

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

December 1, 2025

Tracy Stone-Manning
President
The Wilderness Society
1801 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Stone-Manning:

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) is investigating The Wilderness Society's (TWS) role in the Biden administration's cancellation of two decades-old mineral leases in the Superior National Forest (Twin Metals leases) and withdrawal of 225,504 acres of mineral-rich land in the same area from mineral exploration and development (Superior Withdrawal).¹ The Committee is particularly concerned with, at the very least, a serious appearance of impropriety—if not ethical violations—stemming from collusion among TWS, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), other activist environmental groups, and the Biden administration.²

In 2018, the federal government reinstated mineral leases for the prospective Twin Metals copper-nickel-cobalt mining project in Northeast Minnesota.³ In December 2019, the company developing Twin Metals formally submitted a Mine Plan of Operations to begin the federal

¹ See generally Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al. to Deb Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, and Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management (Nov. 20, 2023), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hnr_letter_to_doi_blm_on_twin_metals_cancellation_tws_meetings.pdf (seeking documents and information from Biden administration officials to further the Committee's investigation into the Superior Withdrawal and cancellation of the Twin Metals leases); Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al. to Deb Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, and Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management (Jan. 8, 2024), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hnr_follow_up_letter_to_doi_blm_on_twin_metals.pdf (seeking documents and information from Biden administration officials to further the Committee's investigation into the Superior Withdrawal and cancellation of the Twin Metals leases); Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al. to Deb Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, and Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management (Aug. 27, 2024), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.08.27_twin_metals_follow_up.pdf (seeking documents and information from Biden administration officials to further the Committee's investigation into the Superior Withdrawal and cancellation of the Twin Metals leases); Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al. to Deb Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, and Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management (Oct. 15, 2024), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.10.15_hnr_twin_metals_fourth_letter.pdf (seeking documents and information from Biden administration officials to further the Committee's investigation into the Superior Withdrawal and cancellation of the Twin Metals leases).

² See Hannah Northey, *Interior Emails Tied to Boundary Waters Spark Questions*, GREENWIRE E&E NEWS (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2023/10/25/interior-emails-tied-to-boundary-waters-sparks-questions-00123227>; *Interior Officials Secretly Met with Environmental Plaintiffs in Critical Minerals Project They Later Cancelled*, FUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://functionalgovernment.org/interior-officials-secretly-met-with-environmental-plaintiffs-in-critical-minerals-project-they-later-cancelled/>.

³ *Rescission of December 15, 2016, Lease Renewal Application Rejection. Reinstatement of Mineral Leases MNES 01352 & MNES 01353 as Issued in 2004. Reinstatement of Twin Metal's 2012 Lease Renewal Application*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (May 2, 2018), <https://www.twin-metals.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018.05.02-Twin-Metals-Lease-Reinstatement-Decision-002.pdf>.

permitting process; the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources also conducted its own environmental impact review.⁴ In August 2020, various preservationist groups, including TWS and CBD, sued the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Forest Service (USFS) in an effort to stop the Twin Metals leases.⁵ Boldly, though unsurprisingly, TWS and its partners expected the same taxpayers harmed by this vexatious litigation to pay for it through exploitation of the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA).⁶

Amid ongoing litigation, in January 2022, the Biden administration canceled the Twin Metals leases.⁷ The Biden administration's actions spurned years of environmental review; a pending Mine Plan of Operations;⁸ and myriad comments and letters from Members of Congress, mineral developers, locals, union workers, and many other stakeholders overwhelmingly expressing support for the Twin Metals project. That same month, the Biden administration also finalized the Superior Withdrawal, totaling 225,504 mineral-rich acres to further kneecap America's ability to responsibly mine essential minerals domestically.⁹ Subsequently, TWS, CBD, and other environmental groups intervened to defend the Biden administration's actions in Northern Minnesota in a lawsuit brought by Twin Metals.¹⁰

These Biden administration actions followed private, off-the-books meetings between high-ranking members of Biden's Department of the Interior (DOI) and at least one of the environmental groups suing the federal government over Twin Metals: TWS.¹¹ These meetings reportedly included both environmental lobbyists and attorneys, focusing not only on the ongoing litigation but also on the policies and politics surrounding mining in Minnesota and Twin Metals.¹²

⁴ Steve Karnowski, *Steve Twin Metals Minnesota files formal mine plan with regulators*, Associated Press, (Dec. 18, 2019), <https://apnews.com/3cb7d821267e8ada06e1817b5c380eef>.

⁵ Press Release, *Lawsuit challenges mining permits near Boundary Waters Wilderness in Minnesota*, THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY (Aug. 5, 2020), <https://www.wilderness.org/articles/press-release/lawsuit-challenges-mining-permits-near-boundary-waters-wilderness-minnesota>; Complaint, *Center for Biological Diversity et al., v. Leverette et al.*, Case 1:20-cv-02132, (D.D.C. Aug. 5, 2020), https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_land/mining/Minnesota_mining/pdfs/Twin-Metals-Minnesota-20-08-05-Complaint.pdf.

⁶ See Complaint, *Center for Biological Diversity et al., v. Leverette et al.*, Case 1:20-cv-02132, (D.D.C. Aug. 5, 2020), https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_land/mining/Minnesota_mining/pdfs/Twin-Metals-Minnesota-20-08-05-Complaint.pdf.

⁷ *Leases Canceled, Decision of Tommy Beaudreau, Deputy Secretary of the Interior*, DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Jan. 26, 2022), https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/docs/2022-01/2022.01.26%20Twin%20Metals%20Lease%20Cancellation%20Decision_0.pdf.

