



No Time for Relaxing Pollution Standards

If nothing else, the current financial crisis has taught us that repeating false statements does not make them true. The probability of false information remaining false no matter how it is packaged is very high whether it concerns financial matters or the potential to pollute our air and water.

Those with financial interests in obtaining permits to pollute continue to seek to gain an advantage during troubled times by exploiting the public's vulnerable position. "Trust us. We would not harm the environment." They continue to deal in alchemy rather than science. Ships continue to dump infected ballast water into our harbors. Mining plans do not prevent acid mine drainage and the release of sulfates into streams. The air is filled with dangerous fibers and mercury. Runoff from impervious surfaces poisons our lakes and streams.

There are no effective plans in place to eliminate these sources of pollution. We have only empty promises and faulty plans endlessly thrust upon us. Pollutants accumulate over time destroying limited water and natural resources. We encourage members of SLSA and others to demand the truth from our agencies and elected officials concerning the potential for pollution from projects currently under consideration for approval.

Irreversible damage to public health cannot be justified on the basis of short term financial gains. Write letters. Contact officials. Speak out. Challenge the media. Make the good times healthy times.'

LeRoger Lind

Sulfide mining lease purchases continue

Despite the current economic slump, sulfide mining lease purchases continue within Minnesota's Lake Superior watershed. This past March, Canadian mining company, Duluth Metals purchased the rights to mine and remove copper, nickel and other non-ferrous metals from a 3500 acre MN DNR lease offering. This most recent lease is at the headwaters of the St Louis River, which is the largest U.S. watershed that feeds Lake Superior. Regrettably, this mining lease shares a 2.5 mile border with the DNR's own Sand Lake Peatlands Scientific and Natural Area. It's hard to imagine more opposing land classifications.

Other DNR copper-nickel mining leases within the St Louis River watershed now total over 25,000 acres. There are additional state lease offerings within the Lake Superior headwaters region that have the potential to bring this figure to well over 40,000 acres, with a great deal more just over the divide in the Rainy River watershed. Lake Superior watersheds in Michigan's UP region are under similar pressure to yield their marrow, exposing more poison generating, sulfur-laden ore bodies.

Interestingly, Wisconsin is void of this detrimental mining activity. This not because it is void of mineral deposits, but because the citizens of Wisconsin have demanded their representatives take steps to safeguard their water resources from this persistent and toxic pollution source. The 1997 Wisconsin mining law requires an applicant to provide examples of a mining operation in the U.S. or Canada that have not resulted in significant environmental pollution. This simple law has been sufficient to cause sulfide mining companies to pursue ore bodies elsewhere. Minnesota and Michigan have yet to take such proactive measures to protect their water.

Todd Ronning

Not all the coast is "colder by the lake"

It's called an "upwelling" and ,when it happens, a dramatic difference may result between the temperature on Minnesota's northshore and that along Wisconsin's shore.

The upwelling, cold water from the deeps, rises to the surface. When combined with northwest to southwest winds, the warm surface water, displaced by the cold, is shifted across the lake to the badger state....much to the delight of swimmers who can enjoy water as much as 25 degrees warmer!

This was the finding of the Large Lakes Observatory study, led by professor emeritus Robert Megard and described in Seiche, the publication of Minnesota Sea Grant.

Cleaner fuel coming for lake & ocean ships

We've all seen the emissions from stacks on lakers and foreign vessels but few of us thought about the environmental impact on Lake Superior. This is especially true for those old enough to remember the miles-long streaks of coal smoke several decades ago. The thin wisps of oily emission from today's commercial ships belie the need to clean up the noxious contents.

The EPA announced on July 1st that it will demand (by 2012) that fuel changes must be made to comply with new regulations. The agency states that a reduction of as much as 96% of the sulfur in the diesel fuel would result. At the same time the particulate matter—some of which drops into the lake—would be cut by 85%. Nitrogen in the fuel would drop by 80%.

EPA research, says Lisa Jackson, the agency's administrator, shows that up to 14,000 lives would be saved each year among people living in or near U.S. waters.

The bunker fuel is regarded as "dirty" but will apparently not be banned but it may be used in a blend with No. 1 or No. 2 diesel fuel.



