

OPINION

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Informed debate on Twin Metals can begin now

On Wednesday, Twin Metals Minnesota announced it had formally submitted its mine project proposal to state and federal agencies. The filings, the culmination of 10 years of research and work, triggered federal and state reviews that are expected to take at least five to seven years to complete. The reviews will include plenty of public input.

More immediately, supporters and skeptics of the plan already are weighing in, including U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber, R-Hermantown, and Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters Executive Director Tom Landwehr.

'Incredibly perilous time'

"This is an incredibly perilous time for the Boundary Waters. The Trump Administration has corrupted the federal environmental review process and jammed the Twin



Chuck Frederick / cfrederick@duluthnews.com

Twin Metals hopes to build an underground mine between the Kawishiwi River and Birch Lake. The site is in the Superior National Forest near Ely.

Metals project into

a state process that was never intended to protect pristine locations like the Boundary



Landwehr

Waters. If elected leaders don't act we could lose the Boundary Waters as we know it."

— Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters Executive Director Tom Landwehr in a statement Tuesday to the media, including to the News Tribune

Opinion page

'Will be done responsibly'

"In northern Minnesota, mining is our past, present, and future. This Mine Plan of Operation represents the future of our mining industry, as our

friends and neighbors will target another key section of the Duluth Complex to supply the world's demand for precious metals. ... Copper, nickel, and other precious metals found in the Duluth Complex are not just essential to powering the modern world but are also key to unleashing the economic engine in our part of the state. The development of these resources will be done responsibly as our regulations are the strongest in the world and mandate that this company operates at the highest of environmental and labor standards. ...

"We need the jobs and metals this project will provide, so I look forward to seeing our miners meet or exceed every local, state, and

federal environmental regulation."

— Congressman Pete Stauber in a statement Wednesday to the media, including to the News Tribune Opinion page



Stauber

Expect 'transparent,' 'neutral' review

"The credibility of the EIS (environmental impact statement) process for the Twin Metals proposal is critical to Minnesotans. The DNR is committed to a rigorous, transparent, and neutral review of the proposal, based on science and applicable state law."

— Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Sarah Strommen in a statement Wednesday to the media, including to the News Tribune Opinion page



Strommen

STATEWIDE VIEW

MNSure has now delivered \$1 billion to Minnesotans; more is out there

Since 2013, MNSure has helped over 110,000 Minnesotans access over \$1 billion of financial assistance. These tax credits have helped lower the costs of health insurance premiums, provided access to quality health coverage, and helped Minnesotans get the care they and their

loved ones need to prevent and treat serious ailments.

In addition to keeping that billion dollars in Minnesota, MNSure and the federal Affordable Care Act, or ACA, have improved access to comprehensive coverage and provided important

consumer protections that ensure hard-working Minnesota families don't go broke or forgo necessary medical treatment because they are not able to find coverage.

Because of the ACA, young adults under age 26 have the option of staying covered on their parents' health insurance plans. The ACA guarantees Minnesotans cannot be denied health insurance because of a pre-existing medical condition. And it's made annual or lifetime limits on benefits illegal. Covered Minnesota families no longer need to stop needed treatments out of fear of a mountain of medical bills or bankruptcy.

Essential benefits and vital services like pharmaceutical drugs and mental health and substance-abuse treatment

are covered. Immunizations, cancer screenings, and chronic-disease testing that can prevent serious illness and save lives are covered without out-of-pocket payments. The ACA has also helped lower Minnesota's uninsured rate from 8% in 2013 to about 4% today, making Minnesota the state with the fifth-lowest uninsured rate in the country.

For thousands of families in every corner of Minnesota, that billion dollars has helped stretch family budgets, and the comprehensive coverage purchased through MNSure has saved lives.

This year, an average Minnesota family of four earning as much as \$103,000 per year or a single person earning around \$49,900

per year qualify for tax credits. In 2019, 60% of MNSure enrollees qualified for credits that on average saved households more than \$5,500.

If you need 2020 health insurance, go to MNSure.org by Monday, Dec. 23 to see what you and your family might qualify for. One billion dollars' worth of financial help has already made a powerful difference in the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Minnesotans, but there are thousands more Minnesotans who could benefit. The Minnesota Department of Health estimates that as many as 75,000 Minnesotans have missed out on tax credits in recent years because they didn't get their insurance through MNSure.

MNSure.org is the only

place where you can access these tax credits and know you're getting an ACA-certified health insurance plan. If you're eligible, you can apply your tax credits to your monthly premium. It's like an instant discount. You don't have to wait until the end of the tax year to get the benefit.