⁸ BLM National NEPA Register, *Twin Metals Project and Preference-Right Lease in the Superior National Forest*, NEPA number: DOI-BLM-Eastern States-0030-2020-0006-EIS, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (last updated Jan. 27, 2022), <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/1503233/510>.

⁹ See Bureau of Land Management, *Public Land Order No. 7917 for Withdrawal of Federal Lands; Cook, Lake, and Saint Louis Counties, MN*, 88 F.R. 6308, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (Jan. 31, 2023), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/31/2023-01969/public-land-order-no-7917-for-withdrawal-of-federal-lands-cook-lake-and-saint-louis-counties-mn>.

¹⁰ See *Judge Tosses Twin Metals Lawsuit, Halting Mine's Threat to Boundary Waters*, EARTHJUSTICE (Sept. 7, 2023), <https://earthjustice.org/press/2023/judge-tosses-twin-metals-lawsuit-halting-mines-threat-to-boundary-waters>.

¹¹ See Hannah Northey, *Interior Emails Tied to Boundary Waters Spark Questions*, GREENWIRE E&E NEWS (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2023/10/25/interior-emails-tied-to-boundary-waters-sparks-questions-00123227>; *Interior Officials Secretly Met with Environmental Plaintiffs in Critical Minerals Project They Later Cancelled*, FUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://functionalgovernment.org/interior-officials-secretly-met-with-environmental-plaintiffs-in-critical-minerals-project-they-later-cancelled/>. See also Deputy Secretary Tommy Beaudreau's Calendar, DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (June 23, 2021 to July 16, 2021 and July 18, 2023 to July 24, 2021), https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/beaudreau-calendar-6.23-7.17_0.pdf, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/beaudreau-calendar-7.18-7.30.pdf>.

¹² See Hannah Northey, *Interior Emails Tied to Boundary Waters Spark Questions*, GREENWIRE E&E NEWS (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2023/10/25/interior-emails-tied-to-boundary-waters-sparks-questions-00123227>; *Interior Officials Secretly Met with Environmental Plaintiffs in Critical Minerals Project They Later Cancelled*, FUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://functionalgovernment.org/interior-officials-secretly-met-with-environmental-plaintiffs-in-critical-minerals-project-they-later-cancelled/>.

At the very least, these meetings created a serious appearance of impropriety; more likely, these meetings violated ethical standards and evidence potentially improper relationships between TWS—and other similarly radical groups—and the Biden administration. This dark ethical cloud is even more ominous given your new role as President of TWS after serving as the Biden administration's BLM Director.

Consequently, the Committee is keen to discover the details of TWS's backroom role in the cancellation of the Twin Metals leases and the Superior Withdrawal, particularly given tax-exempt environmental groups' continued pressure to oppose mining in Northern Minnesota and otherwise negatively influence America's natural resource and energy priorities.¹³

Accordingly, the Committee hereby requests that TWS provide the following documents and information in your possession, custody, or control, in complete, unredacted, and electronic format, as soon as possible but no later than December 15, 2025:

1. All documents and communications among or between TWS, CBD, Earthjustice, DOI, BLM, FWS, or USFS related to the cancellation of the Twin Metals leases, from January 20, 2021, to January 19, 2025.
2. All documents and communications among or between TWS, CBD, Earthjustice, DOI, BLM, FWS, or USFS related to the Superior Withdrawal, from January 20, 2021, to January 19, 2025.
3. All documents and communications among or between TWS, CBD, Earthjustice, DOI, BLM, FWS, or USFS related to mining in Minnesota, from January 20, 2021, to January 19, 2025.
4. Documents and communications sufficient to show dates, attendees, agendas, and minutes of any meetings among or between TWS, CBD, Earthjustice, DOI, BLM, FWS, or USFS related to the cancellation of the Twin Metals leases, from January 20, 2021, to January 19, 2025.
5. Documents and communications sufficient to show dates, attendees, agendas, and minutes of any meetings among or between TWS, CBD, Earthjustice, DOI, BLM, FWS, or USFS related to the Superior Withdrawal, from January 20, 2021, to January 19, 2025.
6. Documents and communications sufficient to show all litigation costs—including but not limited to attorney's fees, hours, salaries, bonuses, filing fees, and other

[environmental-plaintiffs-in-critical-minerals-project-they-later-cancelled/](#); Email from Natalie Landreth, Deputy Solicitor for Land and Resources, Dept. of the Interior, to Alison Flint, Senior Legal Director, The Wilderness Society, and Drew McConville, Senior Fellow, The Wilderness Society, and Mariagrazia Caminiti, Executive Assistant, Office of the Solicitor, Dept. of the Interior (July 19, 2021, 11:41am), <https://functionalgovernment.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/October-25-2023-released-docs.pdf>; Email from Alison Flint, Senior Legal Director, The Wilderness Society, to Natalie Landreth, Deputy Solicitor for Land and Resources, Dept. of the Interior, Mariagrazia Caminiti, Executive Assistant, Office of the Solicitor, Dept. of the Interior, and Drew McConville, Senior Fellow, The Wilderness Society, (July 19, 2021, 2:57pm), <https://functionalgovernment.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/October-25-2023-released-docs.pdf>.

¹³ See Hannah Northey, *Minnesota Dems in hot seat over Boundary Waters mining*, GREENWIRE E&E NEWS (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://www.eenews.net/articles/minnesota-dems-in-hot-seat-over-boundary-waters-mining/>.

expenses—incurred by TWS, CBD, or Earthjustice for which TWS, CBD, or Earthjustice sought reimbursement under EAJA.

7. All documents and communications among or between TWS, CBD, or Earthjustice related to EAJA.

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. 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 the development of mineral resources. Thank you for 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