



LAWSUIT FILED TO HALT LAND EXCHANGE FOR POLYMET MINE

PolyMet Mine poses an unacceptable risk and will harm Minnesota's water and environment

Duluth, Minnesota--Save Our Sky Blue Waters, Save Lake Superior Association, and the Sierra Club North Star Chapter have filed legal action against the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land exchange with PolyMet. If approved, PolyMet would be Minnesota's first ever sulfide mine and would operate for 20 years, and threatens to pollute the headwaters of Lake Superior with toxic sulfide mining waste for hundreds of years after it is closed, requiring near perpetual water treatment and maintenance of the mine and processing site. Save Our Sky Blue Waters and the Save Lake Superior Association (SLSA) are northern Minnesota groups advocating for the protection of the Arrowhead Region, in which we live and recreate. The Sierra Club represents members across Minnesota and has a long history of working to protect state and federal public lands as places for people to share experiences outdoors and where our wild heritage is preserved.

According to Elanne Palcich of Save Our Sky Blue Waters, "We cannot accept the poisoning of our waters with toxic sulfide mining waste. Mercury, sulfates, arsenic, and other toxic heavy metals are known to have severe adverse effects on human health, wildlife and the environment. The Forest Service's decision to turn over 6,700+ acres of protected Superior National Forest to a foreign corporation so that they can destroy it, poses an unacceptable risk to Minnesota. By approving the land exchange for the massive open-pit sulfide mine, the Forest Service is leaving a toxic legacy of sulfide mining pits and tailings basins in the Lake Superior watershed." Le Roger Lind, President of SLSA, states, "Save Lake Superior Association members and their families are legitimate stakeholders in the effort to protect the quality of the water flowing into Lake Superior from the St. Louis River and its watershed. This land exchange would enable the introduction of a new and more toxic source of water pollution from copper-sulfide mining into the lake. Despite their assertions, the corporations, state agencies and the USFS have not been able to demonstrate their abilities to protect the public from these health threats. Rhetoric neither purifies water nor protects our children. Reverse the approval of this land exchange in the public interest."

Sierra Club's North Star Chapter State Director, Margaret Levin, emphasizes, "This is not the legacy we want to leave for our children and grandchildren. The land exchange should be rejected, along with PolyMet's plan – which would pollute water for centuries, destroy thousands of acres of wetlands, and risk the health of people downstream."



By agreeing to a land exchange, the USFS is going against its own mission statement: "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." Its motto is "Caring for the land and serving people."

The USFS is also ignoring its own mandate to protect land acquired under the Weeks Act 1 for watershed protection. Approving the land exchange for PolyMet's destructive mine is especially egregious, since the PolyMet mine would be located on the headwaters of Lake Superior, an internationally important watershed. The USFS has failed to address the ramifications of water pollution associated with the mining of sulfide ores and the destruction and degradation of thousands of acres of irreplaceable forested wetlands. Such pollution cannot be restrained by artificial boundaries and will eventually impact adjoining areas of Superior National Forest. Ultimately, water pollution from mining activities, waste rock piles, and tailings basins would flow downstream into the St. Louis River, through Fond du Lac Reservation, Cloquet, and Duluth-- to Lake Superior, head of the Great Lakes. PolyMet's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) acknowledges that water treatment would be necessary for at least 500 years, virtually forever.

According to the EPA, the coniferous and open bogs of the exchange area and surrounding wetlands are considered Aquatic Resources of National Importance (ARNI) in terms of unique habitat, biodiversity, downstream water quality, and flood control, specifically to the Lake Superior Watershed and the Great Lakes Basin. By approving the PolyMet land exchange, the USFS is ignoring the value of this landscape to the Arrowhead Region of Minnesota and to the Nation.

This is of special concern to wildlife species--such as lynx, wolves, bear, and moose--that are iconic species of the Arrowhead, some considered threatened or endangered, and that require large tracts of land or special habitats in order to survive. There are also plant, amphibian, reptile, fish, insect and bird species that deserve to be protected from a toxic environment.

The government's highest priority should be to protect its citizens. The human population is dependent upon the health of our environment. Maintaining a healthy environment and protecting clean water sources must take precedence over other considerations.

It is thus our organizations' obligation to protect the waters, forests, plants, wetlands, and wildlife that represent both our heritage and our health. The health of our environment and our people is inextricably connected.

1. U.S. Forest Service History - The Weeks Act of 1911

March 1, 2011, marked the centennial of the Weeks Act -- the "organic act" of the eastern national forests. Signed into law by President William Howard Taft, the Weeks Act permitted the federal government to purchase private land in order to protect the headwaters of rivers and watersheds in the eastern United States and called for fire protection efforts through federal, state, and private cooperation. It has been one of the most successful pieces of conservation legislation in U.S. history. To date, nearly 20 million acres of forestland have been protected by the Weeks Act, land that provides habitat for hundreds of plants and animals, recreation space for millions of visitors, and economic opportunities for countless local communities. As one historian has noted, "No single law has been more important in the return of the forests to the eastern United States" than the Weeks Act.

From the Forest History Society website:

<http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Policy/WeeksAct/index.aspx>

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We appreciate your interest as well as your support.

AVOID THIS FIBER IN YOUR DIET

Although medical professionals advise us that adding fiber to our diets can be beneficial to our health, one type of fiber showing up in our food chain definitely is not. Microfibers.

What are microfibers?

Microfibers are tiny synthetic plastic fibers typically less than one millimeter in length that are commonly used in the manufacture of synthetic textiles and clothing, such as fleece jackets.

How are they getting into the water?

Research shows that microfibers are mainly coming from our washing machines. Each wash of a fleece jacket releases on average 1.7 grams of microfibers according to one study.¹ Aging of a jacket increases the amount of fibers shed, up to 1.8 times as much. The microfibers are discharged with washing machine wastewater and travel through sewage systems, where up to 40% of them escape filtering at wastewater treatment plants. The plastic microfibers are then pumped back into our rivers, lakes, and oceans. These tiny fibers can make up to 85 percent of human made debris on shorelines across the world.

What are the effects?

When microfibers end up in our waters, their small size allows them to be easily consumed by fish and other aquatic life. As with other plastic debris, consumption of microfibers allows toxins to accumulate in the bodies of larger animals up the food chain, and into the human diet. As part of a 2015 study, plastic debris was found in 25% of individual fish and in 67% of all species sampled off the coast of California. Plastic debris was also found in 33% of individual shellfish sampled. The debris found in the California seafood was primarily plastic fibers.²

A recent Great Lakes study has revealed the presence of microfibers in freshwater alongside other plastic pollution such as “microbeads” found in personal care products such as facial washes and toothpastes. A disturbing finding from the study shows that microfibers can become entangled and stay in the gastrointestinal tracts of fish, unlike plastic microbeads and fragments, which tend to eventually pass through. The study also mentions it is possible that microfibers are present in drinking water supplies drawn from the lakes.³

What can we do about it?

The data suggests that it's possible we are eating parts of our fleece jackets for dinner. So, what can we do about it?

Ideas include:

- An obvious solution is to use your power as a consumer, and purchase clothing made only from natural fibers, which are biodegradable.
- Wash your microfiber jackets less. How often do you really need to wash a jacket anyway?
- Two German inventors have developed a mesh laundry bag called the “Guppy Friend” in which microfiber clothing can be washed. The bag captures the microfibers before they enter wastewater, and the fibers can be removed from the bag at the end of the load and disposed of.⁴
- An interesting fact from one study found that top-load washing machines had 5.3 times the amount of microfiber shedding than front-load machines. So, opting for a front-load washing machine would be another way to reduce microfiber pollution.

With their use forecast to increase, microfiber pollution is an emerging issue to start dealing with now.

Eric Lind – Contributing Member

¹ <http://brenmicroplastics.weebly.com/project-findings.html>

² <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep14340>

³ <http://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/dirty-laundry-scientists-warn-microfiber-pollution-great-lakes-n283361>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/feb/12/seafood-microfiber-pollution-patagonia-guppy-friend>

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY CHANGES THREATEN BASIC PROTECTION OF LAKE SUPERIOR WATERSHED

Failure of new federal and state administrations to protect our water, air and natural habitat threaten the pristine quality of the water in the lake and its watershed. The majority of the American people want the EPA to insure that these functions are protected in perpetuity for our children's sake. As it appears to be developing however, our new "leaders" have become "Pied Pipers" leading them over a precipice with toxic chemicals, metals and plastic bits in a river of sewage at its base.

Historically, the environmental protection agencies have improved our environment far beyond the poison pit of the Love Canal and massive river of pollution at Reserve Mining. Remnants of these disasters still remain in New York and along the North Shore of Lake Superior. This is why having a science-based EPA that is NOT controlled by climate and science deniers is vitally important to our local and global future.

Now, even after Judge Miles Lords' historic decision to stop Reserve Mining from dumping 67,000 tons of polluted taconite tailings daily into the lake, we have tremendous political and financial pressures being exerted to continue more subtle forms of this pollution. EPA scientists have identified minute asbestos-like particles in the air and water being discharged into the lake. But the

mining companies are exerting tremendous pressure to have the "Control City Standard" removed from their air emission permit at Silver Bay MN. This standard simply states that the citizens in a city such as Silver Bay and its surroundings should not be exposed to levels of these fibers any higher than those in a "Control City" such as St. Paul, MN which was chosen as the control city during the trial in the 1970s and continues as such today.

The best EPA scientists at the Duluth Water Laboratory proved that these fibers are extremely toxic in the lungs and other organs causing cancerous tumors. So even in the face of all of this work and evidence, these agencies are being defunded and rendered ineffective. The concepts of irreversible damage to humans and the need for precautionary measures when dealing with toxic substances do not have any place in the new administration's distorted universe. Please call or write and ask the EPA and the MPCA in Minnesota not to remove the either the Control City Standard from Cleveland Cliffs' air permit at Silver Bay, MN or other similar permit requirements at other locations around the Lake Superior and its watershed.

LeRoger Lind



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