



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 NorthMet Mining Project affect threatened and endangered species?

There is one federally listed wildlife species, the Canada lynx, and one newly proposed listed species, the northern long-eared bat. There are 11 state-listed Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern (ETSC) plant species and six state-listed ETSC wildlife species known to occur within the project area. State-listed wildlife include the gray wolf, bald eagle, wood turtle, eastern heather vole, yellow rail, and Laurentian tiger beetle. There are no federally- or state-listed fish or macroinvertebrate species (such as mussels) in the area.

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 could be removed or destroyed as part of clearing, filling, or construction activities. Some plant and animal species could also be indirectly affected by changes in water quality and environment, deposition of dust, loss of pollinators, erosion, and invasion of non-native species, among other things.

How were the 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 project may interact with habitat 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 project would be minimized through the reuse of existing brownfield sites. In areas where land is disturbed by project activities, PolyMet would re-seed with native plant species, where possible, though 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. After project closure, PolyMet would restore certain disturbed lands and this could potentially create new habitat, though the 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), and Chapter 6 (Cumulative Effects) of the SDEIS. Also, refer to additional Fact Sheets about the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange SDEIS:

1. What is the Environmental Review Process?
2. Effective Commenting
3. A Guide to the SDEIS Document
4. What's Changed Since the DEIS?
5. Project & Land Exchange Overview
6. Land Exchange
7. Reclamation and Financial Assurance
8. Water Quality
9. Wetlands
10. Air Quality
11. Wild Rice
12. Mercury
13. Threatened & Endangered Species
14. Cumulative Effects
15. Cultural Resources
16. Water Quantity