



**Minnesota
North College**
A Member of Minnesota State

Minnesota North College
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September 11, 2025

Commissioner Katrina Kessler
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, Mn 55155

Re: Comments on Draft Wastewater Permits and Preliminary Denial of Sulfate Variance Request for U.S. Steel Keetac Facility

Dear Commissioner Kessler,

Minnesota North is a comprehensive community college with six campuses spread across Northeastern Minnesota. In 2024, the college served 3688 students and employed 383 full time equivalent staff and faculty. Three of our campuses are in the heart of the Iron Range where mining has driven the regional economy for decades. We make significant investments in academic offerings that support mining directly in programs such as industrial technology – millwright, heavy equipment-diesel repair, electrical controls, welding, and others. The college also hosts multiple programs that support the regional fabric of vendors and services who thrive only because of our mining companies' purchasing power, the high wages paid to their employees, and the families that make a home here because of the employment opportunities the mining industry provides. We also attract millions of federal grant dollars to provide incumbent worker training in mine safety (MSHA). All these investments mean college employees can live in this region and contribute to the local economy.

A 2023 study released by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, estimated that the impact of Minnesota North's campuses on the regional economy to be \$205 million including \$107 million of direct spending. The college also contributes \$15 million in state and local tax revenue. Without a mining economy, multiple program closures would mean the elimination of faculty and support staff positions across all curriculum areas that support mining and other businesses of our region. Transfer programs and course enrollment would also be negatively affected by the loss of families and their children who might leave our region. The college's direct purchasing of local goods such as metal, gases and fuel, training equipment, food, and marketing services would diminish. The necessity of campus closures would not be out of the question. Simply put, the permanent closure of mining operations on the Iron Range would be devastating to the financial health and sustainability of Minnesota North College, which in turn, would have a significantly negative impact on the economy of Northeast Minnesota.

Common ground needs to be found in mine permitting to both protect our environment and grow our economy. I encourage all entities to work toward that end.

Thank you,

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