

MEETING MINUTES: CCCoLA OCTOBER 9, 2025

PRESENT: BETSY BLUME (DEVIL TRACK LAKE), KATHY BOGEN (LOON LAKE), BARB BOTTGER, PATTI CRADDOCK (POPLAR LAKE), GAIL GIESEKE (Greenwood), WOLFGANG GREINER (DEVIL TRACK), LINDA HAY (SEAGULL/SAGINAGA), RORY LAIHO (SOUTH GREENWOOD LAKE ROAD OWNERS), GARY MACIEJEWSKI (TAIT LAKE), IRENE MULLEN (CARIBOU LAKE), LARRY MULLEN (CARIBOU LAKE (HUNGRY JACK), MARGRE LIND MILLS (PIKE LAKE), JOHN MILLS (PIKE LAKE), MARK PETERSON (East Greenwood Lake Property Owners), MARY PETERSON (East Greenwood Lake Property Owners), DANIEL SWENSEN-KLATT (HUNGRY JACK), JERRY WILKES (DEVIL TRACK), ANN SULLIVAN (DISTRICT 4 COOK COUNTY COMMISSIONER)

GUEST PRESENTERS – CHRIS KNOPF (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FRIENDS OF THE BOUNDARY WATERS), Paula Maccabee (Executive Director, Water Legacy) Aaron Klemz (Chief Strategy Officer, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy), Ingrid Lyons, (Executive Director, Save the Boundary Waters)

Note: This meeting was structured as a panel discussion to explore the topic of copper nickel sulfide mining in Northern Minnesota, to better understand the approach each of the represented organizations are taking to oppose this threat to Minnesota's waters and shorelands, and how CCCoLA can support these efforts. CCCoLA members are encouraged to view the meeting recording and transcript.

Item	Discussion	Action
Welcome and introductions	Members and guest presenters introduced themselves and the lake/road/property owner associations and organizations they are affiliated with.	
Question #1 What is your organization's strategy for preventing the development of sulfide mining near the Boundary Waters and other sensitive waterways?	<u>Chris Knopf, Friends of the Boundary Waters</u> Friends of the Boundary Waters recently marked 50 years as an organization and is focused on creating a movement of appreciation for and preservation of the BWCAW. 3 Pillars of FOBW: Wilderness, People, Community 1. Protecting the Wilderness • Fight to stop copper nickel sulfide mining • Addressing climate change • Conservation efforts including ownership of 500 acres adjacent to the BWCA 2. People • Building the next generation of wilderness stewards	Many suggestions and ideas came forward for how CCCoLA members can begin to take action. Here are some key first steps: • Share this information with your lake/road/property owner association members, neighbors, and others in the community • The Friends of the Boundary Waters Citizen

through engagement of young people. Through the No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters, they have reached 3,500 students this year.

3. Community

- Recognition that the gateway communities to the Boundary Waters must thrive. Building civic engagement.

In collaboration with other organizations, FOBW is addressing both Nu Range (Polymet) and Twin Metals proposed mines using 4 strategies:

- litigation
- Legislation
- Citizen action
- Political action

Action Network meets twice a month to make phone calls, send email, and conduct other outreach to elected officials and citizens in key legislative districts. They meet via Zoom and in person. Please sign up below to join the Citizen Action Network or call Chris at 651-999-9565. C <https://www.friends-bwca.org/get-involved/>

- CCCOLA members and others can join Friends of the Boundary Waters Clean Water Coalition.
- CCCOLA members may subscribe to email newsletters from MCEA, Water Legacy, Friends of the Boundary Waters, and Save the Boundary Waters for reliable information. Here are their website addresses:

<https://www.friends-bwca.org/>

<https://www.savetheboundarywaters.org/>

<https://www.mncenter.org/>

<https://waterlegacy.org/>

At our upcoming CCCoLA meeting, members will discuss the following engagement strategies:

