

Lakehead Constructors (Kirk Ilenda)

I am writing to provide comments regarding public notice of draft NPDES permits MN0055948 and MN0031879 for the U. S. Steel Keetac tailings basin and mining area, respectively.

As Vice President - Business Development with Lakehead Constructors, with an office in Aurora, Minnesota, I ask that the MPCA consider and approve a site-specific standard and variance for the U.S. Steel permits and review and update the 10mb/L sulfate standard based on modern science and reasonable compliance levels that properly balance considerations for wild rice and our economy. As the Iron Range's largest industrial general contractor, we employ over 500 union tradespeople that build and maintain our area's taconite plants, industrial/manufacturing, power plants, paper mills, food processing plants and municipal wastewater facilities. All of which discharge water and may be affected by the MPCA's sulfate standards. 10 milligrams per liter is too low, not realistic, unattainable and economically not viable.

MPCA's role is to be balanced in their approach to standards and regulations.

As stated on your website "Working for a Healthy and Prosperous Minnesota – striving for clean air, sustainable lands, a better climate and a THRIVING ECONOMY – let me reiterate – a THRIVING ECONOMY.

In addition to my role at Lakehead Constructors, working work with clients and projects throughout the Midwest, I am past chairperson for Better In Your Back Yard educating and advocating for Responsible Industrial Development, active in lobbying for America's Steel Making independence and Iron Ore Industry – ensuring our national security and that this industry competes on a level playing field, as well as working with a number of economic development groups to keep and bring jobs to Minnesota. Compared to Minnesota's neighboring states, Minnesota is becoming too regulated with unrealistic standards and processes for businesses to locate and/or operate in this state.

Here in northern Minnesota, we are struggling to foster thriving local economies and communities, we are hand tied. At Lakehead Constructors, we see other communities and states thriving – that is where we are having to send our employees for us to find projects – where these states are more supportive of manufacturing / industrial clients. North Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan.

To be clear, we are advocating for common sense and clarity in the state's environmental standards and their enforcement. We are requesting the MPCA issue a variance as requested by US Steel for Keetac and to adopt new sulfate standards going forward to keep our good paying jobs and attract new businesses – Lets do our best to find common ground in balancing taking care of our environment, while also building thriving economies.

Respectfully,

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Lakehead Constructors