



PRESS RELEASE

Superior National Forest

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Agencies Invite Public Scoping Comments on Proposed Land Exchange with PolyMet Mining, Inc.

The USDA Forest Service, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) are inviting public scoping comments on a proposed land exchange between the Forest Service and PolyMet Mining, Incorporated (PolyMet) that is being considered as part of the NorthMet mining and ore processing proposal, both of which will be evaluated in a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS).

The Forest Service has proposed a land exchange as a means to eliminate conflicts with minerals development and to avoid intermingled and inefficient ownership patterns. Non-federal lands offered for consideration by PolyMet would complement existing federal ownership by eliminating or reducing private inholdings. The non-federal tracts consist of forest and wetland habitat as well as some lake frontage, and would potentially enhance public recreation opportunities. The federal lands proposed for the exchange are located in a single parcel in St. Louis County. The non-federal lands proposed for the exchange are scattered throughout Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties.

The proposed land exchange is described in the "Proposed NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange" scoping document, available in the Land & Resources Management/Projects section of the Superior National Forest (SNF) website at: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects.

Two public open houses will be held to provide opportunity for interested parties to talk one-on-one with agency representatives, learn about the proposed land exchange, and provide written scoping comments regarding the proposed land exchange. The agencies will use scoping comments to identify additional issues to be addressed in the upcoming SDEIS for the NorthMet project. Dates and locations for the public open houses follow:

Tuesday, October 26, 2010

5:00 to 8:00 pm

Mesabi East High School

Commons Area

601 North First Street West

Aurora, MN

218-229-3321

Wednesday, October 27, 2010

5:00 to 8:00 pm

New Brighton Family Services Center

Conference Room A

400 10th St. NW

New Brighton, MN

651-638-2130

Comments on the proposed land exchange may be sent to James W. Sanders, Forest Supervisor, Superior National Forest, 8901 Grand Avenue Place, Duluth, MN 55808. Comments may also be e-mailed to comments-eastern-superior@fs.fed.us or faxed to 218-626-4396.

BACKGROUND

The NorthMet project includes a proposal to construct and operate an open pit copper/nickel/cobalt/precious metals mine, an ore processing plant, and tailings basin proposed by PolyMet, near Babbitt and Hoyt Lakes in St. Louis County, Minnesota. The proposed NorthMet mine site would affect national forest lands under which PolyMet leases privately-owned mineral rights. The SNF is joining the MnDNR and USACE as a joint-lead agency to complete the required environmental analysis for the NorthMet project.

Following completion of scoping for the proposed land exchange, the next step in the process will be development of a SDEIS and opportunity for additional public review and comment. The SDEIS will contain a full analysis of the proposed land exchange between PolyMet and the SNF and allow the lead agencies to build upon the Draft EIS that was released in November 2009. The SDEIS will also provide a revised description of project alternatives and mitigation, a revised project design, and changes in response to comments on the Draft EIS. The SDEIS is expected in the summer of 2011, with the Final EIS anticipated six to nine months later. The SDEIS will be prepared jointly by MnDNR, USACE, and SNF, and will fulfill both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requirements.