

Jared Johnson

Need to protect MN mining

Enforcing this now, with economic headwinds, prioritizes speculative harms over proven benefits, especially since wild rice beds have persisted despite historical sulfate discharges. The Unfairness: Political Overreach Ignoring Practical Realities. These regulations exemplify regulatory overreach, disproportionately targeting an industry that's already investing in cleaner technologies while providing minimal gains for wild rice. Tribes and environmental advocates rightly value wild rice for its cultural and ecological significance, but the standard's enforcement overlooks that many affected waters aren't prime rice habitats and that sulfate from mining is just one of multiple sources (including natural runoff and wastewater).

Sudden strict application after years of laxity smacks of inconsistency, punishing miners for a standard that was deemed unenforceable until recently.

Moreover, the link to mercury methylation—often cited by proponents—is indirect and site-dependent, not a justification for economy-crushing limits.

This isn't about denying environmental protection; it's about fairness. Why cripple a key industry when variances, monitoring, and targeted protections could suffice? A Path Forward: Innovative Solutions for Balance Rather than blanket enforcement, we should pursue affordable innovations like bioreactors, which use bacteria to reduce sulfates at a fraction of reverse-osmosis costs—potentially turning waste into sellable byproducts like iron sulfide.

Site-specific standards, as explored by the MPCA, could account for local conditions, allowing higher limits where risks are low.

Collaboration between industry, tribes, and regulators—fueled by state investment in research—can protect wild rice without sacrificing livelihoods. Examples from Sweden prove it's possible. In conclusion, the sulfate regulations are unfair because they rely on flawed science, impose ruinous costs, and ignore viable alternatives, all while threatening the Iron Range's future. By reforming them, we safeguard jobs, bolster national industry, and achieve true environmental stewardship. The choice is clear: don't let rigid rules destroy what built America—adapt them to sustain it