



2023

IMPACT REPORT



sportsmenbwca.org



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REFLECTIONS

@ericbakerphoto

Since the founding of Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters, we've known two things: the watershed of the Boundary Waters is no place for sulfide-ore copper mining, and our passionate supporters are what make this work possible. Without the thousands of yearly visitors, businesses that outfit and house paddlers, and 1.1 million acres of America's best fishing and hunting habitat open to the public, our work would not be possible.

The Boundary Waters is the most visited Wilderness Area in the United States for good reason. It's a sportsperson's paradise. There is abundant solitude, scenery straight from a BBC documentary, and the chance for a bucket list encounter with wildlife around every corner.

Hunters and anglers visiting the area can find world-class cold-water fishing, the opportunity to grouse or deer hunt across millions of acres of mixed hardwoods and conifer forests, see moose, and even hear loons or wolves. Nowhere else in the country can you experience a water-filled Wilderness of this quality or scale.

Not long ago, a copper-nickel mine proposed just outside the BWCA was proceeding through the federal environmental review process when we decided to take a stand. Since then, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters has rallied with you, in-person and online, in the halls of Congress and the Minnesota Legislature, and stood with our community in defense of America's most-visited Wilderness Area.

OUR MISSION

To protect the integrity of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and its watersheds for huntable and fishable populations of fish and wildlife, now and forever through advocacy and education

At the beginning of 2023, thanks to the conservation efforts of hundreds of thousands of people and years of tireless advocacy, we saw monumental protections announced across the country for three of our most iconic wild landscapes in the Boundary Waters, Bristol Bay, and Tongass National Forest.

We've sent tens of thousands of comments to federal agencies, brought Boundary Waters stakeholders to meet with their elected officials, and done all we can to shine a light on the process to protect the BWCA with full public participation and transparency. With your help, we finally achieved our goal of protecting the Boundary Waters from sulfide-ore copper mining.

The monumental decision ensures future generations of hunters, anglers, and Wilderness paddlers will bring their children to fish for lake trout, chase grouse, and share a campfire under the stars in America's most visited Wilderness for decades to come.

We would not be here if it weren't for all of you. This conservation win is for everyone who fought for years to reach this point and who gave their all to preserve the integrity of this wild and extraordinary place.

Our mission is directed at the entire outdoor recreation community, specifically hunters and anglers. 140,000 jobs in Minnesota are outdoor industry jobs, of which 40,000+ are related to hunting and fishing. The Boundary Waters is the most visited Wilderness in America, and thousands of those visitors fish and hunt on their trips each year. Lodges, outfitters, guide services, and locals benefit from the clean water in the BWCA and overwhelmingly advocate for their protection at events we organize, facilitate, or partner on.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

We are a small organization that values integrity and our ability to use funding efficiently. We work towards a positive outcome on behalf of our community that values the priceless outdoor experiences that places like the Boundary Waters provide and for future generations that deserve to experience these wild places as we have.



Administrative Action. [On January 26th, 2023, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland cemented historic protections](#) for the Boundary Waters by signing an order to withdraw approximately 225,504 acres of public land in the Rainy River Watershed of Northeast Minnesota from federal mineral leasing for 20 years.

The mineral withdrawal order will now ban federal hardrock mineral leasing upstream of the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs National Park. In addition to the BWCA, protections were announced in Bristol Bay and the Tongass National Forest.

Federal Legislation. On January 31st, 2023, U.S. House Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) reintroduced [The Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act](#) in the 118th Congress.

This critical legislation was first introduced by a bipartisan group of elected officials in the House of Representatives in January 2020 as H.R. 5598 and then reintroduced in April 2021 as H.R. 2794.

Reintroduced as H.R. 668, Rep. McCollum's bill would create permanent protection for the Boundary Waters from any future sulfide-ore copper mining mineral leasing in the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest while exempting sand, gravel, granite, iron ore, and taconite mining.

The bill would also allow continued use of the Superior National Forest for ongoing mining and logging operations. These are critical distinctions for the Iron Range of Northern Minnesota. Our ongoing goal is to bolster bipartisan support for this legislation. We expect a new version of this bill to be introduced in 2024.

