

Boundary Waters Action Fund
2019-2020 Election Cycle Report

**BOUNDARY WATERS
ACTION FUND** 



Dear supporter,

I am pleased to share with you an annual report for the Boundary Waters Action Fund, a 501c4 partner of Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness (NMW), NMW is the lead organization in the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, a national coalition of 400+ businesses and conservation and hunting and fishing groups. The Boundary Waters Action Fund ran two electoral politics programs in 2019 and 2020, and engaged in lobbying for permanent protection of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from sulfide-ore copper mining proposed on public lands in the watershed. This report describes our political work during the 2019-2020 cycle.

Thank you for supporting the work of the Boundary Waters Action Fund. You are an important partner in achieving permanent protection of the Boundary Waters.

For the Wilderness,

Alex Falconer

Director, Boundary Waters Action Fund

Executive Summary

The Boundary Waters Action Fund, a 501c4 Minnesota nonprofit corporation, is affiliated with Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness (NMW), a 501c3 Minnesota nonprofit corporation, and NMW's Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. The Boundary Waters Action Fund engages in lobbying for protective legislation and electoral politics, all toward the goal of permanently protecting the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from sulfide-ore copper mining. The Boundary Waters Action Fund ran two programs during the 2019-2020 cycle, one aimed at the Presidential election and one focused on building Boundary Waters Champions in Minnesota.

In July 2019, the Boundary Waters Action Fund launched its Presidential campaign in Iowa, the home of the first Presidential caucus, by hiring an organizer to educate Iowa caucus attendees and Presidential candidate staff about the threat to the Boundary Waters posed by sulfide-ore copper mining in the headwaters of the Wilderness. Iowans are regular visitors to the Boundary Waters, and care about its preservation. Iowa presented a unique opportunity to nationalize the issue and present America's concerns to candidates running for the office of President. The Boundary Waters Action Fund program in Iowa was a success: twelve candidates for President became Boundary Waters Champions by pledging to support permanent protection of the Boundary Waters watershed from copper-nickel mining, and the top three winners in the Iowa caucuses were Boundary Waters Champions.



The Boundary Waters Action Fund launched its Minnesota electoral program in July 2020, building off its successful 2019-2020 caucus/primary program which elevated the copper mining threat to the Boundary Waters as one of the top public lands issues in the nation. Ahead of the general election, the Boundary Waters Action Fund unveiled new public opinion research, advocated at the federal and state levels, drove a narrative about the Boundary Waters, worked with a cross-cutting coalition of partners, and mobilized the public.

While the 2020 election on the whole showed that the country remains largely divided among many issues, this is not the case with copper-nickel mining next to the Boundary Waters. The results in Minnesota speak for themselves: Protecting the Boundary Waters is not only the right thing to do – it's good politics. Minnesota voters want their elected officials to protect the Boundary Waters from copper-nickel mining next to the Wilderness, and not leave it vulnerable to dangerous mining that threatens the Wilderness ecosystem and the thriving outdoor recreation economy it supports.

Public Opinion

The Boundary Waters Action Fund worked with ALG Research on a statewide poll in July 2020. The results confirmed our longstanding belief: **the Boundary Waters is the crown jewel of Minnesota, and voters expect their elected officials to continue working across the aisle to permanently protect this special place.** The ALG poll formed the foundation of our communications and outreach.

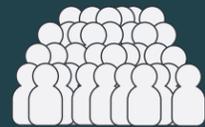
Polling Topline Messages:



The Boundary Waters is uniquely popular among Minnesotans – the area gets an **84% favorability rating**, with a notable **66% very favorable toward the Wilderness.**



The positivity toward the Boundary Waters crosses geographic, demographic, and ideological lines and is bolstered by the view that outdoor recreation and tourism are significantly more important to Minnesota's economy than mining (45% outdoor / 10% mining / 35% both).



Opposition crosses partisan lines, with Democrats opposed by a 69 point margin, Independents by 48, and Republicans by 3.



