

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

February 6, 2026

Senator John Thune  
Majority Leader  
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

## **Re: House Joint Resolution 140 revoking protections for Minnesota's Boundary Waters**

Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, and Senators:

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, we write in opposition to House Joint Resolution 140, which would undo important protections for the watershed of Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of nine member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

The nation's most visited Wilderness area, the Boundary Waters features unique rock formations, expansive boreal forests, and a vast network of clean lakes and rivers. This area is home to internationally significant recreational resources and is iconic for its multi-day Wilderness canoe trips. The Boundary Waters is also one of the most significant stores of clean water in the nation, and the area provides a substantial economic benefit to local communities. The area is a cornerstone of



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Minnesota's growing \$13.5 billion outdoor recreation economy, which supported more than 95,000 jobs and comprised 2.8% of statewide Gross Domestic Product in 2023.

The Boundary Waters area has long been proposed for expanded sulfide-ore copper mining outside of the Wilderness boundary, but within the same watershed. The outdoor recreation community understands the necessity and the urgency of increasing domestic mining for critical minerals, and we have long sought reforms to America's mining laws to streamline permitting and increase certainty for the mining industry, Tribes, and public lands stakeholders that well-sited mining operations can proceed without unacceptably degrading important ecological, cultural, and social values on public lands, including outdoor recreation. A core tenet underlying our work on mining policy is that mining is not appropriate everywhere, and that certain landscapes—because of their outstanding value for outdoor recreation and other uses of public lands—must be off-limits to mining. The watershed of the Boundary Waters is one such landscape.

Sulfide-ore copper mining is an activity with known and severe environmental effects, and the unique hydrology of this area makes it particularly susceptible to damage. The area is currently protected through Public Land Order 7917, which places a 20-year mineral withdrawal on federal lands in the headwaters of the Wilderness area. Public Land Order 7917 was put in place in 2022 following an environmental assessment and extensive public comment process at the Forest Service, which drew more than 675,000 comments, more than 95% supporting protections from mining.

House Joint Resolution 140 would overturn the current mineral withdrawal through the Congressional Review Act (CRA), once again putting the Boundary Waters at risk, and directly threatening the health of one of America's most accessible and most visited Wilderness areas, as well as the jobs and businesses that depend on outdoor recreation in the area.

Beyond threatening the health of a landscape valued by recreationists across the globe, this resolution sets a dangerous precedent regarding the use of the CRA to overturn individual land management decisions, as public land orders of this type have never been considered a "rule" subject to the CRA. Applying the CRA in this



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context creates significant uncertainty for outdoor recreationists and outdoor businesses seeking reliable, safe access to public lands by undermining our community's confidence in the durability of individual land-management decisions, including protective designations. Additionally, the CRA's requirement barring agencies from adopting new rules that are "substantially the same" creates additional confusion and uncertainty regarding future land management decisions on the Superior National Forest.

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports current protections for the Boundary Waters and asks that Senators vote no on House Joint Resolution 140.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman  
Vice President for Policy and Government Relations  
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance  
Heather Thorne, Executive Director, Access Fund  
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association  
Clinton Begley, Executive Director, American Whitewater  
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association  
David Page, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance  
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers  
Ben Gabriel, Executive Director, American Alpine Club  
Madeline Bachner Lane, Chief Executive Officer, Colorado Mountain Club  
Chad Nelsen, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

