50 years of the 1964 Wilderness Act

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the 1964 Wilderness Act into law. “AN ACT to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people, and for other purposes.”

DEFINITION OF WILDERNESS

Section 2 c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The United States now has 107,514,900 acres in 704 units of wilderness. They are managed by four Federal agencies: the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service (which manages around 33% of the total wilderness acres in the United States), and the National Park Service, (which manages the most acres of wilderness, about 40%).

The Forest Service, as well as many organizations, will be celebrating the anniversary of the Wilderness Act but few will remember the long battle it took to attain that piece of legislation.

Many will say the battle for saving wilderness and undeveloped lands began in the early 1900s with the designation of National Forest Service system which was established in 1905. Its mission was to ‘achieve quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people’. Some will say that mission of the National Forest Service has changed to manage the people, not the resource of land and timber.

The push for preserving wilderness areas began in the mid 1920s by many environmental groups all across the country. Much of the land of northern Minnesota was undeveloped at that time, but gradually more and more people discovered the beauty of the lakes and wooded area. Many of the people who were pushing for wilderness designation in northern Minnesota had holdings in the areas themselves.

Resorts, outfitters, cabins, and homes were built on many of the shores of the lakes all across what is now the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. There were as many as 400 property owners all across the Minnesota/Canadian border. Businesses were developed by returning veterans and pilots who started successful fly-in businesses to remote resorts. At one time Ely had the largest freshwater seaplane base in the United States.

In 1949, President Truman signed an executive order banning airplanes in the Boundary Waters. It was a knee-jerk reaction pushed by environmental groups mainly to stop fishermen from getting too deep into the wilderness and to prevent over fishing of the lakes. Rather than enforcing stricter rules and regulations, float planes were banned from landing on lakes of the Boundary Waters. This airplane ban was the demise of the fly-in fishing camps and resorts.

The Thye-Blatnik Act of 1948 gave Congress authority to acquire property in the Boundary Waters by purchase and/or condemnation with appropriations of $500,000. And in 1956 Minnesota Senators John Thye and Hubert Humphrey along with Minnesota Congressmen John Blatnik and Herman Andersen authored legislation to increase the funding to $2,500,000, and another $2,000,000 in 1961. The bill was named the Thye-Humphrey-Blatnik-Andersen Act of 1956.

In 1956, Congress took up the wilderness agenda but had trouble in obtaining the votes to pass legislation in both the House and Senate. It took eight long years to finally get legislation passed, and that was with the help of Minnesota’s Senator Humphrey.

Humphrey needed to endear himself to the hardworking residents of Minnesota who enjoyed fishing the many lakes of northern Minnesota. He knew the importance of reaching those lakes with motorboats, so Humphrey included ‘Special Provisions’ into the Wilderness Act that allowed the continued use of long-established use of motorboats. Also allowed to continue were logging, grazing, mineral leases, and the use of aircraft in some wilderness areas as well as snowmobiles.

A detailed Management Plan for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area came about after a lengthy study by Dr. George Selke. The Management Plan respected the Webster-Ashburton Treaty and allowed motorboat use on the International Boundary Route, including the portages. It listed the names of the lakes that would allow motors

(Continued on Page Six)
Public SDEIS hearings and forums on PolyMet

Three public hearings on PolyMet’s Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement or SDEIS, held in mid January, attracted over 4,000 mining supporters and anti-mining opponents. At all three hearings, pro-mining supporters were in the majority. Following those hearings, there have been several other forums to discuss the future of copper/nickel mining in northeast Minnesota. State and Federal representatives have come out in favor of PolyMet’s project as have several of the candidates vying for their positions. The City of Ely followed Virginia’s lead in passing a resolution in support of the PolyMet project.

In March, Aaron Klemz, Communications Director for the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness was invited by anti-mining groups to speak at Vermilion Community College. About fifty people attended the brief presentation given by Klemz, which turned into a question and answer session by many pro-mining supporters.

The same claims made at the SDEIS hearings were stated again. PolyMet would require hundreds of years of water treatment and potential pollution of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, even though PolyMet is in the Lake Superior Watershed; mining is a boom or bust industry; copper/nickel mining has never been done safely; there will not be the jobs as promised; financial assurance is needed; and that the proposed PolyMet mine will only last for twenty years.

Also in March, Up North Jobs and other Ely supporters of copper/nickel mining sponsored a forum on the economic impact of mining. Ely’s Jay Mackie gave a brief history of tourism and mining in the Ely area and how Ely’s economy cannot be sustained by tourism alone. The area needs the good paying jobs that PolyMet and Twin Metals will bring to the area.

In April, PolyMet CEO Joe Scipioni spoke at a public forum in Embarrass. Scipioni addressed many of the claims put forth by the anti-mining crowd.

As reported in the Ely Echo, Scipioni said the claim that PolyMet’s project will take 500 years of water treatment has been misinterpreted. Scipioni said that modeling scenarios done as part of the SDEIS showed that potential leakage from tailings basins was so small and so slow, that it took time-frames of 200 to 500 years to find maximum reference points.

“Even after 200 years or 500 years, there was no contamination of the water,” said Scipioni. Scipioni charged those models show that PolyMet “still met water quality parameters,” and PolyMet would also meet current state requirements for the protection of wild rice.

As to the number of jobs, Scipioni said the numbers would increase in phases. About 300 people would be employed initially and 60 jobs would be added once PolyMet begins the second phase.

As for financial assurances, it is written in Minnesota law that money needs to be put up front to address any environmental issues and reclamation when the mine closes.

Although the permit period is for twenty years, Scipioni said mineral deposit would be mined beyond twenty years. Minnesota state requirements in the permitting process is for twenty years at a time.

Numerous copper/nickel mines as well as other precious metals have been mined safely in other parts of the United States. In Stillwater, Montana, the Stillwater Good Neighbor Agreement is a pact between conservationists and North America’s only platinum/palladium mining operation that keeps disputes out of the courts while protecting two important Montana watersheds.

There are other mines as well that have operated safely - The Henderson Mine & Mill near Denver, Colorado; McLaughlin Mine 70 miles north of San Francisco; Cannon Mine in Washington state; Flambeau Mine near Ladysmith, WI and immediately adjacent to the Flambeau River; Viburnum Mine No. 27 - developed in geology similar to that found in southwestern Wisconsin’s lead-zinc mining district, the water from this lead-zinc sulfide mine, which operated from 1960 to 1978, is so clean it has served as the primary domestic water source for the town of Viburnum, Missouri since 1981.

Bisbee, Arizona’s Queen Mine is a tourist attraction like the Soudan Mine. It was one of the richest copper mines in history. The mine opened in 1877 and eventually closed when Phelps Dodge discontinued mining operations in Bisbee in the mid–1970’s. The Queen Mine opened once again as a tour for visitors in 1976, nearly 100 years after the mine originally opened.

Today approximately 50,000 people a year visit the Queen Mine Tour to commemorate Bisbee’s prosperous mining heritage and experience what it was like working underground.

Also in April, Becky Rom, who is leading the opposition to PolyMet Mining and Twin Metals Mining here in northern Minnesota brought Mike Clark to Ely. Clark held a presentation at Vermilion Community College. He headed the opposition of the New World gold mine near Yellowstone National Park back in the 1990s. Clark worked with the Greater Yellowstone Coalition to stop the gold mine and worked a deal with the Clinton administration to have money appropriated to pay off the gold mine to stop their operation.

Clark acknowledged the need to mining gold, copper, etc but said it needs to be done safely. He wasn’t as anti mining as Rom and her followers. He said there are mines that are mining with care for the environment, and also acknowledged the technology of today is far superior to that of years ago.
**Message from the President**

It was definitely another long winter in the northland of Minnesota! We had an abundance of snow and too many days of subzero temperatures. It made for great snowmobiling conditions, but the cold and snow lingered well into May again. This affected the late opening of numerous area lakes and delayed the spawning of walleyes. High water made for shorter portages at Newton and Pipestone.

My husband tried to do his annual walk of Four Mile Portage but it is still not passable all the way to Hoist Bay of Basswood. How many times do we have to get after the Forest Service to maintain this portage as a wheel portage as it is supposed to be doing? When the cooperators ran the Four Mile as a truck portage they maintained the road.

The 2014 winter was long in meetings as well. I attended each of the three PolyMet SDEIS hearings and also the several forums on copper/nickel mining in Ely and Embarrass.

Some may ask why is CWCS involved in this issue? CWCS’s Mission Statement is: To educate the public in order to preserve reasonable access to and sensible, multiple-use recreation of public lands and waters (including motorized uses) in northeastern Minnesota, especially the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). CWCS supports care for the environment including clean air, water and soil essential to present and future generations.

Also, CWCS believes in being environmentally, economically and socially responsible. The human factor must be put back into land management policies. The needs of local communities and all users can and must be balanced with the conservation of sensitive natural environments. Common Sense is needed in addressing economic development for the betterment of all.

