

OPINION

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What Others Say

Environmental protections

It's unlikely that many Minnesotans read a recent Miami Herald special report on a Chilean village's battle to restore a river's natural flow after a copper mine opened nearby. That's a shame, because it's an alarming account of how elusive accountability and solutions are when problems occur and a powerful mining conglomerate wants to protect profits.

Los Pelambres is the name of the copper mine. The village is called Caimanes. Neither of those is likely familiar to

“
... a reminder of how difficult it is to hold a powerful international corporation accountable if mining damage occurs.”

Minnesotans, but the firm that owns Los Pelambres should be. It's Antofagasta, controlled by the wealthy Luksic family. Antofagasta owns Twin Metals Minnesota, which aims to open a

20,000-ton-per-day underground copper mine within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA) watershed.

The \$1.7 billion project would be perched on a lake draining into the fragile watery wilderness. That proximity demands caution to prevent pollution and other problems potentially impossible to fix. That's why the decision by the Biden administration to restart an environmental analysis of copper mining's impact on the BWCA watershed is welcome.

The study, when complete, could lead to a 20-year moratorium on mining on more than 224,000 acres of federal land near the BWCA. Its findings also could help persuade Congress to permanently strengthen mining protections for the watershed, an outcome that should be championed by the state's congressional delegation.

The Star Tribune Editorial Board's 2019 "Not this mine, not this location" special report pointed out that Congress had passed permanent mining protections for federal land near Yellowstone National Park and argued that the BWCA deserves the same consideration. The report also detailed maneuvering by the Trump administration to speed up approvals on the Minnesota project.

A key part of that strategy: halting a two-year study begun during the Obama administration of the industry's impact on the BWCA watershed. The two-year analysis was just months from completion but its findings were kept secret, raising a red flag about risks possibly uncovered.

U.S. Sen. Tina Smith and Rep. Betty McCollum, both Minnesota Democrats, commendably called to complete the study. Their leadership has had an impact. The decision to do so also reflects Minnesotans' commitment to protecting the BWCA. In a 2020 poll, 60% of those polled statewide opposed new mining near the federally protected wilderness. Just 22% supported it.

Restarting the study ... rectifies the brazen interference by the Trump administration to tilt the process in Antofagasta's favor.