Nitrate limits in lakes to be tightened

The move by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to get EPA approval of stricter water standards is a step in the right direction—but the steps are taken at a slow pace.

In March of 2009 it was announced that it was reviewing the existing standards and decided more had to be done to protect the health of humans and aquatic life.

The numerical limits being proposed have not been made public and we may not know what they are until they reach an administrative law judge next year. The MPCA reviews our surface and ground water every three years.

Antidote to global warming? Return of Glaciers

Surely the retreat of the last glacier from the Great Lakes can't be attributed to human manipulation, yet its disappearance contributes today to a warming of our air and water! According to the UMD based Large Lakes Observatory, the rate in which this has been happening since the 1990s is "drastic" and results in an annual rise of .12 degrees centigrade in the outflow of Lake Superior water. The increase in our air temperature has been recorded at .06 centigrade per year.

It was explained that the sunlight was reflected from the surface of glacial ice back into the atmosphere. This still happens but we no longer have an ice cover all year long and, even in our winter months, it covers much less of the lake and lasts for shorter times.

Ballast water update

In the spring edition of the MPCA's Minnesota Environment, Anne Moore, the agency spokesperson, reported the action of the Citizens' Board on the contentious issue. The vote was 6 to zero to "control aquatic invasive species by approving a shipping vessel ballast water discharge permit. Though the ballast water-aquatic invasive species threat is global, impacts are all too local. More than 160 aquatic species now live in the Great Lakes; about one-third of those { are in } Lake Superior."

She said the MPCA would have preferred that the problem be addressed at a national level but found it necessary for Minnesota to develop its own permitting program. She cited fact that "Duluth-Superior and Two Harbors ports receive more ballast water discharges than all other Great Lakes ports."

Moore said those in our lake include the zebra mussel, the round goby and the spiny water flea. Last month the zebra mussels were found in Pike Lake near Duluth and it's suspected that they will eventually inhabit other inland lakes.

The MPCA provides the public with a list of ships that now have permits. You can access this and other information by going to www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/ballastwater.html

Cameron Davis; a good choice to head Great Lakes cleanup

Since his appointment by EPA head Lisa Jackson this past June, Davis has been working to coordinate a dozen federal agencies to focus on ambitious plans to clean up the Great Lakes.

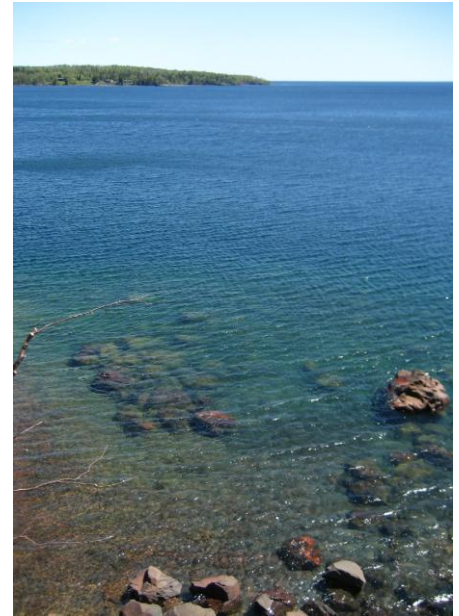
Davis has been serving as president of the Chicago- based Alliance for the Great Lakes.

President Obama is firmly behind the initiative and will have to find about 20 billion dollars to implement it...certain to be difficult in these tough economic times.

It's unlikely that amount would be allocated in one lump sum. During his campaign for the presidency, Mr. Obama pledged to raise five billion for the Great Lakes over a decade with \$475 million in new spending.

Under the Davis leadership the funding would be spent on cleaning up polluted harbors ensuring that the waterways are safe for drinking, swimming and fish consumption.

Davis has been a strong advocate for imposing tight controls on the diversion of Great Lakes water. He's expected to work closely with the Environmental Protection Agency.



Great Lakes Conference coming up in Duluth

This fall, Sept. 10-12, the 5th Annual Great Lakes Restoration Conference is the result of an alliance between the Healing Our Waters environmental group and the Great Lakes Coalition.

