## Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515

March 30, 2017

The Honorable Ken Calvert Chairman Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies U.S. House of Representatives 2007 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable Betty McCollum Ranking Member Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies U.S. House of Representatives 1016 Longworth HOB Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin crafting the Fiscal Year 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we encourage the subcommittee to prevent funding for the Obama Administration's last-minute application for withdrawal of 234,328 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands, for a 20-year term, within the Rainy River Watershed on the Superior National Forest from disposition under United States mineral and geothermal leasing laws.

The application has already begun to sour future investment in the state and will have enormous adverse impacts on the entire region's economy. If approved, it will kill several environmentally responsible development projects currently being studied while restricting future development of a broad swath of northern Minnesota, negatively affecting the region's employment and economic growth.

Countless individuals and local businesses have weighed-in against the application. The Lake County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution opposing the proposed withdrawal. One company that has already invested hundreds of millions of dollars for potential development in the area acknowledged, "The withdrawal of federal minerals from future development, and the related impacts of negating future development of state and private minerals, will have a devastating impact on the region's economy, eliminating the promise of thousands of good-paying jobs and billions of dollars in local investment."

The federal government owns nearly seven percent of the land in Minnesota. However, the protections provided to Minnesota's pristine landscape are largely the result of its citizens and their desire to preserve our way of life. If all development and economic activity is prohibited, that way of life will come to a grinding halt. Sound environmental stewardship and positive economic growth do not have to be mutually exclusive.

Congress must act to prevent severe economic losses to the state of Minnesota, the surrounding region and the U.S. economy that will occur if this misguided withdrawal is implemented.

Accordingly, we ask that you include language similar to the following in this fiscal year's bill:

None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to finalize, implement or enforce the proposed application for withdrawal of approximately 234,328 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands, for a 20-year term, within the Rainy River Watershed on the Superior National Forest from disposition under United States mineral and geothermal leasing laws as published by the United States Forest Service in the Federal Register on January 13, 2017 (82 Fed. Reg. 4282 et seq.).

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Tom Emmer

Member of Congress

Sincerely,

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S

Member of Congress

Rob Bishop

Member of Congress

Scott R. Tipton

Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn

Member of Congress

Tom McClintock

Member of Congress

Bruce Westerman

Member of Congress

Steve Pearce

Member of Congress

Kevin Cramer

Member of Congress