I attended the graduation from Ely Memorial High School for our nephew in May. Forty-one graduates. That’s a far cry from the 140+ graduates in the 1960s and early 1970s when Ely really was a vibrant community. There have been a lot of changes over the years, and Ely is no longer the vibrant community we once were.

Temperatures have really been hot lately and fishing has been great. It’s so nice to finally see some activity on main street. Tourism is still pretty slow, but hopefully visitors will be heading north more and more each week.

CWCS is looking forward to another great year and will see you in Whiteside Park for the Blueberry Arts Festival in July and the Harvest Moon Festival in September.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Nancy McReady
CWCS President

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**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!**

Anti-mining groups are at it again with the never ending drive to stop all economic development in northeastern Minnesota. They are requesting that the U.S. Forest Service conduct a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) on mining in the Superior National Forest. This is another ploy to kill or delay the proposed copper/nickel mining by PolyMet at the former LTV mine site.

According to a recent letter to the editor in the Ely Echo, it stated the new 2012 PEIS is in use by the Forest Service. It further stated the new 2012 planning rule provides a process for planning that is adaptive and science-based, engages the public, and is designed to be effective, efficient, and within the Agency’s ability to implement. The new PEIS is intended to provide the flexibility to respond to the various social, economic, and ecologic needs across a very diverse system, while including a consistent set of process and content requirements for NFS land management plans.

So why the push by environmental groups in telling the Forest Service what to do, other than to go behind closed doors and with their 9-page letter to vilify copper/nickel mining?

Elected officials from Minnesota are all on the same page. The entire Iron Range legislative delegation, including Senators Tom Bakk of Cook, David Tomassoni of Chisholm, and Tom Saxhaug of Grand Rapids, along with Representatives Carly Melin of Hibbing, David Dill of Crane Lake, Tom Anzelc of Balsam Township, Joe Radinovich of Crosby and Jason Metsa of Virginia, have all signed a letter opposing another layer of environmental review. They even penned a letter to Minnesota’s two senators urging them “to work with the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and ask them to reject the call for a PEIS in the SNF.”

Minnesota’s Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken and Governor Dayton had tepid comments about not needing a PEIS. Klobuchar said, “Mining is a great Minnesota tradition, and so is protection of our environment and natural resources.” Franken said he’s been talking with the Forest Service. Governor Mark Dayton said the PolyMet project “is receiving incredibly thorough review.” Congressman Rick Nolan was the most outspoken on the issue; saying “enough is enough!”

Following the DFL convention in Duluth, DFL delegates voted to table support of copper/nickel mining and omit mining from the DFL party platform as they did in 2012. DFL Chair Rick Stafford moved to postpone indefinitely any debate on a proposed resolution.

Minnesota Republican endorsed candidates are 100 percent for mining, especially copper/nickel mining. A recent press conference at the Eveleth-Gilbert Airport included House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt, Attorney General candidate Scott Newman, State Auditor candidate Randy Gilbert, Secretary of State candidate Dan Severson, US Senate candidate Mike McFadden, Governor candidate Jeff Johnson, and 8th District Representative candidate Stewart Mills.
This past week city councils in Ely, Babbitt and Aurora passed resolutions in opposition to a proposed PEIS in the Superior National Forest. We’re sure this was done with the best of intentions, but the further we dig into this the stranger it gets.

To start with, a PEIS is a programmatic environmental impact statement. From what we can gather, instead of looking at one proposed mining project, the USFS would look at all projects and see what the impact would be.

The PEIS has been called a “stealth attack” on the future of mining in northeastern Minnesota. Those looking to support mining see this as a delay in getting projects underway and a duplication of other EIS already completed or in the works.

Understandably, this has a lot of folks very upset including Rep. Rick Nolan, the Iron Range delegation, industry groups and mining businesses.

What’s strange is no group or individual has had the intestinal fortitude to stand up and say that they requested that a PEIS be conducted. There have been plenty of fingers pointed at groups like Friends of the Boundary Waters, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, Sustainable Ely along with one person who has connections to those groups and who has consistently spoken against copper-nickel mining in northeast Minnesota. That person is Becky Rom of Ely.

So we called Rom and asked her if she or any of the groups she is affiliated with formally requested a PEIS from the Forest Service. As a former attorney, Rom is skilled at not answering questions. So we pressed and pressed some more.

Here’s the best of answers we could get:

“I’ve encouraged the agencies to do what’s required under the law and using the best science.”

