



Supplemental Draft EIS Comment Response

What was the public comment opportunity on the Supplemental Draft EIS?

The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Supplemental Draft EIS) for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange was published on December 13, 2013, which was then followed by a 90-day public comment period. During the period ending on March 13, 2014, approximately 58,000 e-mails, written and typed letters, postcards, and instances of public testimony were received by the Co-lead Agencies (i.e., Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Forest Service).

What steps were involved in responding to the comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS?

- Receiving Submissions – The Co-lead Agencies received around 58,000 submissions ranging from form letters to handmade postcards to highly technical analyses. The Co-lead Agencies considered all comments and recommendations that were provided.
- Reviewing Submissions – Because many of the individual submissions had close similarities, the Co-lead Agencies distilled the 58,000 submissions down to 17,000 unique ideas or comments. This approach ensured a comprehensive and consistent comment response while allowing transparency on consideration of each comment.
- Sorting into Topics – The Co-lead Agencies sorted the 17,000 unique comments into topics, which helped agency teams focus their work in their areas of expertise. The following topics were used:

Air Quality	Alternatives
Aquatic Species	US Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permit
Cultural Resources	Financial Assurance
General Topics	Geotechnical Stability
Hazardous Materials	Human Health and Safety
US Forest Service Land Exchange	Land Use, Recreation, and Visual Resources
Mercury	Noise and Vibration
NEPA and MEPA Topics	Project Description
Permitting and Regulatory Considerations	Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
Vegetation	Wetlands
Terrestrial Wildlife	Wilderness and Special Designation Areas
Water Resources	

Categories for suggested editorial changes (EDIT), requests for information (RFIs), and suggested review of specific publications or other references (REF) were also used.

- Assigning Themes – Within each of the topics similar comments were grouped into themes. Water resources comments for instance were grouped into 200 themes; air quality into 14

themes; and so on. In total, about 600 themes (derived from the original 58,000 submissions) are responded to in Appendix A of the Final EIS.

- Developing Responses – The ~600 themes were used to develop responses. The responses fell into one of 4 broad categories: 1) comment warrants new information or analysis in the EIS; 2) comment warrants additional information in response, but no change in EIS text; 3) comment already addressed in document so response references the document location; and 4) no response needed/comment not substantive.

Ultimately, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) considers all comments submitted on the Supplemental Draft EIS. Individual responses are provided for the Cooperating Agencies (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Tribal) comments, with all other comments responded to thematically as described above.

For more information about the environmental review process of the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange, see the Executive Summary, Chapter 1.0 (Introduction), and Appendix A (Responses to Comments) of the Final EIS. 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**