

DNR: MN Mining Laws Will Protect Public

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — State mining regulators assured legislators on Tuesday that Minnesota laws were strong enough to protect future generations from bankruptcies and cleanup costs from copper mines proposed in northeastern Minnesota's Iron Range.

A Minnesota House committee held the first full legislative hearing on a proposal by PolyMet Mining Corp. to build the state's first copper-nickel mine.

In a packed state Capitol hearing room, officials said they were reviewing some 200 mines around the country that have agreements to ensure that environmental calamities, defaults and prolonged water treatment will be paid for by mine owners and operators, not taxpayers.

Jess Richards, director of lands and minerals for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the lead agency on the environmental review of PolyMet's proposal, said the rules "are robust and adequate to protect Minnesotans."

Nearly two dozen other people were to testify, including representatives from American Indian tribes, environmental groups and the mining industry, the Star Tribune reported.

At issue is a \$650 million, open-pit copper mine proposed for a site near Hoyt Lakes on the Iron Range. The project would create up to 350 mining jobs and hundreds of temporary construction jobs. But environmentalists are concerned about possible lingering damage from copper-nickel mining; the nonferrous metals are chemically bound up in sulfide minerals that can produce acids and other pollutants when exposed to the elements.

PolyMet, a Canadian company that has proposed what could be the first of many such mines in Minnesota, said long-term water treatment and modern mining techniques will protect the area's water.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/27/2015 - 12:11pm):

<http://www.chem.info/news/2014/02/dnr-mn-mining-laws-will-protect-public>