

October 22, 2015
For immediate release

To Minnesota Media:

The Downstream Business Coalition is releasing the attached open letter to Governor Dayton regarding clean water and the proposed Polymet copper-nickel mine.

WE INVITE YOU TO A MEDIA EVENT

Date: **Today Thursday the 22nd of October**

Time: **4PM**

Place: **Corner of the Lake Park, behind Endion Station in Duluth**

Contact: Greg Benson, DownstreamBusinessCoalition@gmail.com

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An open letter from the Downstream Business Coalition

The Economy of the North Depends on Clean Water

Governor Dayton - Invest in sustainable local business development instead of spending state resources permitting and regulating Polymet

We are the Downstream Business Coalition

We are a group of 38 small businesses, representing a **cross-section of industries**, including technology, manufacturing, service, entertainment and the trades. **We employ over 800 people** in the North and we are continuing to succeed and invest, adding jobs and dollars to our economy. **Our businesses depend on the health of our watershed.**

We are pro responsible mining and pro jobs

We support and benefit from ferrous mining, which has built the economy and culture of the North. We rely on mined products in our businesses. As primarily owner-operators, we are pro worker and pro quality of life, and we have and will continue to rely on union labor as we expand. **We are vitally connected to the entire regional economy**, and its success is our success.

Copper-nickel mining poses a significant new threat to our watershed

But **we are also part of a regional ecology**, which is why we are concerned about copper-nickel mining. The proposed PolyMet NorthMet copper-nickel mine, and others like it, are **vastly different from ferrous mining, and have the potential to spread toxic metals throughout our watershed**. In copper-nickel mining, water that passes through the site leaches toxic metals, including **mercury**, from the metallic sulfide ore. According to the NorthMet Environmental Impact Study (EIS), this **pollution will continue for a “minimum of 200 years at the Mine Site and a minimum of 500 years at the Plant Site,” requiring treatment “indefinitely”**.^{1,2} Flow path maps in the EIS show that the plume of contamination will reach the Partridge and Embarrass Rivers, which flow to the St. Louis River and ultimately Lake Superior.³

This mine does not just threaten a water source; it threatens one of the world's greatest freshwater resources. Lake Superior contains 10% of the world's freshwater.

Risk to the watershed is risk to the entire regional economy

In different ways for each of us, **our businesses depend on our watershed.** For several of our businesses, **water is our raw material and our brand.** Those of us in the beverage manufacturing industry have located our businesses in the watershed specifically for access to the pristine water of Lake Superior. For those of us in the over 17,000 job, \$800 million annual tourist and outdoor industries of Northeast Minnesota,⁴ the **water draws our customers.** The St. Louis River, Boundary Waters and Lake Superior have become great attractions of our region, and we have built them into the foundation for an entire tourist economy. For us, and many other regional businesses, **healthy water and vibrant outdoor access have enabled us to recruit and retain** skilled employees. Indeed, **the economy of the North overall depends in large degree on the unparalleled quality of life in the Land of 10,000 Lakes.**

We're still cleaning up from the unsustainable practices of the past

The St. Louis River, after decades and more than **\$100 million dollars spent on cleanup from the unsustainable practices of the past,** is finally becoming a safe place to live, work and play again. Up to an estimated \$240 million will likely be spent over the next 5 years to continue the cleanup and restoration. **We owe it to future generations to finish the cleanup, not to put our water at risk again.**

The risk to our regional economy outweighs the benefit

The value of jobs now is real, in any number. We all rely on mined products. And yes, copper mining has to happen somewhere. However, we believe **this type of mine, in one of the world's great freshwater resources, is too great a risk.** We know some people will take issue with us getting involved in what is perceived to be a political issue. Indeed, a recent article in the newspaper - without a clear explanation of our position - was enough to cause some of our customers to boycott our products. This is an economic issue resulting from an environmental issue. We believe the risk to the environment poses a **long-term threat to the regional economy that far outweighs the short-term benefits.**

Our request: Invest the money the state would spend on Polymet in sustainable local business development instead

There is an alternative to the boom and bust extraction economy that benefits foreign corporations and leaves local communities worse off in the end. **Our locally owned small businesses are proof positive** that a more sustainable model is possible. We, and other locally owned businesses, will continue to reinvest the wealth we create into new jobs over the next 20 years. And **there's another important resource on the table** – the money the state will spend on environmental review, permitting and regulation of Polymet. **We call on Governor Dayton to reject the Polymet proposal, and instead invest that state money in sustainable local small business development on the Range.** This investment has the potential to make a larger and longer-term impact than the proposed copper-nickel mining project.

We will contribute to job growth and lessen our demand for minerals

We will do our part to contribute to job growth in the North, and we will **reach out to existing Range businesses to partner** with them wherever possible. We will also continue our efforts to lessen our demand for minerals by **using resources more efficiently**.

We welcome continued conversation

We know our voice is only one of many, but we feel it is necessary to say that **this is more complicated than jobs vs. the environment**. Both are important, and they are linked, and we hope to engage in an amicable debate about responsible mining and building a more sustainable economy in the North for generations to come. **We invite other businesses across the region to reach out to us and become part of the Coalition**. Sign up at DownstreamBusinessCoalition@gmail.com. And **we thank the customers & suppliers that stick by us**.

¹ PFEIS (Preliminary Final Impact Statement, NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Forest Service, June 2015, pp. ES-26 and 5-8.

² Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange, Appendix C, November 2013, p. 12

³ PFEIS, Figures 5.2.2-7 and 5.2.2-9

⁴ *Tourism and Minnesota's Economy, 2015*, Explore Minnesota

Founding Members of the Downstream Business Coalition

Amity Coffee
Anahata Herbals
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Bella Terra Landscaping
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