

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



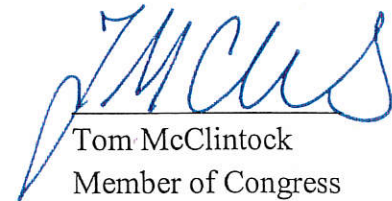
Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



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