On May 17th, 2023, Rep. Pete Stauber's bill [H.R. 3195 The Superior National Forest Restoration Act](#), which was introduced a week earlier, passed the House Natural Resources Committee, but lacked support in the Senate. This legislation would rescind the federal 20-year mineral withdrawal and reinstate permits and mineral leases in the Superior National Forest. SFBW worked diligently through the end of the year to ensure this bill stalls in Congress and will continue to make the defense of our achieved Boundary Waters protections a priority into 2024.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

State Legislation. In partnership with the Minnesota Chronic Wasting Disease Coalition, we urged lawmakers to support critical Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management improvements proposed in Minnesota Environment Omnibus Bills HF 2310 and SF 2438, which contained multiple provisions that tighten regulations concerning captive deer herds to curb the spread of CWD in Minnesota and would protect the cultural and economic value of deer hunting for Minnesota's future generations. [On May 18th, many of the provisions we advocated for passed into law](#), including a permanent moratorium on new cervid farms, creating improved protections for Minnesota's deer hunting heritage and wild deer herds from the spread of CWD.

Just past the new year, Representative Feist and Senator Morrison introduced HF 329 and SF 167: The Boundary Waters Permanent Protection Act. This legislation addresses the need for Boundary Waters protection at the state level from proposed sulfide-ore copper mining in its watershed. This bill would ban sulfide-ore copper mining on state land and prohibit the issuance of new state permits, licenses, or leases for sulfide-ore copper mining in the Rainy River Watershed, essentially mirroring at the state level what H.R. 668 does at the federal level.

SFBW launched its first-ever Paddlin' for the Boundary Waters Campaign. This awareness campaign involved local businesses like Bent Paddle Brewing Co., Frost River, and Merrimack & Sanborn Canoe. Also sponsored by Trampled by Turtles, SFBW threw our biggest BWCA party yet at Bent Paddle, along with a canoe raffle, silent auction, and advocacy through June and July. It was capped off with SFBW representing the BWCA at the Trampled by Turtles Bayfront concert. SFBW raised over \$40,000 that went directly to our work.

SFBW teamed up with Frost River and Trampled by Turtles to release an exclusive hunting/fishing pack, [The Sportsman's Pack](#), where proceeds from each pack went directly to SFBW.



SFBW continued its development of new programs outside of the sulfide-ore copper mining issue, including land, water, and wildlife stewardship and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Our work with the MN CWD coalition has been critical to our efforts, and new partnerships with the MN DNR allowed SFBW to identify a key project for 2024.

SFBW is leading the charge on the MN DNR Adopt A WMA in St. Louis County. We'll work closely with the DNR, stakeholders, landowners, and partners to create critical habitat, access, and wildlife corridors on the 40-acre property. The Pine Island WMA lies almost directly South of the BWCA entry point into Trout Lake.

[SFBW officially launched its first-ever Corporate Partnerships Program](#) to work with current and new businesses that support the Boundary Waters. It's no secret that partnerships providing transparent, effective, collaborative solutions to each other's ever-changing needs are invaluable in the nonprofit and private sectors. We know the value of these partnerships and are proud to have partnered with companies like Sloan Valve Co.

SFBW was a title sponsor of the North American Moose Conference held in Grand Portage, MN. Experts from around the world convened to discuss issues that moose face in a world of ever-changing climate and threats of disease.

SFBW joined the [Alliance for Americas Fish & Wildlife](#) in efforts to help pass the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act – legislation needed to prevent more than 12,000 species of fish and wildlife from becoming endangered.

GOALS FOR 2024

Our plans for Congress, federal agencies, and at the state level for the next year and beyond.



We're very excited to grow as an organization with you in 2024. With new projects lined up, it's going to be a great year.

Boundary Waters Protections

- Work closely with government agencies, key decision-makers, and national NGO partners to continue advocating for the Boundary Waters and permanent protections following the 20-year mineral withdrawal. The Boundary Waters must remain a priority for all who have worked to get to where we are now.
- Stay active in the halls of Congress in supporting partner work and Rep. McCollum's permanent protection bill.
- Support common sense MN state legislation to protect the Boundary Waters and its surrounding regions from non-ferrous mining.
- Identify key decision makers to bolster bi-partisan support for Boundary Waters legislation. As we work in a polarized political world, this is more important than ever.
- Identify, track, and defend against actions taken in Congress to overturn the 20-year mineral withdrawal and protections already put in place for the Boundary Waters.
- Develop our working relationships with state & national NGO partners through collaborative efforts.



