



September 8, 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,

As Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce's President, I am writing to express my strong support for the continued operation of the mining industry on the Iron Range. Mining has always been more than just an industry here—it is the backbone of our communities and the foundation for our regional economy. Hibbing is home to dozens of mining supply and distribution businesses. The lives of our people, past and present are intertwined with mining. The potential closure or significant reduction of mining operations would have devastating and far-reaching effects on local businesses, workers, and families.

The Iron Range economy is deeply interconnected with mining. Local businesses like restaurants, grocery stores, retail shops, contractors, equipment suppliers, healthcare providers, and service industries depend heavily on the spending power of mining employers and their families. Every job in the mines supports several more in the surrounding communities, creating a multiplier effect that keeps small businesses thriving. Without mining, these businesses would face steep declines in sales, reduced employment opportunities, and in many cases, closures.

Additionally, mining companies themselves are major customers of local contractors, trucking firms, machine shops, and professional services. The loss of this demand would not only shrink revenues for these businesses but also reduce the flow of dollars circulating through our region. Tax revenues would also fall sharply, leaving local government struggling to maintain schools, infrastructure, and community services.

The mining industry has sustained the Iron Range for generations, allowing families to build stable lives and enabling small towns to flourish. A shutdown would not just mean the loss of jobs—it would mean the loss of our identity, stability, and future growth opportunities.

For these reasons, I urge decision-makers to recognize the critical importance mining to the Iron Range and to support policies that protect it. The profound economic and social consequences of a mining shutdown would be catastrophic to the community. Protecting mining means protecting our local businesses, our schools, and our way of life on the Iron Range. Thank you for your time and for considering the heavy costs that would accompany any shutdown of mining in our region.

Respectfully,

Amy Mandt

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Mandt".

Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce
President/CEO