“Nobody is pushing for an extra layer or extra delays or costs or more money. I’m just saying this is really important and doing right is following the law and basing decisions on the best science.”

“I did not pen any letter but I’ve had these discussions.”

“As far as I know there’s no formal process for a request like a petition.”

We specifically asked if Rom had approached U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary Robert Bonnie (who oversees the USFS).

“I never talked about this to Mr. Bonnie.”

We put a phone call into the USFS office in Duluth but weren’t able to get any answers prior to deadline on the Thursday prior to Memorial Day weekend.

We checked the news releases of the various groups who have been accused of asking for the PEIS and found nothing. Nobody wants to claim they asked for this.

Then, late Thursday a Freedom of Information Act request by Twin Metals-Minnesota was granted. Upon request, they shared those documents with us. If anyone would like a copy, just send us an email.

In the documents provided by the Bureau of Land Management was a letter asking for the PEIS. The agency requesting the PEIS? Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness. And who is the vice-chair of NEMW? Becky Rom.

We also have copies of emails sent by Rom outlining a meeting with the BLM where the agenda included: “The BLM, together with the Forest Service, should undertake a programmatic environmental impact statement.”

Rom told us the first she heard of the PEIS was when Tom Rukavina, an aide for Congressman Rick Nolan, was in Ely on March 5. We’d like to refresh her memory.

A letter sent Jan. 23 from the attorney for NEMW specifically requests that the BLM and the USFS undertake a PEIS. The letter even references a meeting held on Dec. 10, 2013 with Bonnie and NEMW members.

The letter to Bonnie is nine pages long and is a multi-pronged attack on copper-nickel mining in northeast Minnesota. It specifically targets Twin Metals Minnesota.

Groups like the Friends and NEMW have long-sought to expand the federally established boundaries of the BWCA. Their newest tactic is using watersheds to define the BWCA. If water flows toward the BWCA it should be treated as if it were in the wilderness is their logic.

In the letter to Bonnie, Rom’s group states: “The EIS should include as an alternate the withdrawal of federal minerals from leasing and development within the Boundary Waters watershed.”

We attempted to contact Rom after receiving this information. She did not respond.

The response from elected officials against NEMW’s request has come from both city councils and state elected officials.

The Range Delegation, including Sen. Tom Bakk and Rep. David Dill, have sent a letter to Senators Al Franken and Amy Klobuchar to follow Nolan’s lead and reject a call for a PEIS in the Superior National Forest.

“Copper-nickel mining will provide thousands of construction and long-term mining jobs, thousands of spin-off jobs, and billions of dollars in new investment and economic growth. This is a tremendous opportunity for both the region and the state,” the letter states.

“Mining with the SNF has been thoroughly studied over the past 50 years, and has repeatedly been found to be compatible and consistent with federal policy encouraging multiple-use of national forest and state policy encouraging mineral development,” the letter states.

One of the best responses to this whole PEIS political football came from Rep. Nolan who has the advantage of serving in the House prior to the 1978 BWCAW Act and being back in D.C. today.

He told the Mesabi Daily News the issue “has already been resolved as policy. It was resolved a long time ago during the Boundary Waters debate in 1978.”

He said a deal was made when 1.1 million acres for the BWCAW were taken out of multiple use, “the remaining federal lands were supposed to be used for mining and forestry. It’s a matter of law and public policy.”

That outlook won’t work with Rom or others who are convinced that it is impossible for copper-nickel mining to be done here without damaging the environment. There is no regard for the multitude of laws and regulations on the books or the advances in technology. For Rom it can’t be done. Ever. Period.

We find it most amusing that the anti-mining crowd is always clamoring for transparency and openness from companies like PolyMet and Twin Metals.

Yet when the tables are turned, groups like NEMW hide their actions. They don’t consult with the elected officials or the public. They don’t make their actions known.

And worst of all, when they are asked to respond to questions we get lawyer-speak and double talk.

Did Rom write a letter to the Under Secretary for the Department of Agriculture? Maybe not. But the attorney for the organization she is the vice-chair for did. Now how hard would it be to just say that?

“I never talked about this to Mr. Bonnie.”

Maybe not, Ms. Rom, but now we know that Northeast Minnesotans for Wilderness is behind this and has been since last December. There’s no talking around that.
Copper/nickel mining can be done without harming wild rice

Edited reprint from MinnPost • Commentary by Harlan Christensen - Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

In March, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency canceled their recommendation whether changes are needed to the state’s sulfate standard for wild rice, which could eventually lead to new enforcement affecting mining operations, wastewater treatment plants and other industries.

