

# Online Comment

**Permit Portal:** Air

2/24/2018

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2/24/2018 Dear Commissioner Stine, I live northwest of PolyMet's proposed mine site, in western Cook County. I ask you not to issue the air quality permit for NorthMet. We who live downwind from the proposed mine sites think about what would be blowing our way. Emissions that can be captured would be inconsistently and incompletely filtered or treated, but not so the fugitive emissions rising from the various operations sites and roads between. They would contain arsenic, cadmium, lead, mercury and probably those asbestos-like fibers that have caused such misery and expense, and there is no way to ensure they won't enter the environment. The fugitive emissions control plan lists remedies like sprinkling water on gravel roads and containment basins, which would help. But there would be circumstances and conditions when that wouldn't be enough. If you watch a mining operation you'll see great explosions of debris from blasting, a dirty look to the horizon, clouds of dust above roads, and the belching diesel exhaust from heavy equipment and trucks. As much as ¼ of that would settle on adjacent vegetation, rivers and streams, contributing to their burden of pollution, and the rest would be carried by the wind to fall out across the forest and human communities. Recent studies in Cook County have found airborne pollutants in remote lakes that must have originated hundreds of miles away. Older studies document decades of air pollution. If toxic particles from the Polymet Northmet operation fall across the forest - as they will if you permit it, they wouldn't be alone - there would be cumulative impacts to the health of forest ecosystems. Mining would add a new stress to a forest system already stressed by climate change, non-native invasive species, a disrupted fire regime, and so on. Apparently you think that simply listing conditions and requiring PolyMet to self monitor and report would preserve our air quality. I'm one of many citizens who have no faith at all that this will work. Look at Minntac's variance request. They want to continue to pollute to the degree to which they've become accustomed - over the decades. No state agency has stopped them. Minntac is in a different category of the mining industry than NorthMet, but it's a great example of the shameful behavior all these companies tend to engage in: This is a predatory delay - a strategic, deliberate dragging of the feet when it comes to meeting obligations, keeping promises, and following the law, with the sole purpose of maximizing profits for as long as possible - while preying on others who will have to foot the bills and clean up the mess - that is, we citizens and our descendents. There is a long and well-documented record of sulfide ore copper-nickel mining that predicts that we should expect the same behavior from PolyMet. I didn't find anything in the draft permit that convinced me otherwise. The state's failure to enforce sulfate standards is another example of unreliable or nonexistent enforcement that gives a clear warning that regulations on the books don't mean no pollution in the air and on land and waters. It's discouraging when environmental standards in laws and permits aren't enforced - and when agencies that are meant to be about land stewardship enable a proposal like PolyMet's to get so far. But the wildlife, the forests, the traditional land uses, the clean waters and fresh air and our descendents that would be hurt so badly by this kind of mining are so precious to us that we have to persevere, and ask that even at this late stage you thoughtfully consider the many unresolved problems with NorthMet, and deny this

permit. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Sincerely, Ellen Hawkins PO Box 2142 Tofte, MN  
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**Attachments:**