

Environmental Review 101 – Report CardDate: *March 2010*Student: PolyMet Mining Corp.Overall Grade: *F***Completes Homework On Time***NEEDS IMPROVEMENT*

Despite five years of work by PolyMet and government agencies, the EPA found that the Draft EIS “does not present adequate information ... to fully assess environmental impacts.”

Listens Attentively*NEEDS IMPROVEMENT*

Only politicians who support the PolyMet project were allowed to speak at the public information sessions on the Draft EIS. Concerns expressed by tribal governments during the drafting process were not addressed.

Follows Instructions*NEEDS IMPROVEMENT*

Even though the EPA reviewed two earlier drafts of the EIS, the work that needed to be done to bring it up to standards wasn't completed.

Cleans Up After Themselves*NEEDS IMPROVEMENT*

Mine runoff would be contaminated for up to 2,000 years, one mine pit would overflow and contaminate an adjacent river 45 years after mine closure, the mine would cause increased mercury in fish and wildlife and result in numerous other long-term pollution problems.

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Overview of PolyMet Problems

Lack of financial assurance – Delaying such an important component makes it impossible to fully assess the project’s potential environmental impacts and puts Minnesota’s taxpayers and natural resources at risk.

Inadequate data collection and disclosure – The DEIS is over-reliant on modeling when real-world data could have been easily obtained and would have provided far more useful and predictive information.

Long-term water contamination from waste rock – Modeling in the DEIS predicts that water leaching from waste rock piles will exceed water quality standards for multiple metals and compounds for up to 2,000 years.

Contaminated overflow from mine pit – Approximately 45 years after mine closure, the DEIS predicts that the West Pit will overflow and spill into the Partridge River. Water from the pit is expected to exceed water quality standards and contamination of the river will violate the Clean Water Act.

Overreliance on wetlands for water treatment – Despite acknowledging the wildly variable success of using wetlands for water treatment, the DEIS proposes to use wetlands as a primary tool for water treatment and relies heavily on the assumption that it will work.

Unsafe tailings basins – The DEIS acknowledges that the tailings basins will have a “low margin of safety” because the underlying material—fine tailings from the LTV taconite mine is unstable and poorly-constructed. Failure of the tailings basin would result in the release of a catastrophic amount of toxic waste from ore processing.

Sulfate contamination and mercury methylation – High levels of sulfates discharged into surface and groundwater will increase the methylation of mercury, a biological process which can result in the bioaccumulation of mercury in fish, wildlife and humans.

And much more...

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