

NE MINNESOTA CAMPAIGN FACT SHEET



Mining Without Harm To the Minnesota People and Places We Love

Sierra Club volunteers have been active in Minnesota mining since the founding of the North Star Chapter in 1968 in issues such as the Reserve Mining Water Quality lawsuit (asbestos-like fibers in Duluth's drinking water), copper-nickel mining, and taconite plants.

Recently, Club volunteers in Northern Minnesota have been watching the media reports on new proposals for major mining projects. Reports are dominated by a threat for companies to begin **sulfide mining** (from which copper, nickel, and other metals are extracted*), a toxic type of mining never done in Minnesota before.

It is far more dangerous to the environment than taconite mining. Numerous projects now threaten the region, and are driven by higher metal prices that make the investment more attractive from a business perspective.

They would spew acid, toxic metals and mercury into our clean air and waters. Thousands of acres of wetlands vital to fishing, hunting, Duluth's water supply and Lake Superior fisheries would be at risk. (Clyde Hanson, active volunteer)

One of these proposed mine sites would be sitting at the headwaters of the **Partridge River**, which flows into the St Louis River and Lake Superior. Another is proposed directly under **Birch Lake**, which drains into the Kawishiwi River and consequently, into the BWCAW.

It is likely that if sulfide mining is allowed in Minnesota, the perpetual costs of treating polluted waters and tending toxic wastes would fall on taxpayers, as they have in other states where sulfide mining has been done. **Sulfide mines are “reactive” or acid-producing for thousands of years.** Arrowhead citizens are working together to protect the headwaters of the St. Louis River as well as waters that run into the BWCAW by asking the government and mining companies for “Mining Without Harm”.

WHO THIS POLLUTION DIRECTLY AFFECTS

- People downstream and downwind of the mines (including Duluth and the Iron Range)
- People who hunt and fish in the project impact zone
- People whose livelihoods would be harmed (resort owners, outfitters)
- Mothers concerned about developmental impacts of pollution on children
- People with illnesses caused by pollution
- Healthcare and conservation professionals

* For more information, please see our website at www.northstar.sierraclub.org.

CAMPAIGN GOALS

There are environmental and public health impacts of new types of mining and metal processing in Northeastern Minnesota. We have to ask ourselves what we want our environment to be like and what we can do to help. The following are goals:

- **Prevent new and reduce current pollution** from mining or mineral processing that harms the health of workers and the public
- **Protect wild lands, surface water and groundwater** from damage by mining or mineral processing development
- **Protect wildlife (plants and animals)** populations from damage by mining or mineral processing
- **Protect neighbors** of mines or mineral processing plants from noise, traffic and pollution of such developments

JOBS VS ENVIRONMENT

A mentality exists which pins jobs vs. environment, implying that caring for both issues is contradictory. Senator Paul Wellstone helped clear the trail toward mutual support and alliance for the Blue/Green community. As many people know, the economy and the preservation of wild lands are both major issues for Northern Minnesota. These issues do not exist independently of each other, but do *not* have to conflict.



As part of our Mining Without Harm Campaign, Sierra Club committee members are working with labor unions on the Iron Range to help break down the wall which has been perpetuated by corporate interests and backward politicking.

WHERE YOU COME IN

In Sierra Club, members and volunteers are the ones with the power to make change; to stand up for the issues; to lobby local, state and national governments; to join together in the struggle to protect American's environment.

We need your help. Please volunteer on this important campaign. We are working to protect our water and our health. The mining companies have not yet been given the "go ahead" by the government. If they do, there is a huge risk of acid mine drainage which will linger for many years to come, harming the ecosystem and damaging the water we drink, fish and swim in.



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Please take a look at our website for more information about our accomplishments and plans, and who you can contact to help out.

www.northstar.sierraclub.org look for "Mining Without Harm"

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