GOALS FOR 2024 CONTINUED

The future looks bright for SFBW

- Launch a brand new stewardship program that focuses on preserving the wilderness character of the Boundary Waters and surrounding regions. Through partnership projects with the MN Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service.
- Paddlin' for the Boundary Waters will return bigger and better than ever in 2024. With concerts, raffles, advocacy opportunities, a silent auction, and more. Our largest campaign of 2023 will become a mainstay for years to come.
- Work with state agencies, partners, coalitions, and tribes to ensure healthy fish and wildlife populations through collaborative projects and initiatives.
- Building our corporate partnership program to expand awareness of the Boundary Waters and its world-class opportunities while cementing long-term partners in the hunting and fishing world.
- Lend a hand to our partners. Our partners have many important conservation issues for SFBW, [including Trout Unlimited's Good Samaritan legislation](#). Showing up and supporting bedrock legislation is a priority for SFBW in 2024.
- Tabling is back. SFBW will ensure that conservation shows and expos are focal points in our strategy to reach new audiences in 2024. From the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo to BHA's National Rendezvous, SFBW will ramp up its public participation.
- Successfully complete our largest stewardship program of the year in 2024. Our adoption of the Pine Island WMA will create new access and habitat while teaming up with MeatEater's Mark Kenyon and his Working For Wildlife program.
- Continue developing working relationships with state & national partners within the hunting, fishing, and conservation community to increase our chances of permanent Boundary Waters protection through state and federal strategies.
- Increase our digital presence. The success of Paddlin' for the Boundary Waters and the full release of Grouse Up the Gunflint shows how important a fine-tuned media presence is in the conservation world. SFBE plans to apt up those efforts through new projects and campaigns in the coming year.
- Increase revenue. As SFBW looks to the future, we hope to build our team and our ability to work on the issues that matter most to hunters and anglers in Minnesota. By nearly doubling our fundraising in 2024, we hope to lay the foundation for a successful organization for years to come.
- Our board of directors is a tremendous strength of the organization. SFBW plans to expand its board membership to include new, unique, diverse voices to guide our work.

OUR WORK

2023 was highlighted by the Biden Administration's decision to withdraw sensitive BWCA federal lands from mineral leasing for 20 years. SFBW is incredibly thankful to all who helped secure this landmark decision. Our work to permanently protect the Boundary Waters through legislative action will continue to be a primary focus, but our eyes are also set on other issues in Minnesota.

As we turn our gaze towards 2024, our work will be the building block toward genuine, tangible program efforts that will be felt by the sportsmen and women of Northeast Minnesota and hundreds of thousands of recreationists from around the country. Whether it's wilderness stewardship, ungulate conservation, fisheries management, or Boundary Waters policy that interests you the most, we promise you'll hear from us in the coming months about how, where, and why we're engaging those topics.

As the state of Minnesota moves forward with a conservation framework that allows for the protection of our public lands and waters, as well as the responsible development of iron ore, taconite, logging, and other industries that have existed in Northern Minnesota for generations, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters remains committed to protecting the integrity of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and its watersheds for huntable and fishable populations of fish and wildlife, now and forever through advocacy and education.

Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters is, at this very moment, engaged in keeping the Boundary Waters and surrounding regions the wild and wonderful places they are. That important work relies upon the support of adventurers just like you.

Thank you again for standing shoulder to shoulder with us for years, defending the Boundary Waters. We would not be here if it weren't for your ongoing support.

