



Protecting clean water, healthy communities, and the Boundary Waters  
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## **ELY, MINNESOTA: GATEWAY TO THE WILDERNESS—OR MINING TOWN?**

### Gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

Ely is internationally known as a major entry point to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The Boundary Waters Wilderness is:

- The most heavily visited wilderness area in the entire National Wilderness Preservation System (250,000 people annually)
- At 1.1 million acres in size, the largest wilderness area east of the Rockies and north of the Everglades
- The only significant lakeland wilderness in the National Wilderness Preservation System; travel is primarily through lakes and waterways
- One of the 54 original units in the National Wilderness Preservation System created by the 1964 Wilderness Act, accounting for one-ninth of the original National Wilderness Preservation System area of 9.1 million acres
- The beneficiary of significant additional protection by the 1978 BWCAW Act, Public Law 95-495
- Within the Superior National Forest, established by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909
- The direct descendant of administrative wilderness protections granted in 1926, when the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture protected 640,000 acres of the Superior National Forest as wilderness
- Critical habitat for one endangered species (lynx), one recently de-listed endangered species (wolf), and one species of special concern to the State of Minnesota (moose)
- Of particular importance to the State of Minnesota, which as early as 1902 recognized the area's significance and asked the federal government to withdraw the area from homesteading and other entry. The State requested three land withdrawals that formed the basis for the establishment of the Superior National Forest

• Inclusive of Minnesota's only state wilderness area, Burntside State Forest  
The South Kawishiwi River and downstream lakes and rivers are an important recreation area and canoe route into the Boundary Waters Wilderness. Many of these waters are classified by the State of Minnesota as "outstanding resource value waters." Located along or near the South Kawishiwi River are:

- Twenty-six resorts, camps, and campgrounds and hundreds of private cabins and homes; lakeshore properties alone are taxed on a value of \$318 million

- Four protected research areas (South Kawishiwi Protected Lands, Kawishiwi Pines Scientific and Natural Area, Kawishiwi Experimental Forest, and Keeley Creek Research Natural Area)

Ely has received numerous accolades. From the Ely Chamber of Commerce:

ELY...BEST OF.....

1. National Geographic Traveler, Oct. 1999.  
Boundary Waters—"Fifty Places of a Lifetime"- one of the fifty places in the world that everyone should visit.
2. Charles Kuralt, late CBS newsman – named Ely #1 vacation destination.
3. Sports Afield Magazine, February, 1999  
Ely- Best Outdoor Sports Town in Minnesota
4. Canoe and Kayak Magazine, Canoe Journal  
Ely- Canoe Capital of the World -  
America's Top 10 Paddling Towns – August, 1998
5. Midwest Living Magazine, August, 1997  
Ely- One of 15 Best Wilderness Getaways,
6. Supertrax International Magazine, Fall 2004  
Ely-One of the 10 Best Incomparable Snowmobile Adventures
7. USA Today, August 10, 2007  
BWCAW – One of 10 Great Places to do the Old Snowshoe
8. Midwest Living Magazine, June 2007  
Ely- One of 100 Best Small Town Getaways
9. USA Today, August 10, 2007  
Ely – One of 10 Great Small Towns with Huge Backyards
10. MSN City Guides, December, 2007  
Ely - #7 America's 10 Best Outdoor Towns
11. Field & Stream Magazine, January, 2008  
Ely- #12 America's Top 20 Fishing Towns
12. Real Simple Magazine, April 2008  
Ely- One of the 10 Hidden Gems of the United States
13. Lakeshore Dreams.com Magazine, October 19, 2009  
Top Ten Lake City
14. National Geographic Adventure Magazine, October 2009  
100 Best Adventure Towns
15. Outside Magazine, August 2009  
Ely – One of the Top Best Small Towns in the Country
16. Budget Travel Magazine, June 2010  
Coolest Small Town in America
17. Minnesota Moments, August 2010  
Best Hometown in Minnesota 2010
18. Reader's Digest  
America's Most Interesting Town (8<sup>th</sup> week of contest)  
April 2012 (Contest ran March 2-May 31)

### Mining Town

The last mine (underground iron ore) closed in early 1967.