

What are the Risks...

...to a Healthy Environment?

When waste rock from sulfide mining is exposed to air and water, it creates **sulfuric acid**, making rivers and lakes too acidic for aquatic life and **leaching heavy metal contaminants** from the rocks. This is known as **acid mine drainage** and it pollutes surface water and groundwater, and **kills fish or makes them unsafe** for consumption.

Acid mine drainage has polluted water bodies in many other parts of the country. In some cases, this **pollution will persist for hundreds or thousands of years**.

Minnesota's wet northern forests are a high risk place to conduct this kind of mining. *Are we ready to bring this new form of mining with its long track record of pollution to Minnesota?*

...to Taxpayers?

Because of the boom-and-bust nature of the mining industry and because after closure mines don't generate profit, **companies often go bankrupt**, leaving behind mines that are polluting the surrounding waters and **forcing taxpayers to pick up the tab for clean-up expenses**.

One solution to protect the environment and taxpayers is financial assurance, a **"damage deposit"** that companies should provide before mining to cover clean-up costs in the event they are unable or unwilling to do it.

It is very **difficult to predict pollution** from sulfide mines. If mining companies incorrectly predict pollution, then their calculations for clean-up costs will also be wrong. Here are a couple examples of mines where such problems have occurred:

- **Brohm Mine, South Dakota:** Produced acid mine drainage, despite rock that was less than one percent sulfide and predictions of no pollution. The company declared bankruptcy and the mine was designated a Superfund site in 2000. Its pollution will be treated in perpetuity at taxpayer expense.
- **Zortman-Landusky, Montana:** After the mining company went bankrupt, the state assumed the costs of clean-up, reclamation, and ongoing water treatment. It is estimated it will cost at least \$33 million, and water treatment is expected to be required indefinitely.

Even when a company does provide a "damage deposit" by setting aside money for clean-up in the event of bankruptcy, taxpayers still frequently have to pay because the assets of a company are often awarded to other creditors in bankruptcy proceedings.

...to a Sustainable Economy?

Northern Minnesota's economy depends on clean waters and a healthy environment.

- In northeastern Minnesota, **tourism brings in \$1.6 billion per year**, \$250 million in local and state taxes, and 33,500 full-time equivalent jobs.
- **The Superior National Forest** estimates that it generates \$223 million to the region annually in tourism and recreation. Of that, the **Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness brings \$30 million annually to the area**.
- The region's **clean water and healthy environment is one of its greatest assets**, drawing businesses, employers, and workers who want to live in such a beautiful region with plentiful outdoor opportunities.