*Thank you for supporting
Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters*

**THANK YOU FOR
ADVOCATING ON
BEHALF OF THE
BOUNDARY WATERS!**

ADVOCACY & ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Paddlin' For The Boundary Waters

**Through collaborative efforts,
this campaign reached over
500k people**

Social Media Impressions

**Over 1.5 million impressions
through innovative media
campaigns**

Website Visitors

Over 100k engaged visitors

Messages sent to decision makers

**Over 5000 messages sent on
behalf of state and federal
BWCA protections**

Grouse up the Gunflint Film

**A combined 75k view of our
film highlighting the BWCA**

MEDIA ROUNDUP

The historic 20-year withdrawal announced by the Department of Interior was highlighted by our partners and in the media. Here are just a few notable standouts.

[Outdoor Life: Biden Administration Bans Mining Near Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness.](#)

[Field & Stream: Federal Government Bans Mining Upstream of Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness](#)

[The White House: WHAT THEY ARE SAYING: President Biden Protects Lands and Waters](#)

[Backcountry Hunters & Anglers: MILESTONE DECISION REACHED ON BOUNDARY WATERS, MOST VISITED WILDERNESS AREA IN UNITED STATES](#)

[Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership: Historic Protections Announced for Boundary Waters](#)

[National Wildlife Federation: Boundary Waters' Protections Safeguard Water, Wildlife, Rural Economies](#)

[Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters: 20 Year Protection for the Boundary Waters Is A Big Deal](#)

ENGAGEMENT

1,200+

New Sportsmen for
the Boundary Waters
supporters

30%

Increase in revenue to
ensure SFBW's work
continues for future
generations

25%

Increase in engaged and
supportive SFBW donors

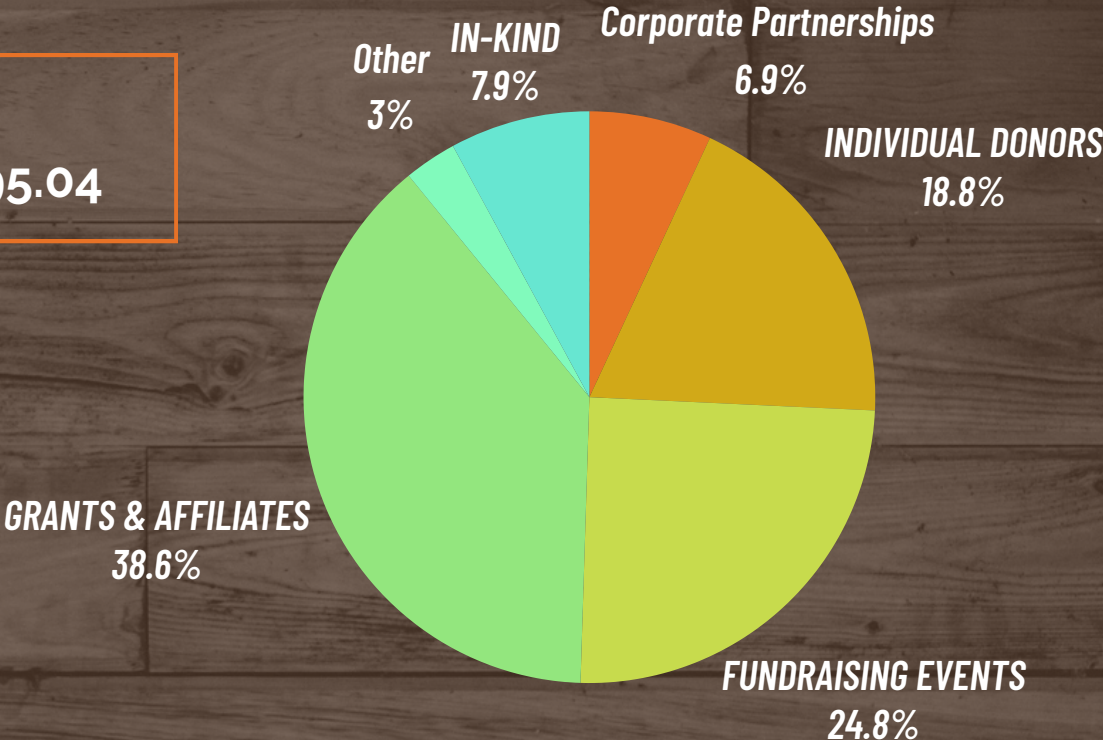


2023 FINANCIALS

Your support is, has, and will be critical.

