



What's changed since the Supplemental Draft EIS?

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the NorthMet Project in November 2009. Following its release, the public was given 90 days to review the Draft EIS and provide comments. Comments were received from government agencies (federal, state, and local), tribal entities, local businesses, non-governmental organizations, private individuals, and PolyMet.

Based on these comments, as well as additional changes to PolyMet's proposal and the inclusion of a land exchange as a connected action, the MDNR, USACE and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) (collectively known as the Co-lead Agencies) decided to prepare a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Supplemental Draft EIS) for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange. The Supplemental Draft EIS incorporated several project changes, and reflects consideration of the Draft EIS comments related to those changes, to provide an updated and complete source of information about the revised project.

The Supplemental Draft EIS was released in December 2013. As with the Draft EIS, the public was given 90 days to review the Supplemental Draft EIS and provide comments. Comments were again received from government agencies (federal, state, and local), tribal entities, local businesses, non-governmental organizations, private individuals, and PolyMet.

The Co-lead Agencies have now prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS). The Final EIS details all project changes, includes new analyses and mitigation, and responds to comments submitted on the Supplemental Draft EIS and Draft EIS. It is the last stage of the detailed review of the project. Environmental review is complete after the state issues its Adequacy Determination, with the federal agencies issuing their respective Records of Decisions.

What's different about the Final EIS?

Changes and additions have been made to the Final EIS based on public comments received and project refinements proposed by PolyMet. Examples of some of these changes include:

- A new section that consolidates information about potential human health impacts of the proposed project.
- Additional information on potential effects to moose, other plants and animals, and biodiversity sites.
- Revisions to the design of the tailings basin system that include the addition of deep soil cement mixing to the existing basin to increase factors of safety for stability. The tailings basin holds the leftover materials from mineral processing.
- Addition of a semi-autogenous grinding (SAG) mill into the concentration process.
- Updates to sanitary sewage treatment at the plant site.

- Removal of the existing coal ash landfill at the plant site with disposal of the coal ash in the hydrometallurgical residue facility (HRF).
- Pretreatment of all water used in stream augmentation at the plant site.
- Updated water impact modeling at the mine and plant sites.
- New monitoring and potential mitigation to prevent the potential for northward flow of groundwater through bedrock at the mine site.

The Final EIS responds to comments submitted on the Supplemental Draft EIS. Individual responses are provided for the Cooperating Agencies' comments (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Tribal), with all other comments responded to thematically. In some cases consideration of comments led to text edits or clarifications for the Final EIS, project design modifications, or updated analysis where deemed necessary. The Final EIS also includes thematic responses to comments on the Draft EIS.

For more information about how the design of the proposed project has changed since the Draft EIS, see Chapter 2 (EIS Development) and Chapter 3 (Proposed Action and Alternatives); for the health impacts summary section, see Chapter 7, section 7.3.4. Also, refer to additional Fact Sheets about the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange Final EIS:

1. Project and Land Exchange Overview
2. What is the Environmental Review Process?
3. What's Changed since the Draft EIS?
4. What's Changed since the Supplemental Draft EIS?
5. Supplemental Draft EIS Comment Response Process
6. Effective Commenting on the Final EIS
7. A Guide to the Final EIS Document
8. Air Quality
9. Water Quantity
10. Wetlands
11. Water Quality
12. Wild Rice
13. Mercury
14. Threatened & Endangered Species
15. Cultural Resources
16. Land Exchange
17. Reclamation & Financial Assurance
18. Cumulative Effects
19. Tailings Basin Stability
20. Water Modeling
21. Northward Flowpath
22. Duration of Treatment & Financial Assurance
23. Human Health