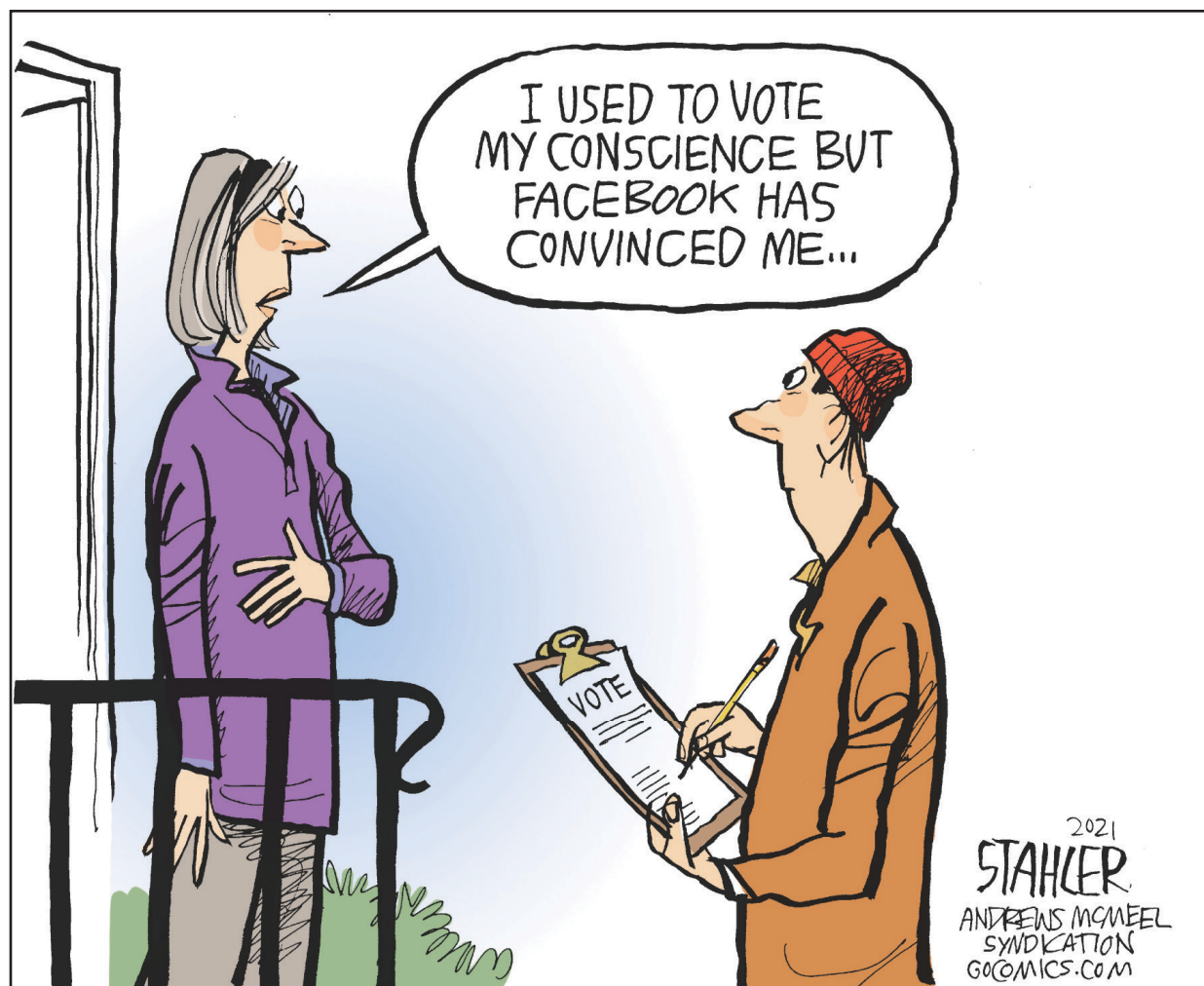
Gov. Tim Walz should also act and halt state-level review of Twin Metals while the federal review is underway. The federal findings could deny the project a key third lease critical to its future. It would be a waste of state taxpayer-funded resources to evaluate a mining plan dependent on a lease that could be denied.

In a statement, Twin Metals said it remains "dedicated to the communities of northeast Minnesota and to advancing a sustainable mining project that will bring much-needed economic growth to our region" as well as "responsibly develop" minerals needed for renewable energy.

That statement ignores the project's risks to area businesses and jobs dependent on pristine resources. The Miami Herald report also serves as a timely reminder of how difficult it is to hold a powerful international corporation accountable if mining damage occurs.

Restarting the federal study to understand the risks to this irreplaceable wilderness is the careful stewardship the BWCA deserves. ONLINE: startribune.com

Minneapolis Star Tribune
Oct. 24



Letters to the Editor

Community Humane Shelter of Steuben County closed for two weeks

To the editor:

The Community Humane Shelter of Steuben County would like to take this opportunity to advise all local readers of a temporary change of hours and protocols for both intake and adoption of animals.

During the week of Oct. 24-30, we had brought into the shelter, unknowingly, a cat or litter of kittens, affected with the feline deadly disease of panleukopenia. Thanks to the quick action of our staff, two local veterinarians were immediately called in and all cats in the process of intake that had yet to be vaccinated were so. Some already affected and very sick cats perished and some incurable with the disease were humanely put down.

All new pet owners who adopted cats during this time were contacted and they were offered to bring the cats back to be quarantined with the rest and/or given medical advice. While the situation has been brought under control, the shelter is currently closed for two weeks so the cats can be quarantined, and everything is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. We currently cannot take new cats until regular operations resume in two weeks.

