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MEDIA CONTACT: Paula Maccabee  
ph: 651-646-8890 c: 651-775-7128

**WaterLegacy Calls for New Process to Restore “Public” and  
“Information” to the PolyMet Draft EIS Meeting Process**

***GROUPS SEEKS 2 MORE MONTHS AND 2 MORE MEETINGS***

**DULUTH, MN, December 8, 2009** – WaterLegacy, a non-profit organization formed to protect Minnesota’s waters and the communities who rely on them, sent a letter today to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expressing concern that the public process on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the PolyMet sulfide mining project provides too few meetings, too soon, and in inconvenient locations. Most troubling, the agencies have proposed a process where members of the public are sequestered so that they can’t hear each other’s comments, and the only perspective heard at meetings will be that of the consultant promoting the findings and conclusions of its own DEIS.

WaterLegacy attorney Paula Maccabee explained, “There are too few public meetings and too little time for citizens to learn about the PolyMet project. To add insult to injury, if citizens come to a meeting, they won’t even be able to hear the views of their neighbors or of the Indian tribes who served as cooperating agencies and raised concerns about the risks of the PolyMet mine and the inadequacy of the EIS studies.” Maccabee summarized, “For the PolyMet project, the agencies have taken both ‘public’ and ‘information’ out of the term ‘public information meeting.’ This strange process undermines critical public participation in environmental review.”

WaterLegacy also noted that members and citizens have found that the MDNR email address that is supposed to receive public comments has been down for much of the past week. This creates another barrier to public comments.

In its letter to the agencies, WaterLegacy proposed the following:

- 1) Extend the comment period on the DEIS from February 3 to at least March 26, 2010. Ensure that members of the public as well as experts have sufficient time to review and understand the DEIS before the comment period lapses.
- 2) Schedule at least two meetings in late January and early February in convenient locations in Duluth and in St. Paul, Minnesota. Since the PolyMet project is the first sulfide mine to be considered for permitting in Minnesota and there are copper sulfide mining prospects in southeastern Minnesota as well, it is strongly recommended that there also be a public information meeting in Rochester.
- 3) Ensure that the additional public information meetings operate as public meetings. Allow members of the public to come to a microphone in front of the group and have their comments transcribed by a court reporter. This is the customary practice for environmental impact statement public meetings in energy proceedings throughout Minnesota. It is well-known and successful in helping the public understand complex issues.
- 4) Provide all meeting attendees (including attendees at the meetings this week) with a balanced perspective on the DEIS. Along with the consultant's point of view on the DEIS that they prepared, specifically invite a representative of the cooperating agencies to explain the alternative findings and positions developed by the tribes.
- 5) Ensure that email addresses for public comments are in good and continuous working order and that paper copies and CDs are available to members of the public who wish to review the DEIS.

Explained WaterLegacy Board Member Diadra Decker, "The current process reflects a sales job rather than a sincere attempt to glean public comments in an orderly and balanced way. This needs to change." Continued Decker, "Additional public meetings should be scheduled after the New Year, include a presentation by the tribal cooperating agencies and have an independent professional facilitator to ensure that no one is intimidated and all points of view are heard respectfully."

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Copies of the December 8, 2009 letter to agencies and other information on the PolyMet project and the DEIS comment process are available on the WaterLegacy web site at [WaterLegacy.org](http://WaterLegacy.org)