

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 11, 2019

Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Deputy Secretary Censky:

I write to urge your consideration of concerns raised by Lake, St. Louis and Cook counties in northeastern Minnesota about the recent appraisal of lands contained in the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness Area (BWCAW). Before finalizing the appraisal, I ask that you take into account the attached information provided by the three counties.

These three counties are unable to collect property taxes or utilize other revenue streams on the lands in their jurisdiction which are part of the BWCAW. It is for this reason that Congress passed the Thye-Blatnik Act, which set up a system of annual compensation payments to the host counties. Thye-Blatnick payments to these counties are based on the revenue that would be generated from "the highest and best use" of the BWCAW lands if they were not reserved as wilderness.

Unlike the previous appraisal in 2008, the most recent appraisal determined that the highest and best use of the relevant lands would be as working timberlands rather than recreational use. Such a determination would result in a 49 percent decline in payments to the counties.

I ask that you carefully consider the attached documentation submitted by the counties before finalizing the Department's payment formula under the Thye-Blatnik Act.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate

Enclosure