People wishing to adopt dogs may still do so, by first viewing the animals at our website — chssteubencounty.org — then contacting the shelter at 260-833-2877 and making an appointment. A shelter representative will bring the dog out to meet and greet the prospective new owner. These are basically the same protocols we had in place during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The shelter will reopen on Nov. 15 with business as usual. We appreciate everyone's understanding as we work through this difficult time.

Editor, while you graciously give us this space and ink, we would also like to say the shelter is in need of latex gloves, bleach, blankets, towels, stainless steel litter pans, durable spray bottles and 13-gallon trash bags. Those wishing to contribute these items, may contact the shelter at the above phone number for instructions on how to drop off items.

We thank our shelter staff for their quick attention to recognize the issue and begin quick action. We thank Doctors Engel and Luttman for their quick delivery of medical attention.

And we thank patrons for understanding as we work through the necessary steps to keep all our animals healthy and place them into new loving homes.

Judy Rowe, on behalf of
Board of Directors of the Community
Humane Shelter of Steuben County

Historical revisionism is a propaganda tool

To the editor:

A myth about turkeys claims they are so brainless they will stare into the sky during a rainstorm until they drown.

In reality, turkeys are more intelligent than this. I am not convinced all humans are, though.

I suspect many Americans accept woke, Neo-Marxist propaganda disseminated from universities, media outlets and the Biden administration without question, and lightly dismiss any challenge to their narrative as "red scare" or "conspiracy theories."

It is no secret the Biden administration has allied itself with woke activists. Biden appointed several leftist activists into key government positions. Additionally, virtually every executive order and Democrat-initiated legislation is focused on the woke agenda.

Neo-Marxists claim social relationships are primarily power relationships. Society is divided into oppressor and oppressed, with no middle ground. The white, heterosexual, cisgender (non-transgender), Christian male is the ultimate oppressor.

Oppressors exercise authority over the oppressed through institutions such as government, religion, education, military, media,

entertainment and corporations. Woke activists seek to infiltrate and dismantle these institutions. They seek to separate the individual from their traditional national, family, and spiritual identity, and to force a new identity upon them.

Historical revisionism is an important propaganda tool to achieve these goals.

Woke historical revisionist materials include The 1619 Project by activist-journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones at New York Times and A People's History of the United States by activist-historian Howard Zinn.

These materials are used by activist teachers in K-12 classrooms to convince American schoolchildren our nation is a slavocracy since its inception in 1619. Their objective is to vilify our nation, and to turn children into activists that hate it.

Both books have been dismissed as leftist propaganda, with significant historical errors and distortions, by serious historians. This doesn't deter activist teachers from using them, though.

Historical revisionism is essential to promoting false ideologies. Often, cultic groups distort church history so early Christians resemble the cultists, rather than orthodox Christians. Cults vilify orthodox Christians to exalt their defective ideology as the true faith.

One result of woke revisionism is the attack on monuments. Many monuments have been destroyed by leftist activists.

Activists claim these national heroes were racist and/or owned slaves. In some cases, their claims are true. But, their simplistic view of history doesn't consider significant mitigating factors, such as historical context, personal treatment of slaves, nobler aspects of their character, and changes in behavior over time. In other cases, the claims are simply false. Additionally, activists do not apply the same critical standards to their heroes. Several were violent criminals. Finally, their worldview affects their reasoning and agenda, and they are not objective.

Neo-Marxists will not stop at statues of national heroes. They will turn their attention to Christianity, its historical figures, symbols, and statues. Christianity is one of the institutions they despise.

If my observations and projections sound like conspiracy theories, I invite you to read books by recognized woke activists like Ibram Kendi, Robin DiAngelo, Jemar Tisby and Richard Delgado, and assess the reasonableness of my concerns in light of their own words.

