

NORTHMET MINING PROJECT AND LAND EXCHANGE

Final Environmental Impact Statement



A Guide to the Final EIS Document

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Forest Service (collectively known as the Co-lead Agencies) jointly prepared the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The Final EIS describes the process these state and federal agencies undertook and the results they used to evaluate the potential effects of PolyMet's proposed NorthMet project, land exchange, and alternatives.

The Final EIS adheres to the organization recommended in Title 40, Part 1502.10, of the *Code of Federal Regulations* and content requirements of Part 4410.2300 of the *Minnesota Administrative Rules*. The Final EIS contains the following chapters:

- Executive Summary, which summarizes the Final EIS, including the issues and predicted effects of the proposed NorthMet project, land exchange, and alternatives.
- Chapter 1.0 (Introduction), which provides an overview and describes the purpose of and need for the proposed NorthMet project and land exchange. The chapter also discusses the state and federal regulations that apply to the proposed project, the roles and responsibilities of state and federal agencies, and the organization of the Final EIS.
- Chapter 2.0 (EIS Development), which describes the steps in the development of the Draft EIS, the Supplemental Draft EIS, and the Final EIS. The chapter lists permits and approvals that could be required for the proposed project. The chapter also discusses changes in the proposed project since the Draft EIS and the Supplemental Draft EIS and how various groups — including the state and federal agencies and the public — influenced the development of the Final EIS.
- Chapter 3.0 (Proposed Action and Project Alternatives), which describes the proposed NorthMet project and land exchange, as well as their alternatives, including the “no action” alternative and alternatives considered, but eliminated from detailed analysis.
- Chapter 4.0 (Affected Environment), which summarizes the existing conditions of the area where the proposed NorthMet project would be located, as well as the surrounding environment, and the existing conditions of the parcels included in the proposed land exchange. The discussion includes physical, biological, cultural, socioeconomic, and recreational resources.
- Chapter 5.0 (Environmental Consequences), which presents the potential environmental effects of the proposed NorthMet project, land exchange, and alternatives. It also identifies measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse impacts.
- Chapter 6.0 (Cumulative Effects), which describes the potential cumulative effects of the proposed NorthMet project and land exchange on the surrounding environment, when considered together with other relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects.

- Chapter 7.0 (Comparison of Alternatives and Other Considerations), which presents a comparison of the potential effects across the proposed NorthMet project, land exchange, and alternatives. This section also addresses irretrievable and irreversible effects, short-term uses versus long-term productivity of the environment, unavoidable adverse effects, impacts on human health, and identification of public interest factors that are considered for the Land Exchange Proposed Action and alternatives.
- Chapter 8.0 (Major Differences of Opinion), which describes major differences of opinion between the Tribal Cooperating Agencies and the Co-lead Agencies regarding aspects of the Supplemental Draft EIS, with updated Co-lead Agencies responses for the Final EIS. The Cooperating Agencies include the: 1) Bois Forte Band of Chippewa; 2) Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; 3) Grand Portage Band of Chippewa; 4) Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission; and 5) 1854 Treaty Authority;
- Appendices, which provide additional supporting materials to help the reader better understand the process leading to the publication of the Final EIS, including:
 - Appendix A – Thematic Responses to Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIS Comments, and individual responses to the Cooperating Agency comments on the Supplemental Draft EIS;
 - Appendix B – Underground Mining Alternative Assessment for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange EIS;
 - Appendix C – Tribal Agency Position Supporting Materials from the Supplemental Draft EIS; and
 - Appendix D – Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation for the proposed NorthMet Project and Land Exchange

For more information about the organization of the Final EIS for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange, see the Executive Summary and Chapter 1 (Introduction) 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**