

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1796

To withdraw all Federal land located within the Rainy River Drainage Basin in Minnesota from all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws, location, entry, and patent under the mining laws and operation under the mineral leasing laws, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 15, 2015

Ms. MCCOLLUM introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To withdraw all Federal land located within the Rainy River Drainage Basin in Minnesota from all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws, location, entry, and patent under the mining laws and operation under the mineral leasing laws, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “National Park and
5 Wilderness Waters Protection Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds as follows:

3 (1) The Rainy River Drainage Basin head-
4 waters begin in northeastern Minnesota and flow
5 north to Canada. Located within Rainy River Drain-
6 age Basin are Voyageurs National Park and Bound-
7 ary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, which were es-
8 tablished by Congress to protect their unique and
9 pristine water resources.

10 (2) Voyageurs National Park which is com-
11 prised of more than 218,000 acres, is a water based
12 national park that contains lakes, shorelines, and is-
13 lands stretching along 55 miles of the United
14 States–Canadian border.

15 (3) The Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilder-
16 ness is the most visited national wilderness area in
17 the United States. It is comprised of more than
18 1,000,000 acres and over 1,200 miles of canoe
19 routes in myriad lakes and rivers. It extends ap-
20 proximately 150 miles along the United States–Ca-
21 nadian border.

22 (4) The mining of copper and other metals on
23 Federal lands in the Superior and Chippewa Na-
24 tional Forests, within the Rainy River Drainage
25 Basin, poses a direct and long-term impact to the
26 pristine water quality of Voyageurs National Park

1 and Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness from
2 sulfide-ore mining contamination.

3 (5) The risk of sulfide contamination to Voya-
4 geurs National Park and Boundary Water Canoe
5 Area Wilderness from the mining of copper, nickel,
6 platinum, palladium, gold, and silver on Federal
7 lands within the Rainy River Drainage Basin puts at
8 risk the nationally recognized natural resources of
9 the area, as well as the region's economically vibrant
10 tourism industry which generates an estimated
11 \$852,000,000 annually and sustains more than
12 18,000 jobs.

13 **SEC. 3. WITHDRAWAL OF FEDERAL LAND.**

14 Subject to valid existing rights, the Federal lands
15 within the Rainy River Drainage Basin in Minnesota are
16 withdrawn from all forms of—

17 (1) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the
18 public land laws;

19 (2) location, entry, and patent under the mining
20 laws; and

21 (3) operation under the mineral leasing and
22 mineral material laws.

1 **SEC. 4. CONDITIONS FOR LEASES OR PERMITS INVOLVING**
2 **MINING ACTIVITIES.**

3 (a) MAJOR FEDERAL ACTION.—Approval of any
4 lease or permit in the Rainy River Drainage Basin is
5 deemed to be a major Federal action significantly affect-
6 ing the quality of the human environment if that lease
7 or permit involves activities related to mineral production.

8 (b) EIS.—An environmental impact statement con-
9 ducted for the major Federal action described in sub-
10 section (a) shall include, among other issues, consideration
11 of any potential impacts, as a result of such lease or per-
12 mit, to units of the National Park System or land in the
13 National Wilderness Preservation System located in the
14 Rainy River Drainage Basin.

15 (c) SUSPENSION OF ACTIVITIES.—As a condition for
16 the issuance or renewal of any lease or permit relating
17 to mineral production, the entity receiving such lease or
18 permit shall be required to seasonally monitor water qual-
19 ity throughout the Rainy River Drainage Basin. If any
20 mining related contamination is detected in a unit of the
21 National Park System or land in the National Wilderness
22 Preservation System in the Rainy River Drainage Basin,
23 all mining activities related to the contamination shall be
24 immediately suspended until the head of the Federal agen-
25 cy that issues the lease or permit certifies that all contami-
26 nation was remediated.

1 (d) REMEDIATION PLAN; BOND.—The Federal agen-
2 cy shall not approve any mining related activities in the
3 Rainy River Drainage Basin until the entity holding a
4 lease or permit for that mining activity has submitted to
5 the Federal agency—

6 (1) an acceptable contamination remediation
7 plan that outlines the strategies and tactics that the
8 entity would undertake in the event that contamina-
9 tion is discovered; and

10 (2) a full reclamation and performance bond
11 that is sufficient to return the affected area to its
12 original condition and treat any potential contamina-
13 tion for 50 years following the conclusion of any
14 mining activities.

15 (e) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—The provisions of this section
16 shall not apply to existing sand, gravel, and granite oper-
17 ations in the Rainy River Drainage Basin.

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