



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®
St. Paul District



Date: December 5, 2013

To: Interested Parties

From: Lisa Fay, MDNR Project Manager
Douglas Bruner, USACE Project Manager
Tim Dabney, USFS Deputy Forest Supervisor

Re: NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange
Supplemental Draft 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 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange. The SDEIS describes the anticipated environmental and socioeconomic 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 SDEIS is posted on MDNR's website at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/polymet/index.html>.

The NorthMet Project would create an open pit copper, nickel, cobalt and precious metals mine with adjacent stockpile areas; refurbish a portion of the former LTV Steel Mining Company (LTVSMC) processing plant and construct a new hydrometallurgical facility at the plant site; construct a new tailings basin facility on the site of LTVSMC tailings facilities; 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 Land Exchange is subject to Forest Service Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process (objections process) regulations at 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. The Land Exchange legal notice, identifying requirements under 36 CFR 218, will be available on the Superior National Forest website, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/northmet>. The Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation for the proposed NorthMet project are also posted on the Superior National Forest website.

The USACE public notice for the SDEIS and public meetings, and the public notice for the USACE Section 404 Clean Water Act Permit, are available on the Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District website, <http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/ProjectsStudies/PolyMet.aspx>.

Following the anticipated publishing of the SDEIS notice in the Federal Register on December 13, 2013, the MDNR, USACE, and USFS invite written comments on the SDEIS during the public comment period that ends March 13, 2014 at 4:30 PM CT. Comments should address the accuracy and completeness of information presented in the SDEIS. Following the comment period, the MDNR, USACE, and USFS will review and address all substantive comments received, and will issue a Final EIS. Responses to comments will be included as part of the Final EIS.

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 NorthMetSDEIS.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 SDEIS 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 Supplemental Draft EIS is a detailed and lengthy document, more than 2,000 pages in total. A 60-page summary of the SDEIS is available, as well as a CD containing the full version of the SDEIS. Due to the cost of printing, a limited number of hardcopies have been produced. The summary and/or CD may be requested by calling the MDNR at 651-259-5110. A hardcopy of the full SDEIS may be available on a limited basis.

The Co-lead Agencies will hold three public informational meetings for the purpose of providing information on the project, answering questions and gathering public comments on the Supplemental Draft EIS:

- (1) Thursday, January 16, 2014
DECC - Duluth Entertainment Convention Center (<http://www.decc.org/>)
350 Harbor Dr, Duluth, MN 55802
5:00 p.m. – open house
6:45-10:00 p.m. formal presentation and public comment period
- (2) Wednesday, January 22, 2014
Mesabi East High School (<http://www.mesabieast.k12.mn.us/>)
601 N 1st St W, Aurora, MN 55705
5:00 p.m. – open house
6:45-10:00 p.m. formal presentation and public comment period
- (3) Tuesday, January 28, 2014
Saint Paul RiverCentre (<http://www.rivercentre.org/>)
175 West Kellogg Blvd, Saint Paul, MN 55102
5:00 p.m. – open house
6:45-10:00 p.m. formal presentation and public comment period

Verbal and written comments on the SDEIS will be accepted at these meetings. Responses to comments will not be provided during the public meetings; however, staff from the state and federal agencies will be available to answer questions during each open house. The Duluth meeting will also serve as the public hearing for the USACE Section 404 Clean Water Act Permit.

In case of a weather-related cancellation of one or more of the public meetings, the cancelled meeting(s) would be held at the same locations listed above on the following alternative date(s): 1) Thursday, February 27, 2014, DECC - Duluth; 2) Monday, February 3, 2014, Mesabi East High School - Aurora; 3) Tuesday, February 18, 2014, Saint Paul RiverCentre - St. Paul. The Co-lead Agencies would notify the public of any cancellations, time or venue changes via press release and/or social media (e.g., Twitter).

Please contact any of the following if you have any questions:

Lisa Fay, MDNR at 651-259-5110
Douglas Bruner, USACE at 651-290-5378
Tim Dabney, USFS at 218-626-4303