

Better In Our Back Yard (Better In Our Back Yard Premier Mining Advocacy Group)

The Board of Directors at Better In Our Back Yard - representing labor, industry, and educators across both Minnesota and the U.S. - strongly opposes the MPCA's continued push to enforce an outdated sulfate standard that threatens the future of responsible industrial development in our state.

Let's be clear: This is about whether Minnesota still understands where its prosperity comes from. Iron mining contributes over \$1.8 billion annually to Northeast Minnesota's economy and supports more than 4,000 high-wage, family-sustaining jobs. These are union jobs. Skilled jobs. Jobs that pay nearly \$950 more per week than the regional average. If mining falters, so do the contractors, educators, small businesses, and communities that rely on it. There is no replacement industry waiting in the wings. Meanwhile, billions of dollars in industrial investment are flowing to states that understand this. Minnesota is being left behind.

US Steel Keetac's permit includes a 10 mg/L sulfate threshold based on observations from the 1930s and 1940s, and a water quality standard written in the 1970s, with no additional scientific process to rely on. Enforcing it today without considering the breadth of knowledge we have gained studying wild rice in the 2010s and 2020s imposes excessive costs and destabilizes operations across the Iron Range for an uncertain outcome.

Minnesota's iron industry is foundational to steelmaking, infrastructure, clean energy, and national security. Undermining it doesn't just hurt the Range, it weakens the state's ability to compete, build, and grow. It weakens the United States' position in the global world order.

We respect wild rice and agree that it should be protected and can be protected.

We also respect the people who make Minnesota work. The ones who weld, teach, haul, repair, and build. The ones who don't show up in online forums or policy briefs but who show up every day at local stores and banks. These communities deserve better than a one-size-fits-all rule that ignores both science and reality.

This is a moment for our state's leadership to support the interests of all Minnesotans and to not allow a zero-sum scenario to unfold. Nearly every industrial and municipal discharger in Minnesota will be affected by this standard. We stand behind US Steel and demand a modern, site-specific approach - one that protects wild rice and preserves the industries and communities that make Minnesota strong.

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