



Threatened and Endangered Species

The federal Endangered Species Act and Minnesota's endangered species act and associated rules protect federally- and state-listed threatened and endangered animal and plant species in the state of Minnesota.

How would the proposed NorthMet Project affect threatened and endangered species?

The proposed NorthMet project is expected to affect three federally-listed species, specifically the Canada lynx, gray wolf, and northern long-eared bat. There are ten state-listed Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern (ETSC) plant, and eight ETSC wildlife, species known to occur near the proposed NorthMet project area that may be affected by the proposed action. These wildlife species include the moose, little brown bat, eastern pipistrelle, northern goshawk, boreal owl, wood turtle, eastern heather vole, and yellow rail. There are no federally- or state-listed fish or macroinvertebrate species (such as mussels) in the area. There are no federally-listed plant species at the proposed NorthMet project area. Of the ten state-listed plant species in the proposed NorthMet project area, eight species would be directly affected, and two would potentially be indirectly affected, by the proposed NorthMet project.

Some of these protected species (such as Canada lynx or gray wolf) could be directly or indirectly affected by project-related noise, vibration, human activity, and rail and vehicle traffic. More broadly, species populations, individuals, or their habitat(s) could be removed or destroyed as part of clearing, filling, or construction activities. Some plant and animal species could also be indirectly affected by the proposed NorthMet project, for example by changes in water quality and environment, deposition of dust, loss of pollinators, erosion, and invasion of non-native species.

How were the potential effects determined?

The Co-lead Agencies relied on existing data from state and federal agencies, in addition to new surveys and reports, to determine land cover types, native plant communities, habitat types, forest stand age classes, landscape ecosystems, and presence or absence of protected species. This information was then compared to the proposed design and management of the mining project to determine how the proposed NorthMet project may interact with habitats or individuals, and further assess the effects on protected species potentially occurring in the project area.

What would be done to avoid or minimize these effects?

The direct disturbance of the proposed NorthMet project would be minimized through the reuse of existing brownfield sites. In areas where land is disturbed by project-related activities, as part of reclamation, PolyMet would re-seed with native plant species where possible, although some non-native species may be used. PolyMet would also monitor and control invasive plant species such as harmful weeds. Soil near the Tailings Basin may be amended with organic material to improve its quality

and promote the growth of vegetation. As part of closure, PolyMet would restore certain disturbed lands and this could potentially create new habitat; this process could take decades.

For more information about how threatened and endangered species in the area would be affected by the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange, see the Executive Summary, Sections 4.2.4 (Affected Environment, Vegetation) and 4.2.5 (Affected Environment, Wildlife), Sections 5.2.4 (Environmental Consequences, Vegetation) and 5.2.5 (Environmental Consequences, Wildlife), Chapter 6 (Cumulative Effects), and Appendix D (Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation) 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**