

Briefing Paper Format for Federal Register Notices

1. State Office

Eastern States Office

2. What is the title of this notice?

Notice of Cancellation of Withdrawal Application and Termination of Segregation, Minnesota What are the key issues raised by the underlying decision documents for this notice?

On December 14, 2016, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) submitted an application proposing a 20-year withdrawal from mineral leasing laws on 234,328 acres of Federal mineral estate within the Superior National Forest. On January 19, 2017, the BLM published a Federal Register notice announcing the proposed withdrawal and initiated a two-year segregation from mineral leasing laws. On September 6, 2018, the USFS submitted a letter to the BLM canceling the application for the withdrawal, canceling the segregation. The BLM is publishing this Federal Register Notice in compliance with 43 CFR 2310.2-1(c).

3. What public lands are affected?

This cancellation involves 234,328 acres of National Forest System land on the Superior National Forest within the Rainy River Watershed Withdrawal in northern Minnesota.

4. How will the underlying decision(s) or action(s) impact jobs?

The cancellation of the withdrawal will allow for mining in the area and potentially increase the availability of jobs in the area.

5. Who are the key stakeholders interested in the underlying decision(s) or action(s)? What are their concerns and positions?

The key stakeholders include the USFS, Native American Tribes including the Bois Forte Band and the 1854 Treaty Authority, mining interests, local communities, local businesses, and the public. The public comments received by the FS expressed a range of opinions, from support for the withdrawal to protect water quality and recreation in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, to opposition in support of mining and job creation.

6. Is there interest in this underlying decision(s) or action(s) from the State or U.S. congressional delegations?

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN) has expressed concern that the USFS failed to complete the withdrawal study (Press Release 9/6/18).

7. Is tribal consultation appropriate under E.O. 13175, or other authorities? Will the proposed action(s) potentially impact tribes or generate their interest? If so, what consultation or other communication/outreach are you planning?

No formal tribal consultation is required. The withdrawal was canceled effective upon receiving the notice from the USFS.

8. Will this notice be controversial?

The withdrawal was canceled effective upon receiving the notice from the USFS on September 6, 2018 and numerous statements were publically made both for and against the withdrawal cancelation. The publication of the FRN is a formality and not expected to garner additional attention.

9. What will the underlying decision(s) or action(s) change? (Summarize changes to policy, management practices, allowable uses, differences between draft and final, etc.)

The withdrawal included the Duluth Complex which studies indicate contains one of the world's largest undeveloped deposits of copper, nickel, and strategic metals such as platinum, palladium, gold, and silver. These strategic metals are designated as essential elements needed for the manufacture of batteries and electronics, and for the aerospace and defense industries. The cancelation of the withdrawal will allow the BLM to move forward with processing the 48 mineral applications in this area and completing the requisite environmental reviews.

10. Will this notice need communications materials, e.g., a press release or a Communications Plan? If so, enclose these materials with the notice package submitted.

A communications plan is included in the Federal Register package.

11. Does the underlying decision(s) or action(s) further the administration's priorities?

This action and the future actions from it strongly support the administration's priorities for Energy Independence and Job Creation.

12. What are the reasons for the timing of the notice and the consequence, if any, of delaying or canceling the release?

The notice is in response to the September 6, 2018 cancelation letter from the USFS. Per 43 CFR 2310.2-1(c), the Federal Register Notice should be published within 30 days.

13. How has this been analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

The USFS began NEPA to analyze the withdrawal, including extensive public input. After a careful review, they have determined that the withdrawal is not necessary and they announced they are changing the Environmental Impact Statement to an Environmental Assessment. .

14. Is there any additional pertinent, descriptive information that reviewers need to know or would increase understanding?

No.

15. List the names and positions of the people who have prepared, reviewed, and approved the notice and the underlying decisions and documents.

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16. Authorizing signature of State Office or Center Budget Officer, or Washington Office Resource Advisor certifying that the cost code on the Federal Register notice is accurate and valid.

(signature)

(print name and date)