

# COVER SHEET

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Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Polymet Mining, Inc. – NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Forest Service have jointly prepared the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to evaluate the proposed project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act 42 USC 4321-4347, and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, *Minnesota Statutes*, section 116D.

**Abstract:**

This FEIS documents the review and analysis of potential impacts associated with the proposed NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange located in northeastern Minnesota. PolyMet Mining, Inc. (PolyMet) is proposing to develop the NorthMet copper-nickel-platinum group elements (PGE) mine and associated processing facilities. Mining would involve open-pit surface mining methods for approximately 20 years, resulting in both ore and waste rock. Waste rock with a low potential for chemical reaction would be placed in a permanent stockpile (capped at closure), while waste rock with a higher potential to react would be stored temporarily in lined stockpiles and ultimately disposed subaqueously in the mined pits. Ore would be transported by an upgraded existing railway to a refurbished and modified former taconite facility for processing. Processing (tailings) waste would be placed in an upgraded existing Tailings Basin, and hydrometallurgical residue waste would be placed in a new, double-lined Hydrometallurgical Residue Facility, located on the southern edge of the Tailings Basin. Water that has contacted surfaces disturbed by mining operations (including the stockpiles), as well as seepage from the Tailings Basin, would be captured in containment systems and treated at wastewater treatment facilities located at the Mine and Plant sites. At closure, unnecessary infrastructure would be removed and the sites reclaimed. Monitoring and water treatment would continue until it is no longer required in order to meet environmental standards and permit conditions. The NorthMet Deposit containing copper-nickel-PGE minerals is located on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Superior National Forest (SNF). The mineral rights associated with these lands were reserved by the original private owner when the United States purchased the land for National Forest purposes under the authority of the Weeks Act. Those mineral interests remain privately owned and are now controlled by PolyMet. The USFS has taken the position that the mineral rights that were reserved do not include the right to surface mine as proposed by PolyMet. Consequently, PolyMet proposed a land exchange that would involve the Forest Service conveying the land at the NorthMet Mine Site to PolyMet in exchange for land of equal value that would become a part of the SNF. Such an exchange would give PolyMet the property rights it needs to pursue its surface mining proposal, while at the same time allowing the Forest Service to be compensated by acquiring other land, of equal value, that could be managed as a part of the SNF. Without this exchange, under the described conditions, the surface mining operation desired by PolyMet would not take place. For this reason, the Land Exchange is a connected action to the NorthMet Mining Project.

**Public comment submittal:**

Public comments submitted on the FEIS will become part of the official record and as such, may be made available for public examination. Comments and submittals will not be edited to remove any identifying or contact information; therefore, the Co-lead Agencies caution against using any information that should not be publicly disclosed. Both mailed and emailed submittals will be accepted.

E-mail submittals should be directed to [NorthMetFEIS.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:NorthMetFEIS.dnr@state.mn.us) and include a full name and legal mailing address to be considered.

Mailed submittals should be directed to:

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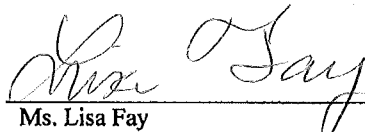
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**Approved for issuance:**

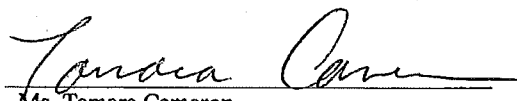
10-19-15  
Date

  
Ms. Lisa Fay  
MN Department of Natural Resources

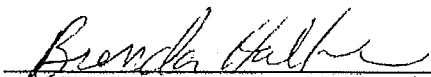
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