

ANGIE CRAIG
2ND DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2302

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October 7, 2021

Secretary Thomas Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Deb Haaland
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Haaland,

I write to ask that your agencies make publicly available any preliminary data that was developed by the Forest Service as part of the environmental assessment that was previously cancelled by the former administration for the Rainy River watershed mineral withdrawal in 2018. While I believe this assessment should be completed and information should have already been released by the prior administration, there are new developments at the state level related to the withdrawal and wilderness protection that would benefit from this additional information.

Specifically, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is seeking public comment to inform a decision on whether the state's existing nonferrous mine siting rule is adequate to protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) from pollution, impairment or destruction from potential mining within the Rainy River Headwaters watershed. The DNR will seek substantive public comments from November 9, 2021 through December 8, 2021 to assist the department in its decision making.

Sharing the mineral resources report, the biological and economic impact assessment and the assessment of potential impacts to water resources, wilderness areas and cultural resources data would help all commenters better inform themselves about this potential significant change in state rules. With the closely interrelated state and federal mineral leases located near the Boundary Waters, any state action(s) resulting from this comment period are likely to factor into any federal decisions to be made about mineral development in the area. Therefore, I urge your agencies to share this information in a timely manner.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Angie Craig
Member of Congress