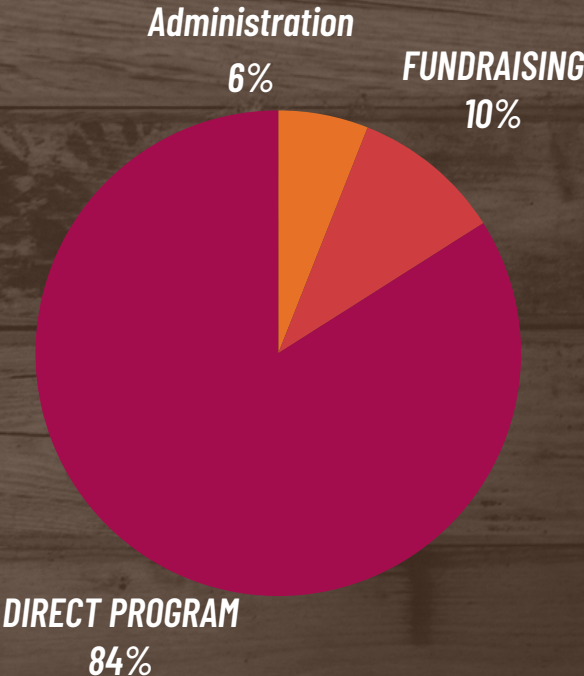
REVENUE

\$242,195.04



EXPENSES

\$239,395.16



GET INVOLVED

01

TAKE ACTION

Send a message directly to your decision-makers at federal agencies, the State Capitol or in D.C. Whether its an online message or a phone call, Your voice matters.

02

VOLUNTEER

Sign up at sportsmenbwca.org to volunteer at events both virtual and in-person, help organize direct engagement, and to stay updated on everything BWCA.

03

SPREAD THE WORD

Digital platforms are the best tool for you to reach others and get them involved. Share a petition, post on social media, and join other great conservation organizations working to protect our wild places.

04

CONTRIBUTE TO SFBW

Know that every dollar goes towards our efforts to permanently protect the Boundary Waters.

MEET THE TEAM

SFBW's strength is in our partnerships at home and across the country



THE SFBW TEAM

- Lukas Leaf, executive director
- Dave Nomsen, senior advisor
- Matthew Schultz, development & policy
- Jake Dahlke, content manager

BOARD OR DIRECTORS

- Bob St. Pierre, chair
- Rob Drieslein, vice-chair
- Julia Peebles, treasurer
- Mark Neuzil, secretary
- Dave Simonett
- Mark Kenyon
- Hansi Johnson
- Dave Seaton

NATIONAL PARTNERS

- Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Trout Unlimited
- National Wildlife Federation
- American Sportfishing Association
- Izaak Walton League of America
- Fly Fishers International
- American Fly Fishing Trade Association
- National Deer Association
- And many more!

STATE PARTNERS

- MN Chapter, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
- Minnesota Conservation Federation
- MN Chapter, Trout Unlimited
- MN Division, Izaak Walton League
- MN Department of Natural Resources
- MN CWD Action Coalition

2023 BUSINESS PARTNERS

- Frost River
- Trampled By Turtles
- Sloan
- Simms Fishing
- First Lite
- Patagonia
- Outdoor News
- Piragis Northwoods
- Bent Paddle Brewing Co.
- West Mountain Drifters
- Vortex
- Drift West
- Sanborn Canoe
- Merrimack Canoe
- Wenonah Canoe
- Hungry Jack Outfitters
- Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop
- And many more!

"I HAVE DISCOVERED IN A LIFETIME OF TRAVELING IN PRIMITIVE REGIONS, A LIFETIME OF SEEING PEOPLE LIVING IN THE WILDERNESS AND USING IT, THAT THERE IS A HARD CORE OF WILDERNESS NEED IN EVERYONE, A CORE THAT MAKES ITS SPIRITUAL VALUES A BASIC HUMAN NECESSITY. THERE IS NO HIDING IT...UNLESS WE CAN PRESERVE PLACES WHERE THE ENDLESS SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF MAN CAN BE FULFILLED AND NOURISHED, WE WILL DESTROY OUR CULTURE AND OURSELVES."

SIGURD F. OLSON

