Terry Grosshauser

Keetac Tailings Pond Comments

I have attended the Keetac MPCA public meeting in Virginia, MN. I have a number of comments about the variance for meeting MPCA's proposed permits.

- Clearly U.S. Steel has used lawyers over at least the last 15 years to delay cleaning up their pollution and meet the wild rice standard. The legal expenses could have covered the cost of cleaner wastewater.
- Legislators were complaining about the wild rice standard is based upon old science and that is clearly not the case since there is new science studies that support 10 mg/L standard.
- Legislators and people at mines are using scare tactics to indicate that jobs will be lost and northern Minnesota will become a waste land. This cannot be farther from the truth and should be totally discounted as a non-issue. Nippon purchased U.S. Steel and guaranteed to keep the mines in operation and invest $11B in the U.S. Steel mines. In the presentation it was noted that this was NOT included in the financial analysis proving that U.S. Steel has the necessary profit and investment capability to fund the reduction of sulphate levels in the discharges.
- Legislators are indicating that municipalities can not afford to meet the standard. This is not true as well since municipality discharges have lower sulphate levels and are more likely to be allowed to have a variance. The MPCA has stated this on their website.

- Sulphate not only is an issue for wild rice, but after a DNR ten-year study, it is clear that sulphate and bacteria combine with mercury in our wetlands to form methyl mercury which easily moves into the food chain. The study confirmed that the addition of sulphate substantially increased methyl mercury in our waterways. Northern Minnesota is very sensitive to increases in methyl mercury impacting the mercury levels found in fish. Fish are showing very high levels of mercury in northern Minnesota. This needs more consideration when approving any variance to reducing the levels of sulphate in discharges.

I will add that the MPCA needs to publicize the fact that Nippon will not close mines and is investing $11B in the mines so there should be little chance for U.S. Steel mines closing. The potential for mines to close because of the cost of reducing sulphate discharges levels is not a valid concern.