



# Saint Louis County

Fourth District County Commissioner • 320 Miners Drive East • Ely, MN 55731  
Phone: (218)365-8200 • Fax: (218)365-8205 • [mcdonaldp@stlouiscountymn.gov](mailto:mcdonaldp@stlouiscountymn.gov)

Paul McDonald  
County Commissioner

RECEIVED  
BUREAU OF LAND MGMT  
U.S. FOREST SERVICE OFFICE  
JAN 33 P 12:33

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

The majority of the St. Louis County Board is writing in opposition of the U.S. Forest Service taking action to pursue the withdrawal of lands and minerals in northeastern Minnesota from future leasing, exploration, and potential project development.

The comprehensive, science and fact-based environmental review process for TMM's proposed underground copper, nickel, cobalt, and platinum group metals mining project has been underway since the company submitted its mine plan of operations in November 2019. That regulatory process requires years of detailed review of TMM's operational plans and the potential impacts under multiple federal, tribal, and state government entities, as well as opportunities for public comment. TMM deserves the right to work through this process and prove that they can mine responsibly.

Should the Forest Service follow through with taking this unnecessary action, the decision would be contradictory to the current administration's goals of creating good paying union jobs and solidifying reliable domestic supply chains of minerals critical to the renewable energy industry. TMM's project represents an opportunity for northeast Minnesota to lead the nation in responsibly mining critical minerals while making an economic comeback in the region. We've seen first-hand St. Louis County's population steadily decline in an excess of 10 percent over a 30-year period and it's in part, due to potential decisions such as these by leaders and entities far away that don't understand our way of life.

Sincerely,

Paul McDonald  
4<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner  
St. Louis County Board, Chair

  
Keith Nelson  
6<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner  
Budget & Finance, Chair

Mike Jugovich  
7<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner  
Natural Resources & Environment, Chair

Keith Musolf  
5<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner  
Transportation, Chair



*Resolution  
of the  
Board of County Commissioners*

*St. Louis County, Minnesota*

*Adopted on: February 2, 2021 Resolution No. 21-105*

*Offered by Commissioner: Nelson*

**Resolution Opposing Legislation Instituting a Moratorium on Issuing Permits  
for or Banning Nonferrous Mining in Northeastern Minnesota**

WHEREAS, Bills in federal and state legislative bodies are or may be introduced to enact a moratorium on issuing permits for nonferrous mining operations or withdrawal of lands from future exploration and potential development in Northeastern Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, Enacting such legislation could cause devastating and irreversible damage to the citizens, communities and economy of St. Louis County and the region; and

WHEREAS, St. Louis County Board Resolution No. 11-685, adopted on December 20, 2011, declared the county's support for the existing open, transparent, and comprehensive environmental review and permitting process in place for the various nonferrous mining initiatives planned for development in the county; and

WHEREAS, St. Louis County Board Resolution No. 17-112, adopted on February 14, 2017, requested the rescission of the Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service proposal to withdraw 240,000 acres of land in NE Minnesota from future leasing, exploration, and potential development; and

WHEREAS, A thorough and comprehensive environmental review process is already established under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and

WHEREAS, The responsibility of the federal agencies is to accept proposed mineral development projects and subject them to the science-based review established under NEPA.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the St. Louis County Board opposes state or federal legislation which places a moratorium on issuing permits for nonferrous mining operations or withdrawal of lands from future exploration and potential development in Northeastern Minnesota.

RESOLVED FURTHER, That a copy of this resolution be sent to federal and state legislators to demonstrate the County Board's continued support of state and federal environmental review and permitting standards for the continued exploration and development of all ferrous and nonferrous mining operations in Minnesota.

Commissioner Nelson moved the adoption of the Resolution and it was declared adopted upon the following vote:

Yeas - Commissioners McDonald, Musolf, Nelson and Chair Jugovich - 4

Nays - Commissioners Jewell, Boyle and Grimm - 3

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
Office of County Auditor, ss.  
County of St. Louis

I, NANCY NILSEN, Auditor of the County of St. Louis, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing with the original resolution filed in my office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, A.D. 2021, and that this is a true and correct copy.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE at Duluth, Minnesota, this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, A.D., 2021.