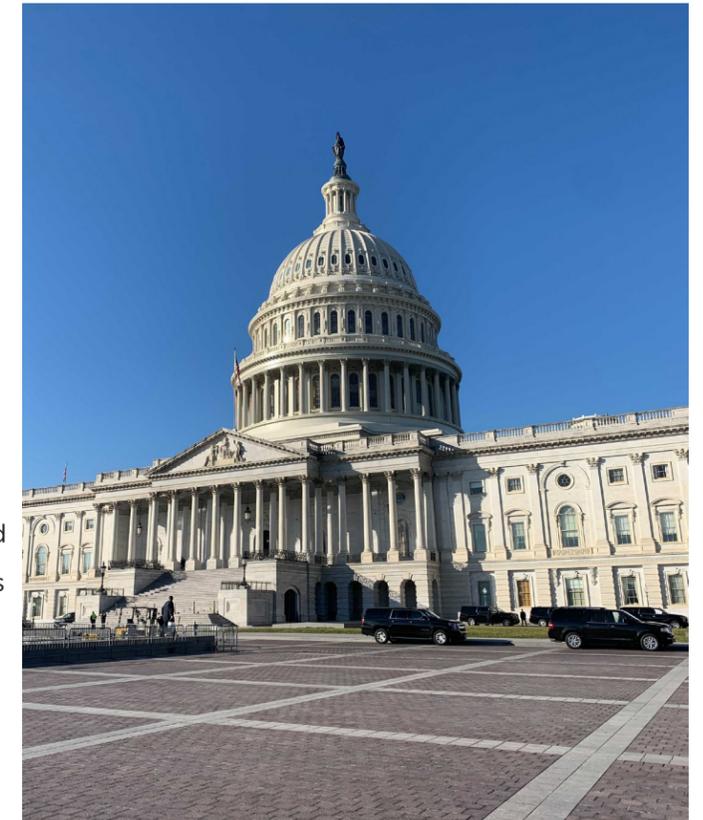
Overall, **68% of Minnesota voters favor permanently protecting the Boundary Waters** from sulfide-ore copper mining. Only 18% of Minnesotans oppose such protections.

Federal Advocacy

In January 2020, U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum introduced her Boundary Waters protection bill in the U.S. House of Representatives with bipartisan support. HR 5598 would permanently protect the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining by withdrawing 234,328 acres of National Forest lands in the watershed of the Wilderness from mining. HR 5598 matches the Obama administration's application for a 20-year withdrawal, prematurely cancelled by the Trump administration. The Boundary Waters Action Fund is working toward the introduction of a companion bill in the U.S. Senate and re-introduction in the U.S. House in the 117th Congress.

As a result of the Boundary Waters Action Fund's electoral advocacy, twelve Democratic presidential candidates pledged to protect the Boundary Waters from copper-nickel mining, and national and local media paid increased attention to the saliency of the issue in Iowa, Minnesota, and throughout the Midwest.

Throughout the course of the general election in Minnesota, the Republican Party and President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, and U.S. Senate candidate Jason Lewis campaigned aggressively on a pro-copper mining, pro-Twin Metals platform, Minnesotans overwhelmingly rejected this agenda and voted in Boundary Waters Champions up and down the ballot. The election of Joe Biden as president, Tina Smith's re-election in the U.S. Senate, and victories for four out of five Boundary Waters Action Fund endorsed Congressional candidates proved once again that support for the Boundary Waters is bipartisan and broad.





State Advocacy

Our Minnesota electoral work laid the groundwork for the introduction of a Boundary Waters protection bill in the Minnesota Legislature. We strengthened relationships in the Minnesota Senate by loaning one of our regional organizers to the Senate DFL Caucus. The 61 winners endorsed by the Boundary Waters Action Fund form a nucleus of support during the 2021 legislative session. Among them, Minnesota State Representatives Kelly Morrison and Jim Davnie, Minnesota Senator Steve Cwodzinski, and other Boundary Waters Champions plan to introduce legislation during the 2021 legislative session that would ban sulfide-ore copper mining on state lands in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters, Canada's Quetico Park, and Voyageurs National Park. In addition, DFL leadership in the House and the Senate have pledged their support.

Narrative Drumbeat

The Boundary Waters Action Fund built a narrative drumbeat throughout the three months leading up to the election. Each week, the Boundary Waters Action Fund released a fact sheet on themes such as clean water, economic impact, and bipartisan support for the Boundary Waters. We distributed press releases and partner social media toolkits to promote the fact sheets to the press and broader public audiences.

There are countless stories to tell about the Boundary Waters, and we let Minnesotans and visitors tell those stories in their own words. One standout example is a 30-second video featuring Carl Madsen, a former union electrician and owner of Rockwood Outfitters on the edge of the Boundary Waters. The Boundary Waters Action Fund shared Carl's video organically on social media and through paid programmatic ads.



Vote Boundary Waters 2020 Fundraiser with Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Al Franken

On October 8, the Boundary Waters Action Fund held a virtual fundraising event with seven candidates who are Boundary Waters Champions hosted by Julia Louis-Dreyfus and former U.S. Senator Al Franken. The event raised \$140,000.

