth Complex — which accounts for 95% of America's nickel resources, 88% of our cobalt, and more than one-third of our copper — offers an opportunity for my constituents unlike any other in the world. We can mine the resources to supply the United States and the rest of the world with the precious metals we desperately need for modern life — instead of relying on China, Russia, and the Congo.

However, members of Congress from far outside our region are working hand-in-hand with the Biden administration to deny my constituents opportunity while those same D.C. and Twin Cities politicians ensure America's supply chains remain reliant on foreign sources. The so-called Boundary Waters Pollution Prevention Act introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum, D-St. Paul, is anti-science legislation that would arbitrarily withdraw more than 234,000 acres from mineral development in the Superior National Forest. It is on tap for a legislative hearing on Tuesday, May 24, in the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee.

Fortunately, I serve as the top Republican on this key panel, and my pro-mining Republican colleagues and I will expose this legislation for what it truly is: another chapter in the radical left's assault on American natural-resource development. Our region is no stranger to these attacks.

With only 16 days remaining as vice president, Joe Biden and the administration of President Barack Obama initiated a unique partisan "study" that would lead to a baked-in 20-year moratorium on mining in the Superior National Forest. And they withdrew the two federal leases that had been held since 1966, targeting the Twin Metals project. President Donald Trump rightfully reversed this decision, reinstated the long-held leases, and canceled the political study. However, just this past February, Biden, now president, continued to [fulfill his promise to cut mining jobs](#) and endanger America's national security by once again going back to his playbook from the Obama administration.

The bill from Rep. McCollum takes the Biden withdrawal a step even further. It would permanently withdraw the Superior National Forest from mining. Make no mistake: This is an assault on our way of life.

For starters, the Twin Metals project signed a Project Labor Agreement with the Iron Range Building and Construction trades, meaning union workers would build and construct the mine. This legislation [insults northern Minnesotans](#) and disregards our desire for family-sustaining, middle-class wages. We need these jobs. Schools are closing. Towns are losing grocery stores. It's imperative we reinvigorate our Iron Range communities with quality careers.

America and the world desperately need the resources we have in our own backyard. Right now, our supply chains are a national-security risk. As Biden and Democrats in Congress ironically pine for more windmills, solar panels, and electric vehicles, they shut down the Duluth Complex. In fact, the nonpartisan International Energy Agency [estimates](#) that demand for copper will increase by 40%, demand for nickel and cobalt will rise by 60%, and mining in general will need to rise sixfold.

Right now, we import those minerals from Russia, which dominates the international nickel market and uses our reliance on its natural resources to feed Vladimir Putin's atrocious war in Ukraine. We also import minerals from the Congo, the world's top cobalt producer, which is infamous for horrific child slave labor practices.

Lastly, do not let the bill's name fool you. In reality, this legislation has nothing to do with the Boundary Waters. The Superior National Forest is a working forest, and its forest plan explicitly includes mining as a [desired condition](#). The proposed Twin Metals mine is outside of both the wilderness area and the Mining Protection Area set up in the 1978 BWCA Act. It's in an industrial region with existing and former mine pits, logging roads, quarries and more.

Let alone, the Canadian New Gold Rainy River Mine — an open-pit, nonferrous mining operation — sits a mere 40 miles north of my district in the very same watershed.

The Twin Metals project, on the other hand, would be an entirely underground mine, using high-tech dry-stack tailings methods that, [by definition, run](#) no risk of harmful mine drainage.

Let's remember the words of the late Congressman Jim Oberstar, the Democrat who came before me from our district. He said it best in his letter to President Jimmy Carter in 1978 when discussing mining and logging: "I urge you not to trade off the lifestyles, livelihoods, and legitimate desires of the people of northeastern Minnesota for equitable treatment in favor of the vague and ill-defined interests of other, perhaps more clamorous constituencies far removed from the BWCA."

Congressman Oberstar was right back then, and his words remain relevant today. This withdrawal put forth by President Biden and Rep. McCollum on Tuesday trades off our lifestyles. It keeps America import-reliant on hostile foreign nations for critical minerals needed for defense, energy, and everyday life. And it is an insult to the union women and men who live here, who want to raise families here, and who want to construct and operate the Twin Metals mine.

On Tuesday, my Republican colleagues and I will stand together against this Democrat-led, permanent anti-mining bill. I will fight for our families and our future. Mining is a path to a brighter future, and the Iron Range will lead it.

Pete Stauber of Hermantown is the Republican representative of Minnesota's 8th Congressional District and is the ranking member of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee.



U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber