The US Forest Service has recently released a portion of some very large changes planned for the BWCA permit system. These changes are tentatively planned to go into effect for the 2019 summer permit season. Some of these changes have been very controversial, especially the plans to eliminate the permit lottery for the most sought after permits dealing with motor use on the Fall Lake and Moose Lake entry points. This system will be replaced with a single “go live” date and a race to reserve desired permits.

It came as a surprise that the USFS chose to skip a formal public comment process with these large changes, as the public comment process is generally standard procedure. A recent public informational meeting was called to attempt to ease public concern and explain some of the changes and the complicated process that will go into the proposed permit reservation and processing for 2019.

The most controversial concern voiced at this meeting was “why is the lottery being eliminated?” It was pointed out that many other recreational areas across the country that will be a part of the new reservation platform still have their lottery system intact. However, the lottery was abandoned for the Fall Lake and Moose Lake entry points here in the BWCA. This is in spite of the fact that there is more demand vs permit availability for these affected BWCA entry points than there are in some of the remaining lottery systems.

When asked why, the US Forest Service said that there wasn’t enough demand here and the unrelated reason that the no show rate was too high in the BWCA lottery entry points. No formal numbers were presented to explain this no show argument and the US Forest Service representatives couldn’t answer the question if the permit no show rates they presented were just for those entry points involved in the lottery or for all motorized entry points. Several in the audience expressed concern with why there wasn’t any effort to implement several ideas on ways to get unused permits back into the system. The USFS instead said that because a permit is being reserved on this new system instead of with the lottery applications, that somehow that will reduce “no show” permits. Many in the audience weren’t in agreement with that logic.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act.

What led to the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act

What started as acknowledgement of the importance of our forested areas to our developing nation in the early 1900s became a push for wilderness to stop all development. Three main road corridors – the Echo Trail, Fernberg Trail and Gunflint Trail were developed that opened up the area to recreational opportunities. This was after the area had been logged off by Swallow and Hopkins lumber company.

After World War I there was a great desire to get as far away from the sights and sounds of war. Many pilots headed to northern Minnesota to find that solitude. Their little havens developed into remote, fly-in fishing camps/resorts that were inaccessible by roads. One the first fishing camps was Bill Berglund’s Isle of Pines Fishing Camp on Knife Lake. The Isle of Pines became a very popular destination after Bill’s death when Dorothy Molter (the Rootbeer Lady) took over.

Shagawa Lake in Ely, Minnesota became the largest inland seaplane base in the world. It is currently the only U.S. Forest Service Seaplane Base outside of Alaska.

The push for wilderness by various groups such as the Wilderness Society and Izaak Walton League led to the demise of the fly-in fishing camps, and the condemnations and buyouts of resorts.

It took eight years, from 1956 to 1964, to get the 1964 Wilderness Act passed.

40th anniversary of 1964 Wilderness Act in Ely parade 2004

Senator Hubert Humphrey included wording in the legislation that would allow the continued use of logging, motor boats and snowmobiles. What has been ignored in this legislation for the past 54 years (by both Parties) is the mandate that state lands

(Continued on Page Two)
What led to the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act

After the ’78 Act passed, it took nearly ten years for businesses to change their focus and recover. Many businesses were lost and people left the area.

People of northern Minnesota thought the assault on their way of life was over, but it’s never enough for extreme preservationists. The Friends of the Boundary Waters came back ten years later with the removal of trucks from three portages. When trucks were returned to only two of the portages in 1999, the Friends attacked the Chain of Lakes permit quotas. The Forest Service has ignored the courts mandate that they recalculate the Chain of Lakes permits saying they don’t have data from 1976, 1977 and 1978 to base recalculation upon.

The latest attack has been on the number of towboats used in the Boundary Waters which has turned into a Forest Service review of all commercial uses. This will affect towboat-use that aid canoeists through the motorized lakes, fishing guides and sled dog guides.

In addition, the Forest Service is changing the permit system by eliminating the permit lottery.

Regarding opposition to Twin Metals’ proposed underground copper nickel mine outside of the Boundary Waters – an EIS was completed by the USFS in May 2012 under the Obama Administration. In December 2016, President Obama signed an executive order to withdraw 234,000 acres in northern Minnesota from future mining and exploration. There was no input on this decision from state, county or city officials.

According to the Federal Register, a study was to be conducted on this withdrawal to determine if mining should be banned for twenty years. The study was to take up to two years. Within this time period, the Trump Administration could approve, deny or cancel the application. The study ended a few months short of two years with no new scientific information to warrant a twenty year ban on mining. Secretary of Agriculture Perdue canceled the application.

The ’78 BWCA Wilderness Act also established the Mining Protection Area which includes the Echo Trail, Fernberg and Gunflint Trail. Mining is banned in the Boundary Waters. Outside of the wilderness, mining and exploration in the Superior National Forest is an allowable use.
Message from the President

Summer once again went by way too fast and I was busy attending various meetings.

Starting in May, I attended Mining Minnesota’s annual meeting in Hibbing. Updates were given on several mining projects in the area, including Twin Metals, Encampment, Teck, Tamarack Project, AngloGold Ashanti, and PolyMet.

Ron Hein with the St. Louis Historical Society also gave an update on the Erie Mining Company History Project. The information gathered on the world’s largest taconite mine and processing plants is being put in a book and on DVD, and will be given to all Minnesota schools. This will be a great asset for education students on Minnesota’s mining history.

In June, I applied for CWCS to be on Governor Dayton’s Wild Rice Task Force. I wasn’t chosen, but Paul Austin with Conservation Minnesota and Kathryn Hoffman with Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, two anti-mining environmental groups, were chosen.

Also in June, my husband and I were able to attend the Trump rally in Duluth. No matter which political party you belong to, this was quite the experience. It was great to hear the Trump Administration was working on Minnesota mining issues.

Recently my husband and I were in Platteville, Wisconsin and visited the Platteville Museum on mining. It was very interesting to see that sulfide lead and zinc had been mined in this Upper Mississippi River area from the 1820s until 1979. This is in an area that had 14% sulfide ores compared to PolyMet and Twin Metals 3% sulfide ores. Remember, Flambeau Mine had 30% sulfide ores and mined safely.

Over the years mining practices improved with pollution regulations. Today the area is developed with homes and businesses over the underground mines. There has not been any superfund site or impact to the area watersheds. In fact, brook trout are doing very well in area streams. The argument that copper/nickel mining can’t be done safely is just rhetoric from the other side who do not want to see the Iron Range prosper.

The Blueberry Arts Festival in July had some controversy at our CWCS booth. Political candidates visited our booth and left some political signs. We were asked to remove the signs, and we did.

Several anti-mining people were confrontational. We offered information on the proposed copper/nickel mining projects.

Some took the info, others preferred to argue.

It has been pretty well known for the past couple years that CWCS has been working together with Up North Jobs and Minnesota Miners for future generations for the health of our communities. We even jointly had new banners made with all three of our logos.

For the Harvest Moon Festival in September, CWCS was told CWCS was to have only CWCS material at our booth. We couldn’t have other organization information at our booth. That included the logos of other groups CWCS works with on our new banner. CWCS had to cover the Up North Jobs and Minnesota Miners logos.

CWCS has been in the Blueberry Arts and Harvest Moon Festival for twenty years. Our booth has usually been at the end of the row of vendors toward Harvey Street and 7th Avenue, with our boat, motor & trailer outside of our “X10” paid space with no problem. CWCS has acted as a welcoming booth to visitors, offering festival maps, giving directions and answering questions when asked.

This year the Ely Chamber told CWCS if we wanted our trailer next to our booth we would have to pay an additional booth fee of $120, or move the trailer out of the park. Luckily the CWCS raffle was only for a boat motor this year. A call was made to get help to lift the motor out of the trailer and put it under our tent. The trailer was moved out of the park.

Next year, look for the CWCS booth at a new location outside of the park during the Blueberry Arts and Harvest Moon Festivals where we will be able to display our new banners.

On November 13th I attended the meeting with the Forest Service regarding the elimination of the permit lottery and the changes that will be made. My main questions were 1 – What initiated the changes? 2 – Why wasn’t there any public input as most other Forest Service actions? 3 – Was there any consideration of moving the reservation system to Ely instead of to Kentucky? See related story.

We thank you for your continuing support of CWCS. It is greatly appreciated.

Nancy McReady
CWCS President

What is a Superfund site?

Courtesy of Back Forty Mine

Since 1980, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund, has directed the cleanup of hazardous waste sites and responded to local and nationally significant environmental emergencies. The program focuses on a few specific areas: manufacturing facilities, processing plants, landfills and mining sites.

The mining facilities on the list include historical operations. Many of these sites began operations in the 1800s and early 1900s and were closed or abandoned.

Today we talk about ‘modern’ mining and the advancement of our industry. According to the EPA and National Mining Association, the modern era of mining dates back to the 1990s. It is during this time that facilities started operating under current management practices and present-day environmental regulations.

The total number of hard rock mines permitted in the U.S. since 1990 is nearly 3,400. None of the sites are on the Superfund list.

