



Save Lake Superior Association Winter 2019

Dedicated to the restoration and preservation of this Great Lake

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Can the Great Give-away to PolyMet Be Stopped?

2018 was a bleak year for those of us opposing the permitting of PolyMet. In late October of 2017, Governor Mark Dayton moved from being "genuinely undecided" on the proposed PolyMet copper-nickel mine to being a genuine supporter of the project. "Nothing of that magnitude is risk free but I think it's a risk worth taking and I support the project. PolyMet is one where I think the risk is worth (the reward)..." the governor told the Pioneer Press.

Missing from Dayton's politically expedient declaration is who will be subjected to the risk--those residing in northeastern Minnesota, especially those living downstream of the toxic mine--and Lake Superior.

Pollution from a toxic sulfide mine in the headwaters of Lake Superior would travel downstream to adversely impact Fond du Lac, Cloquet, Carlton, Duluth, and Superior, Wisconsin, in addition to anyone else living along the way.

But the governor is not as comfortable with another proposed copper-nickel mine.

PolyMet's structure and location "is very different from Twin Metals. It's a very different watershed," he said. Governor Dayton ignored the geological evidence that PolyMet's deposits morph into those of Teck Resources, which morph into those of Twin Metals. The permitting of PolyMet would set the stage for a sulfide mine district extending from Hoyt Lakes to Birch Lake--and once one sulfide mine is permitted, there will be no stopping the expansions.

Dayton's PolyMet decision gave Tom Landwehr, his appointed commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), permission to move forward with permitting of the first ever copper-nickel sulfide mine project in Minnesota. On December 20, 2018 PolyMet received the final major state permits needed to begin construction of the mine. The federal Army Corps of Engineers 404 wetlands permit has not yet been issued.



The Partridge River flows through the proposed PolyMet project site (Photo: Rob Levine)

During this same time frame, in late 2017 H.R. 3115, the Superior National Forest Land Exchange Act, was authored by 8th district Congressman Rick Nolan and passed the House. The bill was designed to override four separate lawsuits against the U.S. Forest Service transfer of over 6,500 acres of public land to PolyMet for its open pits. The lawsuits challenge the legality of the land exchange, with Save Lake Superior Association as a party to one of the suits.

Rather than allow for judicial review, our elected officials — Nolan, along with senators Smith and Klobuchar — jumped in to override due process and the rights of their own constituents by introducing legislation to compel the USFS to transfer valuable acreage on the headwaters of Lake Superior and the Rainy River watershed to a foreign mining company. First district Congressman Tim Walz, now our Minnesota governor, co-sponsored Nolan's bill. Passage of the bill failed in last-ditch efforts on the senate side for attachment to the Federal Defense Authorization Act.

In 2019, newly elected 8th District Congressman Pete Stauber has re-submitted Nolan's bill, now numbered H.R. 527. As of December 12, 2018, PolyMet hired the Washington, D.C. based Monument Policy Group to lobby for them on issues related to the Superior National Forest Land Exchange Act.

There will be a massive impact to our wetlands and waters from PolyMet's sulfide mine if it is allowed to proceed. The PolyMet mine project poses the largest loss of wetland acreage from any single project ever



Lake Superior "sea smoke" (Photo: Jan Swart Photography)

permitted in Minnesota. 960 acres will be directly destroyed and an additional 6,700 could be harmed indirectly by mining activities.

The wetlands that would be adversely impacted from PolyMet's sulfide mine are located on the headwaters of Lake Superior and are considered Aquatic Resources of National Importance (ARNI designation). PolyMet's EIS

(environmental impact statement) admits that water treatment would be needed for at least 500 years after closure of its proposed mine.

The permitting of PolyMet is being driven by mining company control of Minnesota politics, carrying over to the agencies created to protect our waters, air, and land (DNR and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency). The entire EIS process has been marred by omission and/or manipulation of science and replaced by language claiming that pollution problems will be addressed through 'adaptive management,' once they have occurred. Based upon the continuing promotion of mining at all costs, the DNR Lands and Minerals Division has opened up new

expanses of state land near Cook, Side Lake, and Bear Lake (Itasca County) to gold exploration. Minnesota law does not prohibit cyanide processing in the extraction of gold from low-grade sulfide ores.

The mining industry is in a state of flux. Robotics promise to take over many blue collar jobs. Nanotechnology will one day take over the need to mine such low grade mineral deposits--including copper, nickel, and precious metals. In the meantime, recycling and efficiencies must replace the throw-away, planned obsolescence of our market system and consumers must make informed buying choices.

Once a sulfide ore deposit is opened to mining, the mine will place a perpetual risk and pollution burden upon future generations. Just like a lighthouse keeper would keep a light burning in order to prevent a shipwreck, SLSA continues to shine a light on the dangers of sulfide mining in the water and wetland environment of northeast Minnesota.

By Elanne Palcich

Tribute to Glenn Maxham

The Save Lake Superior Association and the great lake we strive to protect has benefitted from the dedicated involvement of many great community leaders over the years. Those fine people did not seek compensation for their volunteer activities nor did they show hesitancy to take a stand on controversial issues that often threaten our lake and the Lake Superior watershed.

The latest loss SLSA has experienced is the passing of Glenn Maxham, on September 10, 2018. Glenn was a well-known and respected Duluth newscaster and since his retirement in the 1990's he devoted much of his life to concerns about our environment.

While health issues forced him to give up his role as the SLSA Newsletter editor and vice-chair of the board, failing health did not stop him from continuing to voice his deep concerns about our lake. He was an outspoken opponent of Sulfide Mining and the devastating effects he felt it would have on our entire Lake Superior Watershed. Sulfide mining, though, was not his only concern. Be it his fight to keep our Lake's shoreline natural and undisturbed by opposing the "McQuade Road Safe Harbor", his concerns about the introduction of invasive species into our lake, the dumping of ballast water, or the resolution of the possibly toxic contents of the barrels that were dumped into our Lake, Glenn Maxham could always be counted upon to lead the fight to get proper resolution of the problem.

Yes, Glenn worked hard to make sure Lake Superior remained the beautiful pristine fresh water lake of earlier generations. And, yes, the Save Lake Superior Association will miss Glenn Maxham. Glenn's work and his dedication to The Great Lake and our environment was not nearly ready for him to leave us. With that said, it is incumbent upon the rest of us to step up and fill the void left by Glenn's departure. I'll try and do my part, more than ever we will need your involvement as well.

By Will Munger

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