



# Bois Forte

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Condemns Senate Passage of H.J. Res. 140 as an Affront to Tribal Sovereignty and the Band's Treaty-Reserved Rights**

Nett Lake, MN — The Bois Forte Band of Chippewa expresses profound disappointment following the United States Senate's passage of H.J. Resolution 140, which overturns the 20-year mining ban for more than 225,000 acres of federal land near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA). This action represents a significant setback for the protection of the BWCA and the region as a whole, and poses a direct threat to the Band's rights secured under the Treaty of September 30, 1854.

"We are gravely concerned about the passage of H.J. Resolution 140 and the risks it presents to our ancestral homelands," said Bois Forte Chairperson Carlos Hernandez. "Science and experience show us that mining in this precious ecosystem could have drastic and irreversible environmental impacts on our sacred resources."

For generations, the Bois Forte people have depended on the lands and waters of present-day northeastern Minnesota to sustain their way of life. In this sense, the 1854 Treaty is not a relic of the past—it is a living, binding agreement that guarantees Band members' rights to hunt, fish, and gather in the Band's traditional homelands. These rights are essential to the Band's cultural identity, subsistence practices, and spiritual connection to the land.

Through the 1854 Treaty, the Bois Forte Band along with two other bands ceded approximately 5.5 million acres in present day northeastern Minnesota and reserved the right of its members to hunt, fish, and gather within the Ceded Territory in perpetuity. However, increased private land ownership coupled with industry-related pollution have reduced access to the Ceded Territory for treaty harvest to a mere 20% of its original footprint. H.J. Resolution 140 will only further diminish that percentage.

"Our treaty rights are inseparable from the health of the natural resources that sustain them," said Hernandez. "Without clean water, abundant wildlife, and thriving ecosystems, those rights cannot be meaningfully exercised."

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While H.J. Resolution 140 lifts a federal ban on mining, it does not automatically authorize mining activities near the BWCA. Those activities would need to undergo extensive state and federal environmental review and permitting, which must take into account the effects of any proposed project on the Band's treaty-reserved rights and must involve meaningful and timely consultation with impacted tribes.

“Any mining with the Ceded Territory must at a minimum be truly safe, responsible, and guided by strong environmental protections and meaningful tribal consultation,” commented Hernandez. “H.J. Resolution 140 does not embrace these values and instead places our most vital and irreplaceable resources at risk. Safeguarding these resources is essential to our people, our treaty rights, and the well-being of future generations.