

## Myths vs. Facts

### **MYTH: New techniques and technology employed by mining operations would prevent the pollution that has occurred elsewhere with this form of mining.**

- FACT: Mining companies seeking to mine in Minnesota aren't the first to claim that their mines won't pollute. A 2006 study of sulfide mining environmental impact statements found that:
  - 100 percent of mines predicted no water pollution, but 76 percent ended up polluting the water anyway.
  - 85 percent of the most high-risk mines—those near water supplies, like proposed mines in Minnesota inevitably would be—caused water pollution, despite predictions that they would not.
  - 89 percent of mines that polluted predicted that they would not

Source: "Comparison Of Predicted And Actual Water Quality At Hardrock Mines"  
(<http://www.earthworksaction.org/publications.cfm?pubID=211>)

- FACT: New technology is unproven and untested. There are no known commercial uses of autoclaves for processing ore or liners underneath waste rock piles, two techniques PolyMet proposes. These mines would make a guinea pig of our fragile lake country.

### **MYTH: The sulfur content in Minnesota's sulfide ores is very low compared to other mines, meaning that acid mine drainage will not be a problem.**

- FACT: Other mines with similar or even lower average sulfur content in the rock have created significant acid mine drainage problems (e.g., Brohm Mine, South Dakota).
- FACT: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources research has found that Duluth Complex rock with sulfide content as low as .08 percent can produce sulfuric acid.
- FACT: There is a lot of rock in the Duluth Complex deposit that is in the five to six percent sulfide range.
- FACT: Average sulfide content is less important than the volume of reactive rock. Duluth Complex rock is a low-grade deposit, which means the volume of rock extracted is enormous and almost all of it that is mined will be stockpiled as waste rock. Waste rock piles at the PolyMet site would be approximately the size of 500 football fields, 20 stories high.
- FACT: Duluth Complex rock is very low in the carbonate minerals that act like antacids to neutralize the sulfuric acid. So, even though the rock is low in sulfides, it still has a very high risk of creating acid mine drainage.

### **MYTH: The mining will be done in existing mining zones where little of the natural landscape remains.**

- FACT: PolyMet's NorthMet mine site is currently forest and wetlands. Mining at that site would destroy approximately 1,500 acres of wetlands, one of the largest wetlands destructions ever permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers. Wetlands are an important resource for sequestering carbon and slowing climate change, the destruction would release significant carbon into the atmosphere.
- FACT: The PolyMet project is on public land that was acquired by the Forest Service in the 1930s with a stipulation it could not be used for mining.
- FACT: Mining exploration has been occurring right up to the very edges of our treasured Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Mining by Franconia Mineral Company, Duluth Metals and possibly others would be adjacent to and actually underneath Birch Lake, a lake on the South Kawishiwi River that flows into the wilderness.