NANCY NILSEN, COUNTY AUDITOR

By

Clerk of the County Board/Deputy Auditor



*Resolution  
of the  
Board of County Commissioners  
St. Louis County, Minnesota*

*Adopted on: November 26, 2019 Resolution No. 19-681*

*Offered by Commissioner: McDonald*

**Opposing Federal Legislation Impacting Mining Lease Exploration  
within the Superior National Forest**

WHEREAS, The Mining industry has been part of Minnesota and St. Louis County's economy for over 130 years and that industry has contributed billions to the economy of the state and employed thousands of County residents; and

WHEREAS, The federal and state government has enacted a variety of laws, rules and review processes to ensure the safety of the employees and environment associated with and impacted by this industry; and

WHEREAS, The 1978 BWCA Act created a 1 million acre wilderness, which has resulted in our region sacrificing billions of dollars in lost future logging, mining, tax base and other beneficial economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The 1978 BWCA Act included a Mining Protection Zone of 222,000 acres surrounding the wilderness area to help buffer the wilderness from expected future mining activity; and

WHEREAS, The current (2004) United States Forest Service's (USFS) Forest Management Plan (Plan) for the Superior National Forest specifically lists mining as "desirous activity"; and

WHEREAS, Under the Plan, the desired condition for minerals states "...that exploration, development, and producing mineral resources are conducted in an environmentally sound manner so that they may contribute to economic growth and national defense..."; and

WHEREAS, Consistent with the Act and the Plan, mineral leases within the Superior National Forest have existed for many years; and

WHEREAS, The federal government has taken previous action to instead allow the use of an Environmental Analysis to study the impact of mining exploration within the Superior National Forest; and

WHEREAS, Language has now been proposed as part of the current United States House Omnibus Appropriation Bill banning mineral development within the Superior National Forest, and requiring the completion of an Environmental Study before any further mineral development activity is allowed;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners opposes the federal legislation noted above and requests that the U.S. Congress refrain from any efforts to jeopardize the continued exploration and prospecting for minerals within the Superior National Forest;

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the St. Louis County Board urges Congress and all pertinent Federal agencies to allow prospective mining companies in Minnesota to proceed under the same Federal laws, rules and environmental review processes as prescribed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Commissioner McDonald moved the adoption of the Resolution and it was declared adopted upon the following vote:

Yeas – Commissioners McDonald, Musolf, Nelson and Jugovich – 4

Nays – Commissioner Jewell and Chair Boyle – 2

Absent – Commissioner Olson – 1

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
Office of County Auditor, ss.  
County of St. Louis

I, NANCY NILSEN, Auditor of the County of St. Louis, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing with the original resolution filed in my office on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of November, A.D. 2019, and that this is a true and correct copy.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE at Duluth, Minnesota, this 26<sup>th</sup> day of November, A.D., 2019.

NANCY NILSEN, COUNTY AUDITOR

By

Clerk of the County Board/Deputy Auditor



*Resolution  
of the  
Board of County Commissioners  
St. Louis County, Minnesota*

*Adopted on: February 14, 2017 Resolution No. 17-112*

*Offered by Commissioner: Rukavina*

---

**Resolution Requesting the Proposal to Withdraw Federal Lands  
in Northeastern Minnesota from Future Leasing, Exploration  
and Potential Development be Rescinded**

---

WHEREAS, Two federal agencies, the Department of Interior and the United States Forest Service (USFS), have initiated misguided actions to withdraw nearly 240,000 acres of federal lands and minerals from future exploration and potential development; and

WHEREAS, This politically motivated decision will cause devastating and irreversible damage to the citizens, communities and economy of the region; and

WHEREAS, A thorough and comprehensive environmental review process is already established under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and

WHEREAS, The responsibility of the federal agencies is to accept proposed mineral development projects and subject them to the science based review established under NEPA; and

WHEREAS, Independent economic analysis by University of MN - Duluth estimates more than 12,000 construction jobs and 5,000 long-term mining jobs would be created if projects currently under various stages of development in the region advanced to operation; and

WHEREAS, The estimated four billion ton deposit of copper, nickel, and other precious metals in the Duluth Complex stand to potentially generate close to \$3 billion in royalty revenue for the state's Permanent School Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, This revenue would support the education of nearly 900,000 K-12 students statewide; and

WHEREAS, There are 95,000 acres of School Trust Lands within the boundaries of the proposed federal withdrawal; and

WHEREAS, As a result, a significant amount of these enormous economic opportunities and education responsibilities would be lost under the anti-mining withdrawal proposal by the agencies; and

WHEREAS, Similar withdrawal proposals from anti-mining groups have been strongly opposed by U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator Al Franken, Congressman Rick Nolan, the entire Minnesota Range Legislative Delegation, over 50 additional Minnesota state legislators, and the vast majority of local elected officials throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, A recent public opinion poll shows two-thirds of citizens in the region oppose withdrawal of federal minerals from future development; and

WHEREAS, The proposed withdrawal would provide no environmental benefits or protections that do not already exist under NEPA and related state and federal environmental quality laws, standards and regulations; and

WHEREAS, The unproven concerns raised by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USFS are based on hypothetical and unfounded fears of generalized impacts from mining;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners hereby request the Trump administration to immediately rescind the BLM-USFS proposal to withdraw 240,000 acres of land in NE Minnesota from future leasing, exploration and potential development and withdraw the BLM's Federal Register notice announcing the proposal;

*Resolution No. 17-112*

*Page 2 of 2*

RESOLVED FURTHER, That Senator Klobuchar and Senator Franken join Congressman Nolan and publicly state both their opposition to the withdrawal and formally request immediate reversal by the Trump administration;

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the federal agencies return to their responsibility of accepting mineral development projects, review them under the existing National Environmental Policy Act and the scientific, multi-agency requirements of an Environmental EIS process, and restore opportunity for economic development and investment in Minnesota while providing an avenue for America to gain domestic independence from foreign mineral sources that are invaluable to our everyday basic needs, and more importantly to our national security and safety of our country;

RESOLVED FURTHER, That a copy of the resolution shall be submitted to applicable government agencies and public processes pertaining to the BLM-USFS proposal.

Commissioner Rukavina moved the adoption of the Resolution and it was declared adopted upon the following vote:  
Yeas – Commissioners Rukavina, Stauber, Nelson and Jugovich – 4  
Nays – Commissioners Boyle, Olson and Chair Jewell – 3

---

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
Office of County Auditor, ss.  
County of St. Louis

I, DONALD DICKLICH, Auditor of the County of St. Louis, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing with the original resolution filed in my office on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of February, A.D. 2017, and that this is a true and correct copy.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE at Duluth, Minnesota, this 14<sup>th</sup> day of February, A.D., 2017.

DONALD DICKLICH, COUNTY AUDITOR

By

Deputy Auditor/Clerk of the County Board



*Resolution  
of the  
Board of County Commissioners  
St. Louis County, Minnesota*

*Adopted on: December 20, 2011 Resolution No. 685  
Offered by Commissioner: Nelson*

---

**Nonferrous Mining in St. Louis County**

---

WHEREAS, nonferrous ores contain metals used in daily life - copper, nickel, cobalt, platinum, palladium and gold - and found in countless products, including cell phones, computers, joint replacements, electrical wiring, hybrid cars and catalytic converters; and

WHEREAS, the United States does not meet its domestic demand for these valuable metals, importing from 40% to 95% of the metals it uses, often from countries with little or no environmental regulations; and

WHEREAS, pollution from unregulated mines joins a global pool that deposits contaminants around the world, including Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, current nonferrous mining operations planned for St. Louis County must meet strict state and federal laws to protect human health and the environment, including the preparation and regular updating of detailed closure plans designated to pay for closure and associated environmental cleanup/mitigation, along with financial resources designated to pay for such closure; and

WHEREAS, the University of Minnesota Duluth Campus, Labovitz School of Economics had indicated that the evolution of nonferrous mining in the region has the potential to provide thousands of construction and skilled trades-related jobs and thousands more stable private sector jobs, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic benefits to the region.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the St. Louis County Board declares its support for the existing open, transparent, and comprehensive environmental review and permitting process in place for the various nonferrous mining initiatives currently planned for development in St. Louis County, Minnesota, and supports the success of these projects, contingent upon the approval of all federal and state environmental permits necessary for these projects to move forward.

Commissioner Nelson moved the adoption of the Resolution and it was declared adopted upon the following vote:

Yeas - Commissioners Dahlberg, Forsman, Raukar, and Nelson - 4

Nays - Commissioners Jewell, Sweeney, and Chair O'Neill - 3

---

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
Office of County Auditor, *sa.*  
County of St. Louis

I, DONALD DICKLICH, Auditor of the County of St. Louis, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing with the original resolution filed in my office on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of December, A.D. 2011, and that this is a true and correct copy.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE at Duluth, Minnesota, this 20<sup>th</sup> day of December, A.D., 2011.

DONALD DICKLICH, COUNTY AUDITOR

By

Deputy Auditor/Clerk of County Board