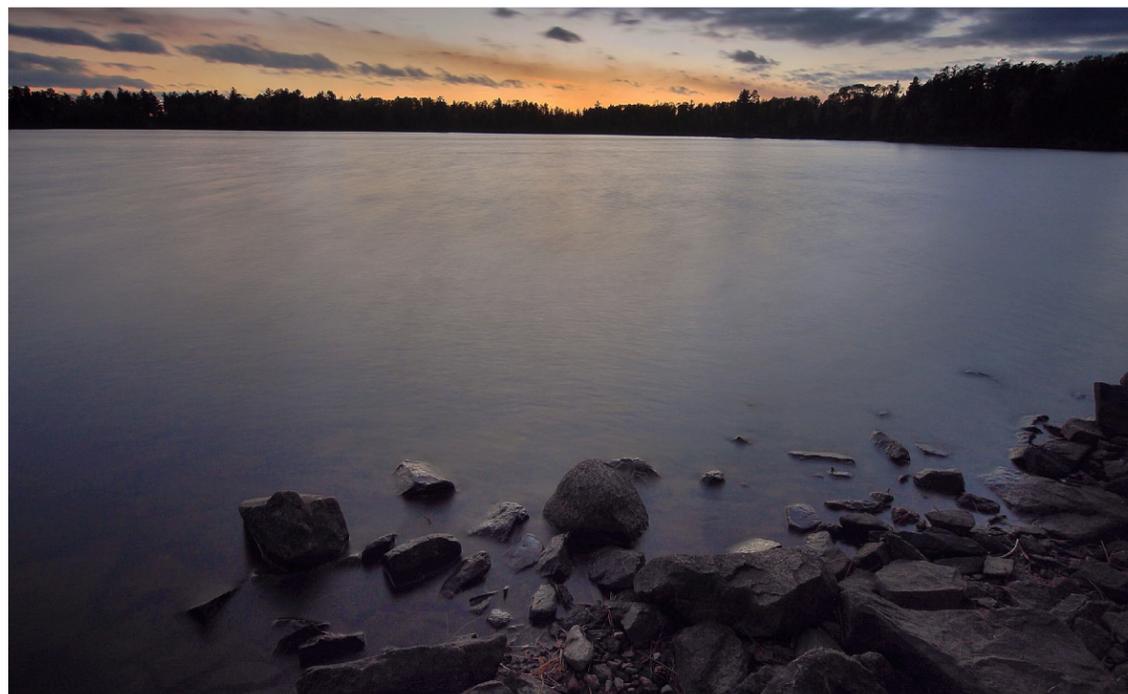
On the call, State Reps. Morrison and Davnie announced their plans to introduce a bill banning sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters.



Partnerships

Not only did the Boundary Waters Action Fund raise the importance of protecting this iconic place, we built a broad coalition of partners who carried the message with us. We worked with environmental organizations, particularly their 501c4 arms, to emphasize the unacceptable environmental threats of a sulfide-ore copper mine at the edge of the Wilderness. Our green group partners include The Wilderness Society Action Fund, the League of Conservation Voters, the Sierra Club, US PIRG, and the National Parks Conservation Association Action Fund. Beyond those partners, our team has built relationships with the Senate and House DFL caucuses, local outfitters, resorts and outdoor gear manufacturers, veterans, sportsmen, and national grassroots. The Boundary Waters Action Fund continues to work with these partnerships to do outreach with the incoming administration.

- The Wilderness Society Action Fund
- The League of Conservation Voters
- The Sierra Club
- National Park Conservation Association Action Fund
- US Public Interest Research Group
- Senate DFL Caucus
- House DFL Caucus
- Patagonia
- Veterans for the Boundary Waters
- Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters
- Wilderness businesses, including outfitters, resorts, and outdoor gear manufacturers



Grassroots Organizing

The Boundary Waters Action Fund carried out a robust grassroots organizing campaign to raise awareness about the issue and get out the vote. Our message was simple: The Boundary Waters is on the ballot in this election. The Boundary Waters Action Fund also amplified the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters' 501c3 messaging to keep the public informed amidst an uncertain election cycle. When a federal appeals court ruled that ballots cast in Minnesota must be received by 8 pm on Election Day, the Boundary Waters Action Fund spread the word to drop off ballots or vote in person. The team distributed 145 "Vote Boundary Waters" yard signs in targeted districts, sent more than 35,000 texts to eligible voters, and sent a direct mail piece to 9,000 18-35 year-olds asking them to vote for Boundary Waters Champions.

The Boundary Waters Action Fund ran a highly targeted digital ads program with programmatic video, Facebook and Instagram display, serving well over 5 million impressions between July and November. The programmatic ads, which used Carl Madsen's 30-second video as creative, delivered an 87.80% video completion rate (VCR). On Facebook, our ad creative progressed from general issue awareness to messages on voting early and finally to getting out the vote. Our sustained digital organizing efforts also resulted in email list growth. The Boundary Waters Action Fund generated 470 new contacts, 258 of which were from Minnesota.