Unlike past mining, today the industry is safer and more environmentally friendly than ever before. Water treatment and reclamation activities are an upfront, essential part of project development. Companies are required to provide financial assurance before starting any construction or mining activity. Assurance acts as security for the community, seeing that the State has the right amount of money available to close and reclaim the site at any given time if the company is unable to do so. It also protects taxpayers and the community from these obligations.

Like many industries, mining has evolved. We have the technology available and experience necessary to ensure that mining is safe and protective of the environment – meaning we can have both a strong economy and clean environment.
Land and Water Conservation Fund

Congress created the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in 1964 to help “preserve, develop, and ensure access to outdoor recreation facilities to strengthen the health of U.S. citizens.”

Under the original law, the largest share of LWCF funds was dedicated to a “stateside” program designed to help local communities fund recreation projects. Forty percent of the LWCF was to be allotted for “federal” purposes to purchase privately owned parcels of land inside existing federal boundaries.

Offshore federal oil and gas leases are the main source of revenue to LWCF, but distribution is appropriated by legislation. This amounts to a possible $900 million each year. Funding falls short of this amount.

Congress appropriates LWCF funds for three general purposes: federal land acquisition to the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; stateside matching grants and a third category referred to as “other federal purposes.”

LWCF is the federal government’s main funding tool for federal land acquisition. This takes private lands off tax rolls. State and local outdoor recreation projects used to receive significant funding until 1975.

Several Senate bills have been introduced to permanently reauthorize LWCF; some bills are also including establishing a dedicated fund. The bills have failed to pass in the U.S. House and Senate.

More work is needed to reform how LWCF is used. More emphasis is needed in addressing the maintenance of our existing public lands than the acquisition of more land.

Today, federal lands, including National Parks and National Forests, have a backlog of maintenance projects. Sewer systems, leaky roofs, crumbling roads and bridges, campsites and portages all need fixing and maintenance. This impacts visitor access, enjoyment, and safety on public lands. These existing federal land infrastructure maintenance issues need to be addressed. They will only cost more if we put them off.

In 1965, the National Park Service (NPS) administered 203 units on less than 30 million acres. Today, NPS manages 417 units and over 80 million acres. The units have doubled and acreage almost tripled since the creation of LWCF. Since 2005 alone, more than a dozen parks were added to the NPS, in addition to land acquisitions through LWCF.

Enough with the land acquisition. Maintain what we have.

GET INVOLVED!
CWCS needs the input of our members on public land and water issues. Help us determine the direction you want CWCS to go in the 21st century and what issues to tackle.

Please send your letters, comments, interests and concerns to:
CWCS Issues, c/o Nancy McReady,
P.O. Box 252 Ely, MN 55731

Winners in the CWCS raffle were:
• Jeff Achman from Gilbert, MN won the motor
• Wayne Ratajack from Paclida, FL won the 2-night stay at Big Lake Wilderness Lodge
• Betty Scholz from Ely, MN won the birch bark framed print

Thank you to all CWCS supporters who bought raffle tickets. Thanks to Joe’s Marine for providing the motor at cost. And a big thanks to John Swenson for donating the stay at Big Lake Wilderness Lodge.

Congratulations to all and thank you for supporting Conservationists with Common Sense!
Mining billboards and banners go up

In July, in efforts to educate and bring attention to the importance of copper/nickel mining, Minnesota Miners purchased a billboard along I-35 on the northbound side near the Highway 210 exit. Mining plays a huge part in providing minerals for our national security; provide jobs on the Iron Range; and generate revenue to Minnesota’s School Trust Fund which benefits all Minnesota schools.

CWCS and Up North Jobs joined Minnesota Miners in having banners made to spread the word about the importance of copper/nickel mining at area events.

Also in July, Nancy McReady, CWCS president and Elizabeth Eloranta, the person behind the billboard idea, attended the Better in Our Backyard Networking Event at Valentini’s in Chisholm. There about 40 like-minded people who want to see the Iron Range prosper with mining and manufacturing. We talked to people about supporting the Minnesota Miners billboard and banner project.

The Center of the American Experiment’s newly released report on the statewide benefits of environmentally responsible mining of Minnesota’s world-class mineral resources continues to attract media attention. The Center’s statewide campaign includes billboards, radio and television commercials. Nearly two dozen billboards are along busy highways and interstates throughout Minnesota, from Duluth to St. Cloud, to Hinckley, to Litchfield. The message is getting out that safe copper/nickel mining and our environment leads to a stronger Minnesota.

The report can be downloaded along with a fact sheet at their new website: www.MinnesotaMines.com

Changes to BWCAW permit system

(Continued from Page One)

Another huge concern was with the ability for local and rural residents to utilize the system. Speed of application now will become the deciding factor on whether you receive a permit or not. Many expressed their concern that in no way will those in our area be on an equal playing field with areas enjoying faster and more dependable communication systems. After the Forest Service explained that they were currently studying area internet speeds, a question arose as to what would they do when their findings showed inferior communication speeds in our area. No answer seemed to be given to this question.

Another question was what would happen if widespread communication outages would occur at the time that the “go live” system began, as this recently happened in the Ely area. Again, there was no response that any action would occur. Several other procedural questions were presented to the USFS representatives, which included why everyone needed to supply an email address, what would happen if they didn’t have an email address, how many permits could be applied for at one time, as well as several others. The USFS attempted to answer some of these questions and said that they would ask and get back to the public with the answers to the several questions they couldn’t answer.

After the audience expressed quite a bit of unhappiness with the direction that the US Forest Service was heading with their decisions, it was again pointed out that no formal comment process was initiated into this decision making process. The Forest Supervisor indicated that she wished she would have known that there was the level of concern that was expressed at the meeting before making her decisions. Those in attendance seemed to agree with this and were visibly upset that their views weren’t given more importance in the process.

Elected officials and their representatives were also in attendance at the meeting, and it is yet to be seen what actions may occur after witnessing some of the public’s concerns. Senator Klobuchar and Representative Nolan have already formally questioned the USFS’s lack of a public input process. Their concern was most likely strengthened after witnessing this meeting.

If you have concerns with these proposed permit system changes, please contact both your elected officials and the USFS with these concerns.
On Oct. 8, Clearwater BioLogic, LLC—a company developed to economically remove sulfates from mining-affected waters in Northern Minnesota—was awarded $10,000 for being the best 2018 start-up company in Greater Minnesota. The award was presented by the Minnesota Department of Education and Economic Development at the MN Cup final awards ceremony at the Carlson School of Business and Management on the Minneapolis U of M campus.

Clearwater BioLogic is headquartered in Babbitt, the birthplace of taconite mining and a central location for the proposed extraction of the confirmed copper-nickel-platinum group metals on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

According to Rob Scarlett, senior adviser to Clearwater BioLogic, the company’s lower-cost, natural biological process offers an affordable way for the mines to comply with any reasonable water quality standard. The process will help save mining industry jobs and create new environmental industry jobs. Sulfate removal through this system will protect the wild rice harvest and the health of all people who depend on area waters for drinking and recreation.

Until the development of this biological process, reverse osmosis was the only way to reduce sulfate to the low concentrations that have been proposed for wild rice protection. Reverse osmosis is effective, but extremely expensive, in part because it demands a great deal of electrical power and leaves behind a brine that must be evaporated and then landfilled. Clearwater BioLogic, according to Jeff Hanson from Babbitt, is able to remove sulfate at a fraction of the cost of reverse osmosis and requires only as much power as can be supplied by on-site solar panels.

Clearwater BioLogic, formed by Hanson of Babbitt and Bill Newman of Minneapolis, will produce a precipitate of fine-grain sulfur along with some iron. As a side-benefit, the precipitate has the potential of being used as a fertilizer for corn fields.

Newman says that Clearwater BioLogic is ready to deploy bioreactor modules into mine-pit lakes to remove dissolved sulfate before the water enters area streams or natural lakes.

Here’s how the process works. The modules are filled with fibers to which native bacteria attach. The bacteria, which are moved into the modules along with small samples of mud from nearby swampy areas, convert the sulfate to hydrogen sulfide. The hydrogen sulfide is then chemically converted to a fine grain sulfur and iron slurry that is pumped off and removed from the system. The modular design allows for both small and large water flows depending on which is needed for that particular Minnesota mining application. These modules operate below the water surface and, in winter, below the ice.

Researchers from the University of Minnesota have accompanied the development of the system. In 2017 they published a report verifying the positive results of the biological portion of the system. The success of the chemical portion has now been established as well. It relies on the proven sulfide control expertise of USP Technologies, part of a $17 billion company.

Clearwater BioLogic has proven that its process can regularly remove 90% (and, if necessary, 100%) of the sulfate in water even when starting at 1,100 parts per million and even in winter. To get to 0% of sulfate, more modules would be needed, but, even then, the cost is not prohibitive.

Capital costs for installation are minimal. No entity that wishes to have sulfate removed

(Continued on Page 7)
Copper/Nickel Mining Projects Updates

DNR Issues Nearly a Dozen Permits for PolyMet Project (from WDIO)

On November 1, the Minnesota DNR has issued 11 permits for PolyMet Mining. The all-important permit to mine, which is the first for a copper nickel project, six water appropriation permits, two dam safety permits, a public waters work permit, and an endangered species takings permit for the NorthMet project.

The permit to mine includes a financial assurance plan and wetland replacement plan. The financial assurance required at the start of mining is estimated at $588 million. In the year of peak mining activities, financial assurance at approximately $1 billion dollars.

You can find the permits on the MPCA's NorthMet project pages at www.pca.state.mn.us/northmet.

Twin Metals’ Up North Jobs presentation (from KBJR)

The Twin Metals proposed underground mine near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is still in the beginning phases.

“We’re collecting a lot of baseline data. We’re finalizing a lot of the plans as we know them today. And we’re trying to ensure that once we make that submittal, we have a robust mine plan of operations submitted,” said Dean DeBeltz, Director of Operations and Safety for Twin Metals.

The mine’s processing facilities would be roughly one mile south of the mine’s proposed location. The processing site would include access to the underground mine and activities related to recovering the target minerals from ore.

“Then it would be submitting for permits at the end of that and all that multiple iterations with public input, and so the timeline is really unknown,” said DeBeltz.

Despite being in the early stages of the process, DeBeltz said this project would directly employ 650 people long term in northeastern Minnesota and create an estimated 1,300 spinoff jobs in other industries.

“This is a long process, and we believe in the process. We look forward to the process, and we want to ensure that we put our best foot and the best project forward that we can,” said DeBeltz.

While the project does have its opponents, some community members, like Gerald Tyler, believe this project will be great for revitalizing Ely’s economy.

“If anything is going to improve economic conditions here in Ely, it’s going to be a mining project, and probably more to the point Twin Metals is the project that will carry us through this tough economic times that we’re facing here in Ely,” said Tyler.

Democrats are using the School Trust Lands

Democrats are using the School Trust Lands in the Boundary Waters as a tool to get permanent funding for the Land & Water Conservation Fund! LWCF was to expire September 30, 2015 but Congress extended the fund for three years in January 2016. This fund is mainly used to buy up more land by preservation groups such as Minnesota Trust for Public Land. They buy lands then sell them to the federal government.

Northern Minnesota especially doesn’t need any more public lands when 64% to 92% are already off our tax rolls and are public lands in St. Louis, Lake and Cook counties!

Environmental preservation groups, with support from Democrats, are pushing to use of the School Trust Lands in the Boundary Waters to get the permanent funding for LWCF!

The School Trust Lands in the Boundary Waters are to be exchanged for federal lands outside of the Boundary Waters. This is something Democrats and Republicans have ignored for 54 years when the 1964 Wilderness Act mandated this exchange. Money should not be needed for this exchange.

Conservationists with Common Sense – CWCS has been very vocal on this issue in our newsletters for nearly twenty years with no action taken.

The Obama Administration has already earmarked federal lands in their 234,000 acre land withdrawal that could easily be exchanged for the 83,000 acres of School Trust Lands in the Boundary Waters. No additional work is needed to figure out what federal lands to be exchanged. The rich mineral deposit lands in the Duluth Complex of northern Minnesota will generate the most revenue for the School Trust Fund which benefits all Minnesota schools.

Potential copper/nickel mining projects can be done safely in this area and protect our environment. Twin Metals is ten years out from any mine startup, and new technology will only insure such mining can be done safely.

New Babbitt company awarded $10,000 as “Best Startup”

(Continued from Page 6)

needs to buy a system. If a mining company, for example, wants sulfate removed from a mine pit lake or tailings basin or if it wishes to dewater an active mine, it would pay for the number of gallons treated or pounds of sulfate removed. The cost would be 80 to 90% below that of reverse osmosis.

Jeff Hanson graduated from Babbitt High School and maintains a home on the side of Birch Lake; he worked as an environmental engineer and business owner in Brazil for 30 years but has now returned to his native lands. Bill Newman is the owner and founder of RNAS Remediation Products a leading provider of bio Remediation products for in situ and groundwater remediation; he is also an avid kayaker and outdoorsman who co-authored two guidebooks on kayaking the Great Lakes. Rob Scarlett has been intimately involved in the mining industry in Minnesota and worldwide. They are poised to employ a good number of Range residents as soon as sulfate-reduction projects are implemented.

They point out that their economical solution for removing high sulfate concentra tion will support taconite mining jobs, offer protection for the environment, and develop new, good jobs in bioremediation.

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