Two important scientific studies, from the University of California, Berkley, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, provide scientific evidence that waters with elevated levels of iron significantly reduce mercury methylation, which is harmful to humans and animals, while reducing the sulfides that inhibit growth of wild rice seedlings.

Iron: The Elephant in the River:

"Reduction of Net Mercury Methylation by Iron... Implications for Engineered Wetlands" published in Vol. 37, No.13, 2003 Environmental Science & Technology provides extremely detailed research, conducted both in test tubes and sediment, that mercury methylation actually decreases with increasing concentrations of iron. The researchers write, “These experiments provide evidence that the concentration of (iron), a variable not previously considered in mercury methylation studies, influences the extent of net (mercury) methylation.” More recently, the March 2014 publication MPCA Wild Rice Sulfate Standard Study Preliminary Analysis revealed that water iron levels greater than 1 milligram per liter bonds to sulfide, making it nontoxic to wild rice. The MPCA testing revealed whopping levels of 8.0 to 84.6 mg/L of iron are present in waters throughout the proposed future copper/precious metals mining area in northeastern Minnesota.

Updated Environmental Standards are needed for Iron Range:

In 1999, Minnesota’s Department of Health published the fact sheet Sulfate in Well Water, which recommends a sulfate limit of 400 milligrams per liter for water used in infant formula, but sets a 10mg/L in wild rice waters. According to the MPCA, no other state has this wild rice water standard.

In the absence of iron, bacteria in sediment can convert 10 mg/L of sulfate into about 150 micrograms per liter of sulfide and begin to affect the growth of wild rice seedlings.

However, with new scientific evidence that sufficient iron makes sulfide non-toxic, the MPCA notes, “Considerable data suggest that in some cases the development of a site-specific standard would be protective of wild rice production.”

The MPCA study even contains a chemical formula that determines the level of sulfate needed to overwhelm the ability of iron to precipitate harmful sulfides from wild rice waters, which can be used to establish water sulfate standards based on regional levels of iron content.

In a recent Star Tribune article, Kathryn Hoffman, an attorney with nonprofit law firm Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, said the state’s environmental standard remains in place because the state’s research supports it. “And this is science,” she said. “Not democracy.”

This IS science, chemistry to be more exact.

The 10mg/L sulfate standard is defensible in waters that contain no iron content. But Ms. Hoffman appears to ignore the scientific evidence that invalidates her organization’s steadfast opposition to precious metals mining. Iron Range waters are loaded with iron.

Updating our wild rice sulfate standards will benefit towns in northeast Minnesota whose water treatment facilities cannot meet the current standard. Chris Vreeland, a Hoyt Lakes city councilor, in a recent WDIO interview explained, “I managed a waste water treatment facility for 33 years, and we always had issues with sulfates. We learned today that it could cost $130 per household if we have to build a reverse osmosis plant to treat the water further.”

There is sufficient scientific evidence to support the contention that precious metals mining in the iron-rich Minnesota arrowhead region can be done without harming wild rice. PolyMet Mining explains on their website how protecting wild rice is important to them because wild rice is sacred to tribes who live in the region.

Twin Metals recently published its proposal for revitalizing Minnesota’s mining industry for at least 100 years while protecting the environment.

Based on this new scientific evidence, Gov. Dayton should direct MPCA to update Minnesota’s antiquated and unreasonable “one-size-fits-all” 1973 wild rice sulfate standard.

Updated regulations will ensure the environment is protected. The enormous tax benefits of mining an estimated $3 trillion in copper and precious metals will pay for improving our schools, our roads and many other projects important to voters.
Jay Mackie has lived in the Ely area for over seventy years, and worked at Reserve Mining Company and then Northshore Mining Company. He has seen the ups and downs of the taconite industry and he has been around long enough to see the impact of mining, timber and tourism over the years.

Mackie explained what he understood sustainability to be at a March forum in Ely. The ability to maintain a certain desired state for an extended period of time without requiring outside intervention, help, aid or support. He followed that with a brief history of the Ely area.

Mackie began his history in 1940, when logging and mining were principle industries and tourism was still in its infancy. He spoke how things changed after the war, with soldiers returning to the Iron Range. They were able to obtain jobs in the mines or in logging. Tourism began to expand with motorboats for fishing, fly-in resorts and outfitters.

