

Amy Norenberg

I am a lifelong resident of northeastern Minnesota, where mining has sustained families, communities, and local economies for generations. More than 85% of America's domestic steel production begins here, and the ripple effects reach far beyond the Iron Range—supporting jobs in Duluth shipping, small businesses, schools, and national industries that depend on steel.

The current sulfate standard is based on research from the 1930s—40s, is stricter than drinking water standards, and has never been enforced on any other industry or municipality in Minnesota. Yet wild rice continues to grow abundantly in our region, and our waters remain among the cleanest in the state, even alongside decades of mining.

Enforcing this outdated and nearly impossible standard at one mine sets a dangerous precedent. Relying on global company profits from years ago to justify compliance costs ignores reality: no business can absorb unlimited losses at a single facility. The result would be shuttered operations, not compliance—and if one mine is forced into that position, the rest of our region's mines will inevitably follow.

This would devastate our economy, eliminate thousands of family-supporting jobs, and weaken our nation's steel independence. I urge the MPCA to approve the variance and move toward standards that are both scientifically sound and fairly applied.

Mining is not just an industry here—it is my family's livelihood, my community's backbone, and a proud part of our state's history and future.