# Lori Ptak

Please see my attached file.

Keetac Tailings Pond Comments

I attended the Keetac MPCA public meeting in Virginia, MN. I have a number of comments about the variance for meeting the MPCA's proposed permits.

- Clearly U.S. Steel has used lawyers over at least the last 15 years to delay cleaning up their pollution and meet the wild rice standard. The legal expenses could have covered the cost of cleaner wastewater.
- Legislators were complaining that the wild rice standard is based upon old science. That is clearly not the case since there is new science studies that support 10 mg/L standard.
- Legislators and people at mines are using scare tactics to indicate that jobs will be lost and northern Minnesota will become a waste land. This cannot be farther from the truth and should be totally discounted as a non-issue. Nippon purchased U.S. Steel and guaranteed to keep the mines in operation and invest $11B in the U.S. Steel mines. In the presentation it was noted that this was NOT included in the financial analysis proving that U.S. Steel has the necessary profit and investment capability to fund the reduction of sulphate levels in the discharges.
- Legislators are indicating that municipalities cannot afford to meet the standard. This is also not true since municipality discharges have lower sulphate levels and are more likely to be allowed to have a variance. The MPCA has stated this on their website.
- Sulphate not only is an issue for wild rice, but after a DNR ten-year study, it is clear that sulphate and bacteria combine with mercury in our wetlands to form methylmercury which easily moves into the food chain. The study confirmed that the addition of sulphate substantially increased methylmercury in our waterways. Northern Minnesota is very sensitive to increases in methylmercury impacting the mercury levels found in fish. Fish are showing very high levels of mercury in northern Minnesota. This needs more consideration when approving any variance to reducing the levels of sulphate in discharges.

Lastly, the MPCA needs to publicize the fact that Nippon will not close mines and is investing $11B in the mines. There should be little chance for U.S. Steel mines closing. The potential for mines to close because of the cost of reducing sulphate discharges levels is not a valid concern.