A big impact to the tourism industry was felt with the air ban that eliminated the fly-in resorts and the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act that also restricted logging. Further restrictions were implemented with other legislation. Canoe tourism expanded, but remains to be a seasonal, four-month industry, whereas mining is a year-round industry.

Mackie spoke about the negative impacts that followed, such as the raising of taxes for everyone and the intervention of government services to the area.

“We began to see ourselves becoming a community of old people,” said Mackie. “In 1985, the average age in Ely was above 60.”

The steel industry had a down turn in the 1980s and saw the closing of Reserve Mining Company. LTV followed with its closing in the 1990s.

“One result of this recession, which most people do not know, is that our hospital was a hair breath away from declaring bankruptcy,” said Mackie. “When I was on the hospital board in 1985 the ongoing occupancy was less than 1 patient per day.”

Declining population, mines closing, timber industry in a slump, and a short tourism season have all led to our schools becoming panhandlers with their hands out for donations to continue their sports programs.

Mackie referred to a letter sent out by the Ely Area Food Shelf seeking assistance in feeding the area’s poor. The letter stated the median household income here is less than $35,000.

“This means that for Ely we are $24,000 or nearly 41% less than the state average,” said Mackie. “Is this what we want to sustain?”

The same letter said about 600 people in Ely lived on below the poverty level, making less than $23,000 a year. This group of people is increasing and the Food Shelf has provided food distribution in the amount of 10,000 pounds in 2012.

“Is this what we want to sustain?” asked Mackie.

Mackie also spoke about our declining business community citing that there are thirty business storefronts closed on Sheridan Street and eight business storefronts closed on Chapman Street.

Again Mackie asked, “Is this what we want to sustain?”

In closing, Mackie said he was convinced that the PolyMet project can be done safely and protect our environment. The rules and regulations are there to be followed.

“These are the businesses which will enable us, our children, and grandchildren the opportunity to be economically sound and sustainable today, tomorrow and well into the future,” said Mackie. “The viability of Ely and of NE Minnesota will be insured and the environment which we know and enjoy today will continue to exist.”

50 years of the 1964 Wilderness Act

(Continued from Page One)

(most of these lakes were excluded in the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act and changed to non-motorized). Twenty-two snowmobile routes and the continuation of the truck and rail portages were included in the Management Plan.

For the most part, dams would be allowed to disintegrate except for small dams to maintain water levels adequate for canoe travel. Existing structures were allowed to be maintained to preserve existing shorelines and for the operation of truck portages.

The Management Plan even addressed the use of animals to haul wagons, drays and other vehicles as being prohibited. Nowhere in the 1964 Wilderness Act or in the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act are the use of sled dogs addressed.

A section of the 1964 Wilderness Act led to the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act.

Section 3 (c) Within ten years after the effective date of this Act the Secretary of the Interior shall review every roadless area of five thousand contiguous acres or more in the national parks, monuments, and other units of the national park system and every such area of, and every roadless island within, the national wildlife refuges and game ranges, under his jurisdiction on the effective date of this Act and shall report to the President his recommendation as to the suitability or non-suitability of each such area or island for preservation as wilderness.

In 1974, when Jim Oberstar was elected to Congress, this was the first issue he addressed. The Boundary Waters had been logged over several times; had roads through it; motorboats and snowmobiles were used; and there were many property owners in the Boundary Waters. Oberstar’s plan was to retract the center portion of the Boundary Waters and have it designated as a National Recreation Area.

This began the battle which led to the so-called compromise of the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act which added another 50,000 acres to the Boundary Waters, banned logging of these 50,000 acres which were known as the Portal Zone; eliminated many more lakes that allowed motors (16 of the 1100 lakes of the Boundary Waters still allow up to a 25hp on them); the 22 snowmobile routes were reduced to two access routes to Canada – one at Saganaga Lake and the other at Crane Lake; snowmobiles were phased out by the end of 1983; the Boundary Waters Canoe Area was given Wilderness designation.

This year marks 25 years of Conservationists with Common Sense – CWCS continuing to preserve multiple use access of public lands and waters, including in the Boundary Waters.

CWCS thanks all who have continued to support our efforts to retain what uses we still have in the Boundary Waters so many more people are able to enjoy our wonderful ‘backyard’.

Two excellent books to read more about wilderness designation: Saving Quetico-Superior: A Land Set Apart - by R. Newell Searle and Trouble Waters - by Kevin Proescholdt, Rip Rapson & Miron L. Heinselman
Celebrating 50 years of the 1964 Wilderness Act with this 'Wilderness Approved' boat!

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