

Sulfide Mining Solutions

Minnesota has an opportunity to lead the nation by protecting the state's clean waters and tax dollars from the risks of sulfide mining. Other states have increased protections only after they have experienced water pollution and taxpayer liability for clean-up costs.

Examples from elsewhere

Michigan prohibits mines that would require "perpetual care." The state is also considering a ballot initiative that would require mines to be situated at least 2,000 feet away from water bodies, among other provisions.

Wisconsin passed a "prove-it-first" law in 1997 that prohibits sulfide mining in the state unless the company can point to a similar mine elsewhere that a) has operated for 10 years without polluting water and b) has been closed for 10 years without polluting water. No mines have been permitted in the state since that law was passed.

South Dakota has extensive protections in place for its waters and valued natural areas, including a law that protects lands designated as special, exceptional, critical or unique from being mined. Despite the safeguards, the state has still experienced significant problems, including unpredicted acid mine drainage and companies that abandon polluting mines.

New Mexico increased financial assurance requirements on two mines to approximately \$400 million each.

Gaps in Minnesota safeguards

Minnesota has some laws in place to manage sulfide mining, but there are numerous gaps that expose the state and its citizens to significant risks, including:

Financial assurance in the DEIS - Mining companies are not required to discuss financial assurance, a kind of mining "damage deposit," in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for their mine proposals, which is a key opportunity for public involvement in the process.

At the edge of the BWCAW - Mining could be allowed up to the very borders of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and adjacent to (or under) water bodies that flow into the wilderness.

Lack of transparency - The Department of Natural Resources can reduce financial assurance on a mine without notifying citizens or receiving public input.

Going it alone - The Pollution Control Agency and Department of Management and Budget are not involved in calculating the amount of financial assurance or in determining the appropriate form of financial assurance. Currently, only the DNR commission makes these decisions.

Perpetual water problems - Mining companies can operate in such a way that their mines will require water treatment for thousands of years.

Find your elected officials at

<http://www.gis.leg.mn/mapserver/districts/>

Tell them you care about our clean water and want them to support efforts to protect our state from pollution caused by sulfide mining.