You only have until Monday to make sure you're getting all the financial assistance available to you to help pay for the security of comprehensive health insurance through MNSure. If you have questions about the process, a statewide network of expert assisters is available to provide free in-person help. Visit MNSure.org to get started.

Kathy Sheran is MNSure's board chairwoman and a retired Minnesota state senator who represented District 19 in the northwestern Twin Cities.



KATHY SHERAN

READERS' VIEWS

PolyMet has proven it can meet requirements

I've been following PolyMet since its inception over a decade ago. I attended the hearings not to advocate but to learn about this important project. When PolyMet received a wetlands permit from the Army Corps of Engineers earlier this year, it became the first company fully permitted to develop and operate a copper-nickel precious-metals mine in Northeastern Minnesota. This was a huge step forward for our state, representing years of scientific work and analysis to prove that the NorthMet Project is capable of operating within strict state and federal regulations.

PolyMet has faced opposition from lawyer-heavy anti-mining groups at every step of the process. Lawsuits filed after the permits were issued, calling for the Minnesota Court of Appeals to review the permits and other aspects of the project, are simply delay tactics.

We've seen these tactics before, after Eagle Mine became the first mine to be permitted under Michigan's Part 632 Non-Ferrous Mineral Mining Law. Project opponents filed a stack of lawsuits and warned of dire environmental consequences not unlike what we're hearing in Minnesota. But they never materialized. Eagle Mine has been produc-

ing nickel and copper safely and responsibly since 2014, and it recently announced plans to extend the life of the mine and further sustain more than 400 high-quality local jobs.

The courts ruled in Eagle Mine's favor in every case, and that's been the case in final decisions handed down by the courts so far for PolyMet.

All necessary permits were awarded because PolyMet has proven that the NorthMet Project will meet or exceed all regulations. Continued forward movement with this project is in Minnesota's best interest because it will keep PolyMet on track to boost our state's economy and create good-paying jobs.

**Peter Clark
Duluth**

Forthcoming Trump can prove innocence

President Donald Trump has continually claimed he is innocent of the accusations against him that are being considered by the House Intelligence Committee. Fine. He can let the public decide by giving us all the facts.

Trump should release any secret transcripts of conversations with Ukraine officials, allow the dozen senior White House officials with direct knowledge of the Ukraine matter testify instead of demanding

they stay silent, and release his personal financial statements. If President Trump would do these three things instead of obstructing justice then we the public could make an informed decision of innocent or guilty.

**Dennis Johnson
Duluth**

Duluth needs an aerial lift gondola line

Voss Station, managed by the Norwegian State Railways, is located in the village of Vossevangen in Norway. Adjacent to Voss Station is the lower terminal for the recently constructed Voss Gondola aerial lift. It rises above passenger tracks, streets, homes, and forested areas, reaching the upper terminal at a hilltop restaurant.

If you compare overhead images of the neighborhood below Voss Gondola to Duluth's Observation Hill, you see that the two neighborhoods are very similar.

Modern aerial-lift gondolas could replace our now-lost Duluth Incline Railway, bringing residents and tourists from the Depot up to a new Buena Vista Restaurant at Hilltop Park and/or Observation Park. This would be a cost-efficient investment for the Twin Ports. An additional bonus would be that a gondola has a smaller footprint on the ground than an incline railway. Thus,

building a Duluth gondola would demolish no homes on Observation Hill, as no homes were demolished while building the Voss Gondola.

**James Patrick Buchanan
Duluth**

Stauber shoots self in foot on Twin Metals

It was distressing to read that the White House meddled with the Department of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill to have language requiring a study of the impact of copper-nickel mining on the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness dropped from its final wording ("Study of mining's effect on Boundary Waters dropped from bill," Dec. 18).

It was even more disappointing to read that our Eighth Congressional District Rep. Pete Stauber "celebrated the language being

dropped and took credit for the Bill not reaching the House floor," as the News Tribune wrote.

Apparently Stauber, who is elected to represent the entire Eighth District, is too shortsighted to realize that copper-nickel mining in Northeastern Minnesota, with bipartisan support, will only happen if the proper studies are completed to reassure Minnesotans that this new form of mining will be a long-term asset rather than a detriment to the environment.

If Stauber wants to project himself as pro-mining, he is surely shooting himself in the foot by opposing the very necessary steps in the process that could, under his leadership, bring together both those favoring and opposing such mining.

**Gregory Garmer
Duluth**

Readers' Views and Local Views

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