

PolyMet's plan commits Minnesota to at least 500 years of treating polluted water without providing details about how this will be paid for.



PolyMet's Problems:

PolyMet Mining's proposed NorthMet sulfide mine fails to meet four fundamental, common sense clean water principles—principles the mining industry previously agreed to:

1. The proposed mine plan **does not** keep Minnesota's water safe and clean.

- PolyMet's own model shows that active water treatment will be needed for a minimum of 500 years. And, not all of the polluted water will be captured and sent for treatment.
- Every year, 11 million gallons of polluted seepage from the tailings basin will enter groundwater and the environment without being treated.
- Every year, over 5 million gallons of polluted seepage from the mine site will enter groundwater and the environment without being treated.
- The model used to predict impacts to water quality has numerous flaws that may significantly under-represent pollution risks. Indeed, the model has been shown to be inaccurate in representing current conditions for water quality surrounding the mine site — undermining confidence that it can accurately predict future water conditions.

2. The proposed mine plan **does not** put safeguards in place for when things go wrong.

- There are no contingency plans outlined for expected accidents that occur at all mines of this type, mishaps such as pipeline spills, accidental releases, failures of water collection and treatment systems, tailings basin failure. These are foreseeable events that should have emergency plans developed and articulated so the public has confidence in the company's ability to respond to a crisis.
- During operations, over 6.2 million gallons of polluted water a day will need to be treated. The mine plan does not describe what will happen if the water treatment plants break down. Will this pollution be discharged into the environment?
- The mine would contain a complex network of miles of pipelines, carrying polluted and treated water to and from various locations. The mine plan does not describe what would happen if a break were to happen in a pipeline carrying high concentrations of toxic metals and sulfates.

3. The proposed mine plan **does not** leave the site clean and maintenance free.

- The plan for at least 500 years of active water treatment violates Minnesota Rules (6132.3200) that call for the mine to be left maintenance free at closure.
- 526 acres and over 167 million tons of reactive waste rock would be left on the surface. Surrounding this would be a system to collect contaminated seepage that must be monitored and maintained for hundreds of years or longer. A plastic sheet placed over the waste rock pile would require annual maintenance, repairing of erosion, and removal of deep-rooted woody plants that might perforate the synthetic material.
- A pit “lake” would be left whose water levels would need to be maintained through pumping to prevent contaminated overflows into the nearby Partridge River.
- A tailings basin pond would need to have its water levels maintained through pumping to prevent contaminated water from over-topping the dams and entering the nearby Embarrass River.
- A lengthy network of pipelines conveying polluted and treated water would need to be monitored and maintained for at least hundreds of years.

4. The proposed mine plan **does not** protect Minnesota taxpayers.

- The plan commits Minnesota to at least 500 years of treating polluted water without providing information about how this will be paid for, and whether it will be enough.
- Details about financial assurance — a “damage deposit” the company provides — are not provided in the revised mine plan. The public does not know how much 500 years of water treatment will cost. We do not know how the company will be held responsible for centuries of costly water treatment — or how the public will be protected from liability.

Tell the DNR what you think of PolyMet's
mine plan at miningtruth.org