



Twin Metals Minnesota (Twin Metals) Fact Sheet

April 28, 2016

Decision Relating to Two Federal Leases

- Twin Metals had two mineral leases with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), MNES1352 and MNES 1353, for mining in the Superior National Forest in the watershed of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (Boundary Waters).
- The leases were issued in 1966 for an initial term of 20 years with the possibility of three 10-year renewals. The leases expired on December 31, 2013.
- The BLM, with the consent of the surface management agency, the U.S. Forest Service, renewed the leases in 1989 and 2004.
- Twin Metals applied for a third renewal in 2013.
- Twin Metals was planning a copper nickel sulfide-ore mine for the leased areas. Acid mine drainage is a significant environmental risk at sulfide-ore mine sites and, as the Boundary Waters is a water-based ecosystem, contaminated water could have dramatic impacts to aquatic life, sport fisheries, and recreation-based communities.
- BLM requested that the U.S. Forest Service decide whether it would consent to the renewal of the leases. This is a standard practice; U.S. Forest Service consent is required by law for mineral leases in the Superior National Forest.
- After a lengthy period of consideration, public consultation, and review of the relevant science, the U.S. Forest Service withheld consent for renewal of the leases on December 14, 2016. Chief Tidwell found “unacceptable the inherent potential risk that development of a regionally-untested copper nickel sulfide ore mine within the same watershed as the BWCAW might cause serious and irreplaceable harm to this unique, iconic, and irreplaceable wilderness area.”
- Because BLM is required by law to have U.S. Forest Service consent to renew these leases, BLM denied the lease renewals. According to the BLM, this is a final, non-appealable decision. The leases have now ended.

Decision Relating to Two-Year Study and Consideration of 20-Year withdrawal of Federal Lands

- Shortly after the decision to deny the lease renewals, the U.S. Forest Service submitted an application to the BLM and the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw key portions of the Boundary Waters watershed from future federal mining leases.
- The application set in motion a process to put on hold new mineral leasing and related actions for a period of two years while the Department of the Interior, the BLM, and the U.S. Forest Service study whether to withdraw the area for 20 years. This decision will not be made until a robust environmental review is completed.
- Sportsmen and conservation groups, businesses, veterans, Boundary Waters users, and other supporters of protecting the Boundary Waters watershed believe this two-year study should be allowed to run its course.