



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 31 2016

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2256 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman McCollum:

Thank you for your letter of February 2, 2016, regarding the management of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and Voyageurs National Park. I share your concern with respect to these special resources, and I apologize for the delayed response.

The BWCAW is noted for its abundant ecological diversity, pristine wildlands, and exceptional recreational opportunities. Lands within the Superior National Forest, south and southwest of the BWCAW, are also known for occurrences of copper, nickel, platinum, palladium, gold, and silver. We share your concerns that inappropriate mining could do irreparable damage. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is working closely with the Bureau of Land Management to review the status of the pending lease renewals and explore options for more comprehensively analyzing and mitigating the potential impacts to the watershed.

Again, thank you for writing and for your long-time support of this special place. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact Todd Batta, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, at

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary