

PolyMet Mine Threat to Environment, Health, & Justice



Toxic Mercury Contamination of Fish

- The PolyMet mine would **increase mercury in water and toxic methylmercury contamination of fish** from the St. Louis River headwaters downstream to Lake Superior due to sulfate and mercury releases and the destruction, dewatering, and rewetting of wetlands.
- Methylmercury levels in fish can be 1,000,000 times higher than levels in the water itself. In 2011, the Minnesota Department of Health found **1 in 10 infants in the Lake Superior region are already born with unsafe levels of mercury** in their blood.¹

Environmental Injustice

- The PolyMet mine would be located on 1854 Treaty lands, where Ojibwe people of the Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, and Bois Forte Bands retain rights to hunt, fish, and gather. The Fond du Lac Reservation is located downstream on the St. Louis River, and the Band's water quality standards would be violated by PolyMet mine pollution.
- Sulfate pollution also decimates manoomin (wild rice) a plant that is both sacred and a culturally important food for the Ojibwe. **PolyMet pollution would unfairly burden low-income and tribal communities, fetuses, babies, and children.**

Weak Permits, No Health Impact Assessment

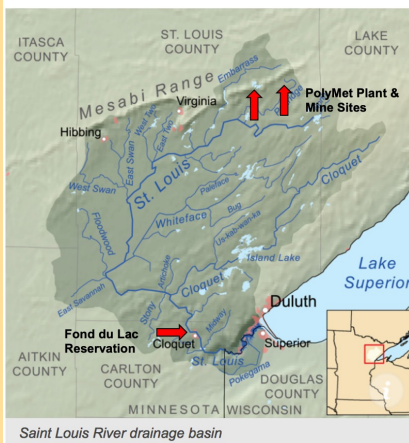
Groups representing more than 30,000 doctors and nurses asked for a health impact assessment for the PolyMet mine, but Minnesota agencies denied their request. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) granted PolyMet permits that would allow toxic pollution, harm the health of downstream communities, and destroy wetlands, habitats, and tribal resources.

WaterLegacy – Reversing PolyMet Permits

WaterLegacy, the Fond du Lac Band, and other allies have successfully challenged PolyMet mine permits in court:

- **PolyMet's water pollution permit was reversed by the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2023** as "arbitrary and capricious" and to protect surface water and groundwater.
- **PolyMet's wetlands permit was revoked by USACE in 2023** because the mine project would violate the Band's water quality standards.
- **PolyMet's permit to mine was reversed by the Minnesota Supreme Court (2021) and an administrative law judge recommended in 2023 that the permit be denied** because long-term storage of reactive tailings waste would violate Minnesota law.

ST. LOUIS RIVER: SUPERIOR WATERWAY



PolyMet Mine Threat to Climate Sustainability

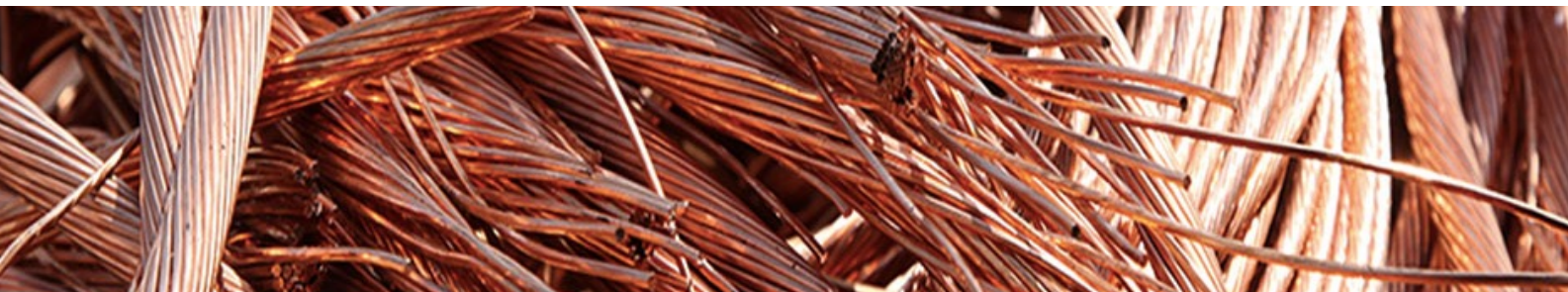


- The **PolyMet copper-nickel sulfide mine would destroy nearly 1,000 acres of wetlands and peatlands** and negatively impact thousands more acres as a result of mine drawdown and pollution.
- Peatlands and wetlands release massive levels of greenhouse gases when they are drained and dewatered. The Minnesota DNR has estimated that destruction of 1,000 peatland acres would **increase Minnesota's entire annual carbon footprint** by 2 percent.²
- Over a 20-year mine plan, PolyMet admits that it would produce **15.8 million tons of CO₂ equivalent pollution**³ – more than 10 million tons from burning fossil fuels.
- **Each year the PolyMet mine project would have about one-fourth the carbon footprint of the entire city of Duluth.**⁴
- **Minnesota has already experienced severe droughts, forest fires, extreme rain events, and floods as the result of climate changes.**



A Better Choice: Nonferrous Metals Recycling

- Copper and nickel retain their value and can be recycled many times. Recycling copper scrap would reduce **energy consumption associated with copper production by 85%** as compared to mining.⁵
- **Less than 24% of e-waste is recycled out of 266 million pounds generated by Minnesotans each year.**⁶
- Incentives for reuse and recycling would support modern technology without the wasteful and destructive environmental and human health costs of copper-nickel mining.



¹ Mercury Levels in Blood from Newborns in the Lake Superior Basin Final Report, Minnesota Department of Health, November 2011, p. 11, <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/docs/glnpo.pdf>

² The Potential for Terrestrial Carbon Sequestration in Minnesota, A Report to the Department of Natural Resources, Feb. 2008 <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2008/mandated/080174.pdf>

³ PolyMet Mining Inc./NorthMet Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Nov. 2015, FEIS, 5-482. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/polymet/feis-toc.html>

⁴ City of Duluth Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast, March 2011, <https://subdomain.waterlegacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DuluthGreenhouseEmissions2008.pdf>

⁵ Comparing the Energy Cost of Copper Mining to Recycling, Gardner Metal Recycling, Aug. 2023, <https://bit.ly/3Jegocc>

⁶ The Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling in Minnesota, Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability, Aug. 2023, <https://www.irpsmn.org/ewaste-recycling>