

Jeremiah Hoey

To Whom It May Concern,

The sulfate standard currently being considered for imposition on the taconite mines of the Iron Range may be noble or right in some respects, but not every decision is clear-cut or black and white. More often than not, there is a gray area in between.

To my knowledge, the revenue the State of Minnesota collects annually from the taconite mining production tax has exceeded \$100 million for quite some time. The relief this provides to the people of northeastern Minnesota is substantial and vital for those of us who live here. These funds reduce property taxes for local residents, while also providing significant support to school districts and education in the area. This includes building maintenance, general expenses, and referendum revenue. The funds are also used for county road and bridge improvements, economic development, and many other essential needs.

The good-paying jobs that these mining companies provide are of the utmost importance to our local economy, families, businesses, contractors, and children. I have been working at U.S. Steel's Minntac facility for six years. My grandfather worked at this same mine for 30 years, my uncle currently works here, and two of my first cousins work at Keetac.

Due to financial difficulties growing up, I was unable to attend university like some of my peers. I worked hard and gained relevant experience to earn an opportunity in the mining industry. It took me a few years, but eventually, my dedication paid off. Shortly after being hired, I was able to purchase my first home in the town where I grew up. My parents still live there, and my younger brothers recently bought homes there as well.

If the mines shut down, I—and thousands of others like me—would more than likely have to move away from our loved ones and pursue life and work elsewhere. We already lost 7,000 mining jobs back in the 1980s, and an entire generation of young men and women entering the workforce at that time suffered that unfortunate fate. With the current economic conditions and the difficulties people face today—especially young people just entering the workforce—mine closures, idling, or layoffs would be absolutely devastating to this region.

I sympathize with the importance of wild rice to Native American people and their culture. I understand they have endured egregious injustices and generational trauma that may never fully heal. There must be a way to preserve the cultural importance and traditions of the Native American people while also mining taconite in an environmentally responsible and safe manner.

I respectfully ask that you consider commissioning a new scientific study for sulfate standards rather than imposing the outdated 10 mg/L standard, which is decades old.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I hope you have a wonderful rest of your day.

Best regards,
Jeremiah G. Hoey