Boundary Waters Action Fund @BWCAaction · Oct 19, 2020
The Boundary Waters is on the ballot this election. Protect Minnesota's clean water legacy by voting for Boundary Waters champions. Learn more: boundarywatersaction.org/endorsements #votebwca #savethebwca



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Financials

“We could not have made it to this historic moment without your generosity and faith in our work. Each of you are critical to our success of our work to permanently protect the Boundary Waters. We are truly grateful for your support.”

2019

\$119,000 raised

777 Donors

Avg. Gift of **\$121**

2020

\$322,000 raised

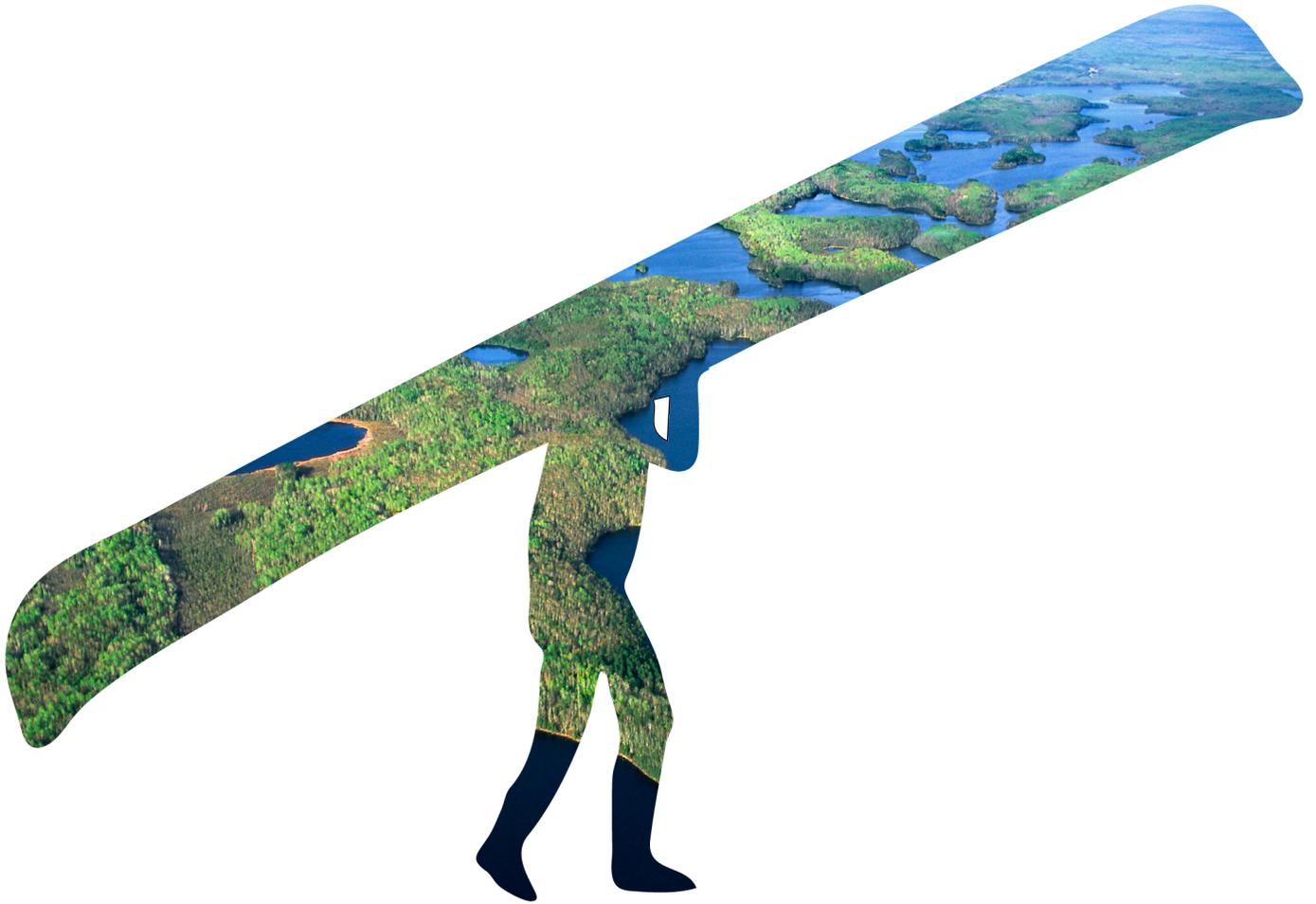
931 Donors

Avg. Gift of **\$273**

\$110,000 grants

\$212,000 individuals





Prepared and paid for by the Boundary Waters Action Fund.
The Boundary Waters Action Fund is a 501(c)4 dedicated to
protecting the Boundary Waters Wilderness from the threat of
sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters.

