

PolyMet official in St. Cloud to seek support for mine

By Kirsti Marohn; 5:38 p.m. CST February 4, 2014



(Photo: Kimm Anderson, kanderson@stcloudtimes.com)

A proposed copper-nickel mine in northeastern Minnesota would create economic benefit for the state while controlling environmental impacts, a representative of PolyMet Mining Corp. told a group in St. Cloud on Tuesday.

Brad Moore, executive vice president of environmental and governmental affairs for PolyMet, spoke to about 50 people at the public event sponsored by St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce. He later addressed the Rotary Club of St. Cloud.

The visit was part of an effort by the company to build statewide support for the controversial plan, which involves a 20-year open-pit mine and processing plant near Hoyt Lakes.

The NorthMet project would be the first copper-nickel mine in Minnesota. The massive deposit of copper and nickel known as the Duluth Complex is one of the largest in the world, and other companies have shown interest in mining in the region.

Interest has grown because of improved processing technology, higher metal prices and reduced deposits elsewhere around the world, Moore said. The metals are used in a range of products including electrical wires, wind turbines, hybrid cars and hospital equipment.

PolyMet's proposal is to mine copper, nickel and other metals by blasting, hauling out the rock and grinding it at the nearby shuttered LTV plant, which has been closed since 2001.

An environmental review was released in December, and a public comment period is open until March 13. Three public hearings around the state have drawn hundreds of people, both supporters and opponents of the project.

Opponents have voiced concern about the mine's potential to pollute the groundwater and the Lake Superior watershed and the need for long-term water treatment.

Groups including the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy and Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness have cited potential risks, including the creation of sulfide acid drainage that could contaminate surface and ground water.

Moore, a former Minnesota Pollution Control Agency commissioner, acknowledged that mining has environmental effects, but challenged some of the criticism of the project.

"In order to get our copper, our nickel, our metals, our steel, our metals, we impact the land. There's no question about it," Moore said. "So the question is, can we do that in a manner that the impact is acceptable?"

One point of debate is the length of time water from the site would need to be treated after the mine closes. The environmental review includes the scenario in which water treatment could be needed for up to 200 years at the mine site and 500 years at the processing plant.

But Moore said treatment won't be needed for that long. He said the conservative modeling used assumes that all elements of the rock will enter the ground water through the weathering process, although that doesn't happen.

The company will be required to provide \$100 million to \$200 million of financial assurance to close the mine and provide long-term reclamation in case the company goes bankrupt or is sold.

"That's so taxpayers aren't left holding the bag if something goes wrong," Moore said.

PolyMet estimates the project would create 360 direct jobs and another 600 spin-off jobs, with an economic benefit to Minnesota in wages, benefits and spending of \$515 million annually.

Moore argued that northern Minnesota needs a diversified economy that doesn't just rely on tourism.

"You go to the town of Hoyt Lakes or Babbitt, they are really crying for these kinds of jobs," he said.

A final environmental impact statement is expected to be completed later this year. If the project receives a permit, construction would begin in 2015.

Karen Fuglie, a Sartell resident who grew up in Biwabik, was at Tuesday's meeting. Her father helped build Erie plant near Hoyt Lakes, which was later owned by LTV.

"Living on the Range has always been a balancing act between protecting the environment, which is absolutely phenomenal, and providing jobs so people can live there," said Fuglie, a retired school administrator.

Fuglie said she felt a little better about the project after PolyMet's presentation, but still has concerns about the environmental effects.

"Obviously in those wonderful waters and streams around northern Minnesota, I don't want to see a whole lot of sulfuric acid," she said. "To me, that was always the wonderful part was the quality of life, and I want some assurances that that quality of life will continue."

Follow Kirsti Marohn on Twitter [@kirstimarohn](#).

Read or Share this story: <http://on.sctimes.com/1ipHWli>

SENIOR CAMPUS

ADULT DAY SERVICES

CAREGIVER RELIEF BATHING & TRANSPORTATION

[take a tour](#)

TOP VIDEOS



**Afternoon North Central
Regional Forecast - December
6, 2015**

01:31

(/videos/news/2916040167001/4648983501)



**Afternoon North Central
Regional Forecast -
December 5, 2015**

01:30

(/videos/news/2916040167001/4647944353)



Johnson Fur Co

01:01

(/videos/news/2916040167001/4644848517)



**St. Cloud Afternoon Weather
Forecast - December 5, 2015**

02:01

(/videos/news/2916040167001/4647719700)

MORE STORIES



**Rotary Club drops off hats
and gloves at Lincoln**

(/story/news/local/2015/12/08/rotary-club-drops-off-

hats-and-

gloves-

lincoln/76937898/)

(/story/news/local/2015/12/08/rotary-club-drops-off-hats-and-gloves-lincoln/76937898/)

Dec. 8, 2015, 11:11 a.m.



**City Council reverses Brothers
liquor license denial**

(/story/news/local/2015/12/08/city-council-

[reverses-
brothers-
liquor-license-
denial/76973696/](#)
[\(/story/news/local/2015/12/08/city-council-
reverses-brothers-liquor-license-
denial/76973696/\)](#)

Dec. 8, 2015, 9:57 a.m.



**Man injured after rear-ending
freight truck**

[\(/story/news/local/2015/12/08/man-
injured-after-
rear-ending-
freight-
truck/76974672/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/local/2015/12/08/man-injured-
after-rear-ending-freight-truck/76974672/\)](#)

Dec. 8, 2015, 9:39 a.m.

A horizontal banner for LifeLock. On the left, the LifeLock logo is displayed in white on a dark blue background, with a red button below it that says "PROTECT NOW" in white. To the right of the logo is a photograph of a smiling man and woman. On the far right, the text "LifeLock is a leader in Identity Theft Protection" is written in blue, with a small blue play button icon to its right.

LifeLock
PROTECT NOW

LifeLock is a leader in
Identity Theft Protection