What's Changed since the DEIS?

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the NorthMet Project in November 2009. Following its release, the public was allowed 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 EIS for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange. The SDEIS incorporates the proposed project changes, and reflects consideration of the DEIS comments related to those changes, to provide an updated and complete source of information about the revised project.

What's different about the Supplemental Draft EIS?
The NorthMet Mining Project design has been substantially refined to address waste management and water quality concerns, including: additional water treatment to control sulfate while meeting the Great Lakes Initiative mercury standard; a reduction in wetland impacts; and a reduction in waste rock stored on the land surface. The document also includes more thorough analysis and modeling of the potential effects on groundwater and surface waters, as well as information about a land exchange between PolyMet and the USFS, and detail on Financial Assurance.

Specific mining project changes include:

- In-pit underwater disposal of the most reactive waste rock to minimize chemical reactions that could affect water quality.
- The construction and operation of wastewater treatment facilities at both the mine and plant sites for active treatment of water captured on-site for as long as required to meet water quality standards.
- Enhancements of water capture systems at the rock stockpiles and tailings basin. Water captured by these systems would then be treated at the wastewater treatment facilities.
- The addition of bentonite to the top and side walls of the tailings basin to reduce oxygen transfer in the waste tails to improve water quality performance.
- The placement of the double-lined Hydrometallurgical Residue Facility on a brownfield site (next to the tailings basin).

- The addition of a land exchange between PolyMet and the USFS, in which PolyMet would acquire federal lands where the proposed open-pit, surface mining operations would occur. Because of this change, the USFS was added as a Co-lead Agency.

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). Also, refer to additional Fact Sheets about the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange SDEIS:

1. **What is the Environmental Review Process?**
2. **Effective Commenting**
3. **A Guide to the SDEIS Document**
4. **What's Changed Since the DEIS?**
5. **Project & Land Exchange Overview**
6. **Land Exchange**
7. **Reclamation and Financial Assurance**
8. **Water Quality**
9. **Wetlands**
10. **Air Quality**
11. **Wild Rice**
12. **Mercury**
13. **Threatened & Endangered Species**
14. **Cumulative Effects**
15. **Cultural Resources**
16. **Water Quantity**