THE LANDSCAPE

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is the most popular wilderness area in the National Wilderness Preservation System, receiving well over 200,000 visitors per year. Established by Congress in the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Boundary Waters was expanded and accorded additional protection by Congress in 1978. Congress acted "for the protection, enhancement and preservation of the natural values of the lakes, waterways, and associated forested areas . . . and . . . [to protect] the special qualities of the area as a natural forest-lakeland wilderness ecosystem of major esthetic, cultural, scientific, recreational and educational value to the Nation." Public Law 95-495, Section 1; United States Congress, October 21, 1978

THE PATH *of* POLLUTION

Intensive exploratory drilling has occurred a few miles southeast of Ely along the Spruce Road and the South Kawishiwi River, and around and in Birch Lake. A mining company called Twin Metals, which is owned by Chilean giant Antofagasta and Canadian company Duluth Metals, has obtained more than 500,000 feet of core samples. If mining is permitted in that area, any sulfuric acid, sulfate, and heavy metal pollution that occurs will discharge into groundwater, lakes, and rivers that flow into the heart of the Boundary Waters. Such pollution would be carried through the South Kawishiwi River, Birch Lake, White Iron Lake, and Fall Lake. Water from Fall Lake flows into Basswood Lake, which is a great fishing lake along the border with Canada and the lake that many people primarily associate with the Boundary Waters; Basswood will be directly in the path of any pollution. From Basswood, the water flows west through the spectacular lakes along the U.S.—Canadian Border and on to the Rainy River. Many sustainable businesses dependent on clean water and a healthy ecosystem lie along the route that the pollution would follow. Of Ely's 40 resorts and camps listed with the Chamber of Commerce, half of them lie along this route.