

OPEN LETTER TO ZINKE AND PERDUE TO REPEAL FEDERAL LAND WITHDRAWAL

- Gerald M. Tyler | Chairman, President and CEO of Up North Jobs
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In April 2015, collaborating with anti-mining activists, Minnesota Fourth District Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced a bill to ban mining on all federal lands within the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest. In March 2016, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, in collusion with the anti-mining activists, directed the Minnesota DNR not to authorize or enter into any new leases or state access agreements on state lands in the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest. Governor Dayton's unlawful directive prohibits mineral development on approximately 147,600 acres of state owned lands. The 147,600 acres include 95,000 acres of Minnesota Public School Trust Lands. These lands are owned by the state in trust for all public schools of Minnesota. Revenues generated from school trust lands are credited to the permanent school fund managed by the State Board of Investment including royalty payments. The Governor's wrongful and unlawful directive prohibiting mineral entry and development on School Trust Lands will deny Minnesota schools of millions of dollars of revenues to operate and maintain the public schools.

Following a well-orchestrated, pre-conceived plan, on March 8, 2016, only two days after Governor Dayton's unlawful directive was issued to the Minnesota DNR, the Interior Department's Solicitor instructed the BLM state director that the BLM could deny renewal of Twin Metals Minnesota mineral leases. Finally, In December 2016, the BLM notified Twin Metals Minnesota that it would not renew its leases.

The decisions by the USFS and Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton to prohibit mineral entry and development of federal and state lands in the Rainy River Watershed of the

Superior National Forest, prohibits mineral development on over 418,000 acres of land in Northeastern Minnesota. (USFS and Minnesota DNR statistics as of January 20, 2017)

The U. S. Forest Service made the decision to prepare an EIS to support the imposition of a moratorium on mineral development on federal lands in the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest for a 20-year term

In January 2017, under the previous administration, the USFS submitted an Application to the Secretary of the Interior proposing a withdrawal, for a 20-year term of approximately 234,328 acres of National Forest System lands, within the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest and published a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register of its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The decision made by the USFS to prepare an EIS was made under the Obama administration, just 7 days before the Trump administration took office. The decision by the USFS to prepare an EIS will replicate the EIS completed by the USFS in May 2012 and prohibit mineral development on all federal lands within the Rainy River Watershed for at least 2 years, i.e., until at least 2019; and the cost of the aforementioned study will be borne by the taxpayers.

The decision by the U. S. Forest Service/BLM and the Obama administration to conduct a study and prepare an EIS is a tactic employed to not only delay, but pre-emptively quash the development of Twin Metals Minnesota's project and will replicate the EIS completed by the USFS in May 2012

The decision by the Obama administration and the USFS/BLM to conduct a study and complete an environmental impact statement "documenting the information and analysis necessary to support a decision on withdrawal, and to support an amendment to the Superior National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan", is a shameless attempt by the anti-mining activists and their federal agency "friends" to pre-emptively quash the development of Twin Metals Minnesota's proposed project by delaying

exploration until at least 2019, and perhaps for an additional 20 years if a moratorium on prospecting is imposed.

The ROD published in 2012 by the BLM is clear, unambiguous and irrefutable. It states:

“Minerals exploration may be conducted in an environmentally sound manner with the application of stipulations shown in the Forest Service ROD, Attachment 2, along with State of Minnesota rules for exploratory drilling. Therefore, the decision to issue the permits, subject to the prospecting permit stipulations (Forest Service ROD, Attachment 2), will not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation.” (BLM Record of Decision, p. 5, September 20, 2012)

Given that a Final EIS was completed by the USFS in May 2012, following a 5 year study to determine the potential effects of issuing prospecting permits, exploration and mineral development on the Forest lands, the Obama administration’s decision to use its agencies to conduct yet another study and prepare yet another Environmental Impact Statement only 5 years later, is a ploy brought to pre-emptively quash Twin Metals Minnesota’s proposed mining development, all at the expense of Minnesota citizens.

For the reasons set forth herein, the 234,000 acre withdrawal application should be rescinded, the two terminated Twin Metals Minnesota leases should be renewed and the Environmental Impact Statement study should be terminated.

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