



Date: November 5, 2015

To: Interested Parties

From: Lisa Fay, MDNR Project Manager
Douglas Bruner, USACE Project Manager
Michael Jiménez, USFS Project Manager

Re: NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange
Final Environmental Impact Statement

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have jointly prepared the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange. The FEIS describes the anticipated environmental and socio-economic impacts of the proposed PolyMet Mining, Inc. (PolyMet) NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange, located near the cities of Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt in northeastern Minnesota. The FEIS also responds to substantive comments received during the public comment periods for the Draft EIS and the Supplemental Draft EIS. The FEIS is posted on MDNR's website at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/polymet/index.html>. The website also includes an executive summary and a series of fact sheets designed to help the public understand the proposed project and access information in the FEIS.

The NorthMet Project would create an open pit copper, nickel, and platinum group element mine with adjacent temporary stockpiles and a permanent stockpile; refurbish a portion of the former LTV Steel Mining Company (LTVSMC) processing plant and construct a new hydrometallurgical facility at the plant site; construct an upgraded tailings basin facility on the existing LTVSMC tailings facilities; construct waste water treatment facilities at both the mine site and plant site; and add to existing utility infrastructure and rail lines. The Land Exchange would consist of USFS conveyance of Superior National Forest Lands encompassing the NorthMet mine site and surrounding lands to PolyMet, and USFS acquisition from PolyMet of up to five tracts of private lands within the Superior National Forest proclamation boundary.

The FEIS is a disclosure document. Following the anticipated publication of the FEIS notice in the EQB Monitor on November 9, 2015, and the Federal Register on November 13, 2015, the FEIS will be available for public review for a period of 30 days, ending **December 14, 2015** at 4:30 PM CST.

The next step in the environmental review process for the Forest Service is to publish a Draft Record of Decision (ROD) which will document that agency's draft decision on the land exchange. The Forest Service anticipates publishing a legal notice for the Draft ROD in the newspaper of record, Duluth News Tribune, on November 17, 2015. The legal notice and the Draft ROD will be available on the Superior National Forest website, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/northmet>, on the legal notice publication date. A limited number of paper copies of the Draft ROD are available upon request. The legal notice will initiate a 45-day "objection" period pursuant to the regulations at 36 C.F.R. Part 218, Subparts A and B. Information about the objection process and how to submit objections will be included in the legal notice and the Draft ROD. The Forest Service's final ROD can only be signed after the objection "reviewing officer" responds to all objections and after any instructions issued by the reviewing officer have been addressed.

A USACE public notice that announces the release of the FEIS is available on the Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District website, <http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/PolyMet.aspx>. This public notice also

describes, and provides an opportunity to comment on, changes to impacts to waters of the U.S. since the last USACE public notice describing these impacts.

Each Co-lead Agency has a different process for completing environmental review after publication of the FEIS.

The MDNR will consider public comments as part of determining if the FEIS is adequate. Interested parties may submit comments on the adequacy of the FEIS to MDNR during the 30-day review period. An adequacy determination will be made by MDNR following this period. The FEIS shall be determined adequate if it:

- A) Addresses the potentially significant issues and alternatives raised in scoping so that all significant issues for which information can be reasonably obtained have been analyzed in conformance with Minnesota Rules, part 4410.2300, items G and H;
- B) Provides responses to the substantive comments received during the draft and supplemental draft EIS review concerning issues raised in scoping; and
- C) Was prepared in compliance with the procedures of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and Minnesota Rules, parts 4410.0200 to 4410.6500.

Comments 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 suggest that commenters not submit information that may cause the commenter concern if publicly disclosed.

Please submit comments by email to NorthMetFEIS.dnr@state.mn.us. All emails should include a name and legal mailing address. Comments may also be submitted by mail to:

Lisa Fay, EIS Project Manager
MDNR Division of Ecological and Water Resources
Environmental Review Unit
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

Public review copies of the FEIS are available at the following locations: the MDNR Library, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul; the MDNR Regional Office at 1201 East Highway 2, Grand Rapids; the MDNR-Division of Lands and Minerals Regional Office at 1525 Third Avenue East, Hibbing; the Hoyt Lakes Public Library at 206 Kennedy Memorial Drive, Hoyt Lakes; the Babbitt Public Library, 71 South Drive, Babbitt; the Duluth Public Library, 520 West Superior Street, Duluth; and the Minneapolis Public Library, 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis.

The Final EIS is a detailed and lengthy document, more than 3,500 pages in total as a paper copy. A 60-page executive summary of the FEIS is available, as well as a DVD containing the full version of the FEIS. Due to the cost of printing, a limited number of paper copies have been produced. The executive summary and/or DVD may be requested by calling the MDNR at 651-259-5110. A paper copy of the full FEIS may be available on a limited basis.

Please contact any of the following if you have any questions about the environmental review process:

Lisa Fay, MDNR at 651-259-5110
Douglas Bruner, USACE at 651-290-5378
Michael Jiménez, USFS at 218-626-4383

Members of the media may contact any of the following with questions:

Chris Niskanen, DNR communications director, 651-259-5023, chris.niskanen@state.mn.us
Patrick Moes, public affairs officer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 651-290-5202, patrick.n.moes@usace.army.mil
Kristina Reichenbach, public affairs officer, Superior National Forest, 218-626-4393, kreichenbach@fs.fed.us

Questions about the proposed project may be directed to:

Jennifer Saran, PolyMet Mining, Inc., 444 Cedar Street #2060, St. Paul, MN 55101, 651-389-4108