Its stated purpose is to "develop strategies to achieve our Great Lakes restoration goals in 2010 and beyond." The conference agenda will address critical issues such as linking Great Lakes restoration to economic recovery.

For details of the conference you can e-mail Martha Borie mboriewood@greatlakes.org or <http://www.healthylakes.org/09conference>

Trading invasive species?

While we are rightly concerned about the invasive species accidentally imported into the Great Lakes region ports, we just learned there's an unintended tit-for-tat exchange.

Among the marine life species taken into the ballast tanks of ships calling in American coastal ports was our indigenous jelly fish. It has since turned up in the Black, Azov and Caspian Seas. Apparently it has wreaked havoc with the anchovy population native to those waters.

According to Sea Grant, the widely known (and tasty) flounder fish was discovered off the Keewenaw Peninsula of Upper Michigan! So far only a single specimen was found.

Not to worry about breeding success of this ocean fish even if it has a mate....it can only reproduce successfully in salt water.

In Minnesota, our wealth is our water

So states C.A. Arneson of Ely, a retired teacher who has devoted time to researching the potential impacts of sulfide mining on our water.

In Arneson's" MinnPost piece she says, "Historically and consistently, sulfide mines have polluted surrounding waters. New mines can take years before leaching shows. By then the damage has been done. Sulfide mining will leave millions of tons of waste rock (99% is waste), whose toxic leaching will be treated with old technology, including liners that can and do fail. According to the mining industry's own experts, all liners eventually leak."

The concern of SLSA and other environmental organizations and individuals is that the sulfuric acid runoff from PolyMet's mine site would flow into the Partridge and Embarrass Rivers and from there into the St. Louis River, down to the estuary in Duluth and then into Lake Superior. The sulfuric acid would reduce the PH of the streams, leach heavy metals and cause fish kills. The Dunka mine pit, a legacy of the defunct LTV Steel operation, continues to leach sulfuric acid drainage into the Partridge River.

Arneson notes that PolyMet, in its first mining venture, is planning to do sulfide mining in Minnesota. It is not alone in its application, nor is it the only one with a checkered record in past bad mining practices. "Teck Cominco (mining company) was sued by the state of Washington for polluting the Columbia River. Teck Cominco was sued for pollution at the Red Dog Mine in Alaska where the heavy metal contamination is some of the highest in the nation. Tech was on the Canadian list of 'top ten' worst mining companies.

In Minnesota, Teck Cominco has a one-time 'back in' with its venture partner, Franconia Minerals, and is doing exploratory mining on its own leased land.

Kennecott is a wholly owned subsidiary of Rio Tinto. Norway's state-run pension fund divested its \$853 million Rio Tinto stake to protest Rio Tinto's mining ethics. Why is Minnesota welcoming it?"

The following is a quote from a 1988 MPCA, Division of Water Quality memo to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Minerals Division: 'We are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the DNR's apparent role as advisor and advocate on behalf of the company in relation to MPCA and our programs.

While we understand and have no problem with the DNR's statutory responsibilities to promote mineral development, we wish to make a distinction between that role and one of acting as advocate on behalf of LTV Steel regarding the latter's dealings with the MPCA.'

Remember! Annual Meeting August 15th

All members are urged to join your board for the event—held this time in the "Copper Top" (First Methodist Church) in Duluth starting at 8:30 am.*

Stormwater Runoff Impacts on the North Shore and the effect on macroinvertebrates such as May, caddis and stone flies and others that have declined due to excess sedimentation according to researcher Valerie Brady,(PhD) the topic of the main speaker. She is a research assistant for UMD/NRRI and has done projects for the EPA and Sea Grant.

In her visual program she will also speak to the importance of Lake Superior wetlands.

A second speaker will be Howard Pierce of Tewantin, Queensland, Australia. He works for the Medtronics company and, as a volunteer monitor of environmental issues in that nation. Howard is the son of board member and secretary Alice Pierce. He will share with us his observations made when visiting the Great Barrier Reef, the Outback and other parts of Australia.

* Coffee and "goodies" will be available

Your SLSA Board Members

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Alice Pierce (Treasurer)
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Will Munger Jr., Todd Ronning,
Sally Munger, Jim Lind,

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per year per person.
The lifetime membership is
\$100 per person**

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