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Reader's view: must 'prove it first'

I have a deep love and respect for northern Minnesota's wilderness. At the same time, I want to see sustainable economic development. Like many of you, I have thought long and hard about both sides of the sulfide-mining issue. I fully understand that by allowing mining for copper, nickel and other precious metals without, at the very minimum, firm and absolute guarantees, we risk compromising, forever, the unique qualities of this beautiful area.

With this in mind, I have come to support "prove it first," which simply means any company permitted to do sulfide mining in Minnesota must first show its mining process has occurred elsewhere without causing environmental harm or pollution.

The Save Lake Superior Association has taken a cautious position on sulfide mining that I share as a member. The organization wants people to fully consider that while permitting may be reversible, pollution from metallic sulfide mining would be irreversible for decades if not centuries. Permits may be withdrawn, but mining and processing waste would be permanent.

Here are things to consider when making your own decision about whether to support sulfide mining. Once a permit is granted, no amount of money or resources can reverse damage that results from acid-mine drainage, the destruction of wetlands, the clear-cutting of forestlands, and the pollution of lakes, rivers and other natural areas. Fully consider that ours is a water-rich area, making it the worst possible place to undertake this kind of mining. As a result, regulations here need to be much different and more stringent than in other areas. Finally, understand that sulfide mining never has been done without significant damage to the environment.

Consider these matters when considering whether short-term jobs are worth the potential environmental and quality-of-life changes that sulfide mining most surely could bring.

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