



Human Health

Were human health effects addressed in the Supplemental Draft EIS for the NorthMet Project?

Yes. The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Supplemental Draft EIS) analyzed risks to human health, specifically how the proposed project could affect air quality, surface water quality, and ground water quality, including effects to drinking water and food sources. However, this information was presented in various media-specific chapters of the Supplemental Draft EIS, rather than in a consolidated section on the assessment of human health risks.

During the public comment period for the Supplemental Draft EIS, the Co-lead Agencies received letters notably from the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Nurses Association, and Minnesota Health Professionals, and others requesting that a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) be conducted for the proposed project.

What is an HIA?

An HIA is a systematic approach to predict and manage health effects (positive and negative) on a community and society as a whole from a proposed project, policy, plan or program. An HIA uses scientific data, professional expertise, and stakeholder input to identify and evaluate public health consequences of proposals, and suggests actions to minimize adverse health impacts.

Why was a Health Impact Assessment not conducted for the proposed project?

The use of an HIA for the proposed NorthMet project was not identified as part of EIS Scoping in 2006, nor was it identified as part of public comments on the 2009 Draft EIS. The Supplemental Draft EIS did evaluate various potential health-related impacts of the proposed action, though an HIA was not conducted.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) met after the close of the public comment period for the Supplemental Draft EIS to discuss the MDH comments, including the suggestion that an HIA be completed for the proposed NorthMet project. The agencies agreed that an HIA is not required for an EIS but is a tool that can help inform the public about potential health impacts from a proposed project.

Although additional HIA information could be developed as part of an EIS, the Co-lead Agencies, in this instance, took a more customary approach and addressed public health impacts based on water and air quality evaluation criteria and regulatory standards that are protective of human health. Public health impacts were addressed in sections of the EIS related to water quality, air quality and toxics, including potential effects to drinking water and food sources as required by the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and National Environmental Protection Act.

Where in the Final EIS can I find information regarding potential human health effects?

Consideration of comments received regarding human health impacts led the Co-lead Agencies to conclude that the human health information in the EIS could be more clearly articulated and better organized. The Final EIS, therefore, includes a new section (7.3.4) that concisely summarizes human health-related information and impact assessments included in the document. This section also directs readers to specific sections in the Final EIS where human health risks are addressed in more detail.

For more information about how the Final EIS looked at potential human health effects of the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange, see Chapter 7.0 (Comparison of Alternatives and Other Considerations) 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**