Works exposing Hannah-Jones and Zinn include Debunking the 1619 Project: Exposing the Plan to Divide America and Debunking Howard Zinn: Exposing the Fake History That Turned a Generation against America by Mary Grabar.

1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project by Peter H. Wood is a good resource, too. If you don't want to invest in a book, there are good interviews with these historians on Youtube. I recommend the documentary American Monument available soon on the Last Stand Studios Youtube channel, as well.

I can provide more information upon request at sparkmanr1@mediacombb.net. Enjoy your Thanksgiving holiday, and remember, turkeys aren't dumb.

Robert Sparkman
Rome City

Crooked Lake development project special exception should be denied

To the editor:

I'm writing in regards to the BZA meeting on Oct. 12, 2021.

Due to time constraints, the public-comment portion of the meeting was shut down before I had an opportunity to share my concerns with and opposition to the Crown Point LLC development project on Crooked Lake. It's disappointing to hear no further comment or consideration will be allowed at the upcoming meeting.

Based on specific guidance provided within

the local zoning ordinance, I believe the Board has a legal obligation to deny this special exception request.

As an attendee, it seemed the Board was not fully prepared for the meeting, and does not have a complete grasp of the applicable sections of the zoning ordinance. The one Board member who asked most of the questions of the developer did not understand and misapplied some components of the ordinance. He didn't even have a complete copy of the zoning ordinance in front of him. As an example, with due diligence the Board would have known that a marina was already a permitted use for a property located in the Lake Residential District, and would not have needed the developer to clarify that point.

Similarly, how could any Board member have been surprised to discover at the meeting that this proposed project is positioned on a narrow, DEAD-END, private lane? This is a very important consideration and safety concern when contemplating the approval for a special exception for a high-density, multi-family development at this specific site. Unlike the R-3 Residential District, where the infrastructure, roadway and neighborhood access are all capable of supporting a higher-density development, this area clearly does not support such a project. The Board must give strong consideration that there is only one, narrow access to the southern portion of Lane 345, which leaves zero margin for street-parked vehicles. The developer even acknowledged overflow parking would be an issue for the owners. When questioned, he said, "They'll need to talk to their neighbors." Who will be responsible for monitoring and preventing parked cars from blocking the only access to Lane 345 for ambulances and fire trucks?

The most glaring ordinance-related oversight though, was the Board's implication that they have no obligation to protect and minimize impacts to views for a Lake Residential District property. Speaking of people off lake or on back lots, one Board member stated, "They have no right. They have no right to those views." That completely contradicts the very specific intent of the Lake Residential District ordinance. The zoning ordinance could not be clearer.

This multi-family special exception request falls within this property's Lake Residential zoning district. The special exception must meet all requirements and intent for that specific district, and it's the Board's responsibility to ensure it checks all of those boxes.

The last sentence of Steuben County Zoning Ordinance Section 04.01© LR Lake Residential District states very clearly what the intent is for this specific zoning district, and gives clear and legal direction to the Board of Zoning Appeals. It states, "The regulations of this district are intended to ensure infill development ... minimizes impacts to views." This is not debatable ... it is the law. The Board of Zoning Appeals has the duty to ensure that any special exception development "minimizes impacts to views."

So the question is simple: Does this proposed development, as compared to other potential options for the property, meet the "minimize impact to views" criteria as spelled out within the ordinance?

While this project meets the minimum multi-family setback requirement of 20' on each side, it uses 100% of the remaining 275' to construct one building, which would be two stories high on what is currently platted as three separate parcels. These same parcels could be used to construct separate, free-standing structures ... an applicable use which would better "minimize impact to views".

Given the scale of this project, it's impossible to conclude that the currently proposed 24' high structure, which is almost the length of a football field, "minimizes impact to views." This special exception request does not fit within the definition and intent of the ordinance, and should be denied approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Steve Buck
Angola

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