

ABSTRACT

PolyMet Mining Company Tom Morris

The PolyMet Mining corporation is a Canadian mine development company that wants to create a large open pit sulfide mining operation to extract copper and nickel from a forested area just outside of Ely, Minnesota and at the very edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA). The pristine and roadless BWCA wilderness area was created by the federal government at the urging of Minnesota senator Hubert H. Humphrey in the 1950's. The mine would endanger the wilderness and the small idyllic town of Ely, MN. This is an isolated community, literally at the end of the road, twenty miles from the nearest town, but only a short paddle by canoe to the Canadian border. The town has become a mecca for wilderness canoe buffs and serious fishermen.

Many of the townspeople of Ely see the mining operation as a source of desperately needed jobs, and the small town features many front yards with signs proclaiming, "We support mining and mining supports us". "The Friends of the Wilderness", local resort owners, wilderness outfitters, and environmentalists see it as an invasion and potential destruction of their beloved wilderness area.

As you can imagine, there are diverse views in the community, and the local state congressman is trying to pass a law forbidding sulfide mining near the wilderness area. This decision-based case presents a classic environment versus jobs issue and will challenge students concerned with the social responsibility of business.