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## Project Overview

PolyMet Mining seeks to develop an open pit sulfide mine in northern Minnesota to extract copper, nickel and other metals.

### What's going on?

- The mine would be located near Babbitt and Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota.
- The mine site would be on land that is now part of the Superior National Forest that is comprised of high-quality peatlands.
- The company proposes to excavate three enormous pits up to 696 feet deep and transport the ore by railcar to an old, dormant taconite processing plant 8 miles away that would be refurbished.
- The mineral rights are private and have been leased by PolyMet.
- The company must acquire the surface lands in a land swap with the Forest Service. This has not yet happened, but its potential environmental impacts are analyzed in the PolyMet draft mine plan.
- Excavated material not desired (waste rock) would be stored next to the pits in large, 20-story high piles.
- Processing waste from the plant (tailings) would be added to an existing tailings basin that is currently leaking polluted water.
- The plant site would produce copper and nickel “concentrates” and “precipitates” which would be transported out of state for further processing into usable metals.
- The mine and plant sites have a projected lifespan of 20 years.
- Two wastewater treatment plants to treat polluted water from the mine site and the tailings basin would operate when the mine is running and would continue operating after the mine closes.  
**Treatment will be needed at the mine site for a minimum of 200 years and at the plant site for a minimum of 500 years.**
- The Partridge River curls around the mine site, and flows into the St. Louis River and then into Lake Superior.
- The Embarrass River runs adjacent to the plant site and flows into the St. Louis River and then into Lake Superior.
- The environmental impact statement is being analyzed by three “co-lead” government agencies: the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Forest Service. In addition, there are “cooperating” agencies that are also providing feedback on the mine plan: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and several tribal governments.

## What's the history of the PolyMet mine plan?

- In October 2009, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed PolyMet mine was released for public review and comment.
- **In February 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gave the proposal its lowest ranking: Environmentally Unsatisfactory and Inadequate.** The EPA gave many reasons, including: missing information, failure to address pollution problems, structural issues, and lack of financial assurance analysis. Many members of the public and environmental advocacy organizations also highlighted major flaws with the proposed mine plan.
- Following this input, the lead agencies decided to revise the mine plan in a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS).
- This revised plan, the SDEIS, was released in December 2013 for public review and input.
- Members of the public — Minnesota residents as well as people outside the state — now have an opportunity to provide input about the proposed mine plan.

## What is the history of sulfide mining elsewhere?

- This kind of mining has never happened in Minnesota before, but in other states, it is associated with long-lasting water pollution.
- **No sulfide mine has ever operated without polluting its nearby waters.**
- **The EPA identifies the hardrock mining industry (sulfide mining is a type of hardrock mining) as the largest toxic-waste producing industry in the U.S.**
- The sulfide ores that are excavated react with oxygen in the air and water from rain and other precipitation — and form sulfuric acid. This acid is harmful to organisms that live in water (fish, invertebrates, etc). It also leaches out toxic heavy metals in the rocks with which it comes in contact — metals harmful to people and to wildlife. This polluted discharge is often called “acid mine drainage,” and it can persist for hundreds, even thousands, of years.
- The sulfide mining industry also has a long track record of financial irresponsibility. Many companies go bankrupt or fail to provide enough “financial assurance” — a damage deposit up front — to cover the costs of dealing with pollution. This has left some states and their taxpayers with hundreds of millions of dollars in liability.

Tell the DNR what you think of PolyMet's mine plan at [miningtruth.org](http://miningtruth.org)