- Consider submitting a collective comment on behalf of the organization during upcoming public comment periods.
- Engaging with local elected officials,

		especially Senator Grant Hauschild, about concerns relative to proposed copper nickel sulfide mining. • Reach out to Sarah Bransford of Friends of the Boundary Waters for education and outreach. • Approach DNR commissioners to request timely information sharing and website updates on mining projects. • Participate in upcoming public comment periods and hearings related to mining permits. • Consider inviting environmental organizations to local meetings to help share information with the community.
	<u>Ingrid Lyons, Save the Boundary Waters</u> Focus of Save the Boundary Waters: Preventing pollution in the Rainy River Headwaters watershed and opposing construction of the Twin Metals Copper nickel sulfide mine. This proposed mine is being developed by Antifagasta, a Chilean mining conglomerate. Save the Boundary Waters is a coalition of 30 non-profit partner organizations and 400 businesses. Their goal is to achieve a permanent legislative solution to ban copper nickel sulfide mining near the BWCA. Key strategies: • partnerships • scientific research • litigation • political advocacy Working with all levels of government is key.	

Paula Maccabee, Water Legacy

Water Legacy was formed in 2009 by rural Minnesotans concerned about the proposed PolyMet sulfide mine.

Focus is to:

1. Stop the threat to the Lake Superior watershed and downstream communities.
2. Prevent the “snowplow” effect behind which other sulfide mines will follow.
3. Demonstrate that sulfide “sacrifice zones” are not necessary or inevitable.

Water Legacy is concerned with preventing sulfide mining in 3 major watersheds: The Rainy River watershed, the Lake Superior watershed, and the Mississippi watershed. All are at risk from proposed sulfide mining development.

Water Legacy is cautious about political solutions due to the financial and political pressure exerted by mining mega corporations.

Strategies to achieve the goal of preventing all sulfide ore mining based on science about threatening Minnesotans’ health and economies and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities:

- Scientific studies
- Permitting
- Environmental review

Water Legacy has also been litigating cases involving taconite mining based on the environmental review process. This would set precedent, thus changing the regulatory structure which currently favors mining interests.

The important role of people on the ground is that they tell their truth when opportunities arise to testify and tell their truth.

Aaron Klemz, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

MCEA is a 51 year-old law firm and advocacy organization

	dedicated to using law and science to defend Minnesota’s environment and the health of its people. The work being done to oppose sulfide mining is core to MCEA’s mission. Primary interest is State-level advocacy. They are involved in litigation in State courts and the legislature. MCEA has been litigating the 2018-19 permits issued to Polymet alongside Friends of the Boundary Waters, Water Legacy, and the Fond du Lac Band. The 2019 water pollution permit issued to Polymet was rejected by the Minnesota State Supreme Court on a 7-0 vote. Sulfide mining rules were established in 1993 in Minnesota and the Court cases tested these rules. These are some of the important legal issues that have emerged and will continue to be litigated. MCEA knows that they can only litigate laws that exist.	
Question #2 How do you work collectively with other organizations having a similar goal?	<u>Ingrid Lyons, Save the Boundary Waters</u> There are a lot of areas where our organization intermixes with the other organizations. We are litigation partners with Friends of the Boundary Waters Youth engagement: Kids for the Boundary Waters is a program that engages young people in going to Washington DC to advocate for the Boundary Waters—over 250 have gone to testify and meet with legislators. Some of the youth who have been introduced to the BWCA through the Friends of the Boundary Waters have participated in legislative advocacy. There is a great deal of resource and information sharing among our organizations. <u>Chris Knopf, Friends of the Boundary Waters</u> There’s collaboration among our organizations in all 4 of our strategy areas of legislation, litigation, citizen action, and political action.	

In the litigation sphere, we partner with Save the Boundary Waters and Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness to defeat Twin Metals at the Federal level. At the State level we partner primarily with Water Legacy and MCA. We also support candidates that support saving the Boundary Waters.

Aaron Klemz, MCA

There are some coalitions such as the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, an umbrella group that has a subgroup called the Mining Cluster and provides an opportunity for exchanging information.

Water Over Nickel is a group of the Mille Lacs Band members concerning the Talon Mine and its impact. Minnesota is fortunate to have a number of really strong and well-resourced organizations that work together to protect the environment.

Paula Maccabee, Water Legacy

The organizations have worked very effectively together. MCEA and Friends of the Boundary Waters are important litigation partners. Although we are very coordinated, we need more resources to stand up to the enormous resources and greed of the corporate mining interests.

We need to prioritize issues that are important to the Tribes and their treaty reserved rights such as preserving the wild rice sulfate standard. Note: that sulfates not only harm wild rice but facilitate the release of methylmercury into the water which is toxic to the developing brains of prenatal fetuses and infants.

Tribes currently have the authority to Tribal stand up for their sovereign rights and object to Federal permits.

Note: Coordination with Rise and Repair.

Question #3

Aaron Klemz, MCEA

Where I see this is in the public engagement area. In the dead of

How can CCCoLA most effectively collaborate with your organization to raise awareness of the dangers of sulfide mining and block efforts to establish sulfide mining facilities near the BWCA and other sensitive waterways?	winter, this is when public comment periods get initiated. CCCoLA members attention to the process of giving public comment is essential. We need to be aware of when the opportunities come up for public input and testimony. 3 important actions for CCCoLA: 1. Pass on reliable and timely information to our members. 2. When there are public comment periods, give input on behalf of CCCoLA. 3. Engage with local elected officials and let them know our concerns. Don't ever let anyone tell us that we don't have the right or the information to speak up. <u>Ingrid Lyons, Save the Boundary Waters</u> In all places of power, it is being said that rural people favor the mining projects. Residents of Cook County need to speak up about their environmental concerns. We can speak with our neighbors and community, become well-informed, and speak up in the legislative sector. <u>Chris Knopf, Friends of the Boundary Waters</u> It has been many years since there was a legislative hearing held on the threat of sulfide mining. The mining corporations don't really want to have this hearing held, and we need to be transparent about this. <u>Paula Maccabee, Water Legacy</u> It is vitally important for citizens to show up at court hearings, opportunities for testimony, engaging our legislators (such as Senator Hauschild), etc. We need to obtain accurate information to share with our community and to have on hand when false information is presented by mining interests. The organizations can provide us information and are willing to	
---	---	--

	show up at community gatherings on the topic of copper nickel mining. State agencies, Legislators, Legislative staff, and the Governor need to hear from us.	
Questions from CCCoLA members	<u>Q: Betsy Blume</u> Do the panelists have suggestions on how we can best engage with DNR Commissioners and others in State government outside of the traditional public comment period? <u>A: Aaron Klemz</u> The easiest way at the Commissioner level is to ask as an organization. Having a clear goal and ask will be important. <u>A: Paula Maccabee</u> I agree with Aaron that the best way to request a meeting with the Commissioners is as an organization. Among the Assistant Commissioners, Barb Naramore is most likely to agree to a meeting. First meeting should be a beginning “toe-in-the door” conversation where we ask how lake associations can understand how to be more involved with the DNR and have a voice. WE might emphasize that we don’t have the resources to request specific documents but would like to be kept informed in a timely manner. <u>Q: Gary Maciejewski</u> Is there any way to convince the President to stop pushing for a mine near the BWCA? <u>A: Ingrid Lyons</u> The Federal landscape is very troubling and top-down right now. From the Executive branch, not likely to make any headway in terms of protecting the BWCA from mining threats. Legislatively, there’s more hope.	

Purpose of this meeting and future engagement of CCCoLA members.	This panel discussion is a springboard for CCCoLA members to gain insights into the topic of Copper-Nickel sulfate mining. We will be pursuing the topic over the Fall, Winter and Spring—engaging with our lake/property owners/road association members and staying connected with the people and organizations who presented here today to determine future action.	See some of the action suggestions above. The Steering Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, October 21 to plan the November CCCoLA meeting. Please send any suggestions to Kathy and we'll keep them in mind when planning the meeting.
Meeting Reflection	Action!! Grateful for what I learned today. Amazing information. Grateful for the work you're doing now and seeing the ties and where we can fit in. This is the first time I've heard Paula speak—if only you could be President. Energizing—I find this whole topic disjointed and hard to get good information, and this was a great summary of how people are working together and how we can work together going forward. Great meeting. Very informative. I'm hopeful and re-energized. Some options for getting out there and certainly talking with others. We're more powerful as a group. I'll reflect that power because the power here is the Coalition and keeping informed. Grateful, enlightened, and empowered. Great information. Thanks to the 4 guest presenters!	
Adjournment		Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.
Next Meeting	At our October meeting, we'll be hosting a panel discussion on Copper Nickel mining in Northern Minnesota.	Thursday, November 13, 10-11:30