

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

August 27, 2024

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning
Director
Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland and Director Stone-Manning:

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) is continuing to investigate the cancellation of two decades-old mineral leases in the Superior National Forest (Twin Metals leases) and the withdrawal of 225,504 acres of mineral-rich land in the same area from mineral exploration and development (Superior Withdrawal). The Committee sent the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) two previous letters—on November 20, 2023 and January 8, 2024—to which we received inadequate responses.

Although some elements of the Committee’s requests were included in your answer, the production received was largely unresponsive. For example, the Committee received no explanation of how cancelling the Twin Metals leases or withdrawing hundreds of thousands of acres of mineral-rich lands from exploration and development supports reducing our nation’s dependence on minerals sourced from foreign adversaries. Moreover, the Committee received duplicate documents, blank pages, and unidentified calendar invitations. Worse yet, the Committee received no evidence that either the DOI or BLM considered the economic or practical impact on businesses in Northern Minnesota before choosing to obstruct mineral production there.

The Committee is reiterating our requests for documents and information—from January 20, 2021, to the present—below. In response to the requests for which responsive documents were previously received, we expect to receive a certification that no responsive documents are outstanding or are otherwise being withheld from the Committee by September 10, 2024. In response to requests for which the Committee has yet to receive responsive documents, we expect to receive a complete production, in electronic format, by September 10, 2024.

The Committee requires certification of completion for the following three requests:

1. All documents and communications regarding any nonprofits, nongovernmental agencies, and any individuals affiliated with any nonprofits or nongovernmental agencies DOI and BLM consulted with regarding Twin Metals, the Superior Withdrawal, and/or the

Boundary Waters watershed. For any entities or individuals listed, please describe the nature of the coordination and provide any communications and/or documents related to the coordination.

2. Documents and communications sufficient to show all stakeholders, small businesses, nonprofits, local governments, tribal entities, and state officials DOI and BLM met with regarding the Superior Withdrawal, including, but not limited to, meetings that do not appear on public calendars.
3. Documents and communications sufficient to show all stakeholders, small businesses, nonprofits, local governments, tribal entities, and state officials DOI and BLM met with regarding the leases for Twin Metals, including, but not limited to, meetings that do not appear on public calendars.

The Committee requires a complete production responsive to the following five requests:

1. Please describe how the Superior Withdrawal and cancellation of the Twin Metals leases help the United States reduce its dependence on foreign adversaries for minerals.
2. Documents and communications sufficient to show the potential economic costs of the Superior Withdrawal, including, but not limited to, costs to stakeholders, small businesses, nonprofits, local governments, tribal entities, or state governments.
3. Documents and communications sufficient to show the analysis on the impacts the Superior Withdrawal will have on stakeholders, small businesses, nonprofits, local governments, tribal entities, and state governments.
4. Documents and communications sufficient to show the potential economic costs of cancelling the leases for Twin Metals, including, but not limited to, costs to stakeholders, small businesses, nonprofits, local governments, tribal entities, or state governments.
5. Documents and communications sufficient to show the analysis on the impacts that cancelling the leases for Twin Metals will have on stakeholders, small businesses, nonprofits, local governments, tribal entities, and state governments.

To combat continued obstruction by DOI and BLM, the Committee will use every tool at its disposal—including the compulsory process—to administer effective oversight and fulfill the Committee's responsibility to the American people.

As you are aware, the Supreme Court has long recognized that Congressional oversight power is broad, indispensable, and far-reaching. *See Barenblatt v. United States*, 360 U.S. 109 (1959); *Watkins v. United States*, 354 U. S. 178, 187, 215 (1957). The Supreme Court has also established that Congress has a duty “to look diligently into every affair of government” and “use every means of acquainting itself with the acts and the disposition of the administrative agents of the government.” *Doe v. McMillan*, 412 U.S. 306 (1973). Hence, a “legislative inquiry may be as broad, as searching, and as exhaustive as is necessary.” *Townsend v. United States*, 95 F.2d 352,

361 (D.C. Cir. 1938). Moreover, under House Rule X, the Committee on Natural Resources has “general oversight” of any matter relating to its jurisdiction, including the management of federal lands and leases therein.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the requests from the Committee on Natural Resources. Please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov with any questions. We look forward to your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Pete Stauber
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources