

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT ON MINNESOTA MINING

Today's U.S. Forest Service hearing on mining is a charade. That's why we're staying home.

Northeastern Minnesota is a world mining center of excellence, with more than 130 years of experience in the field. We – workers, business owners and residents of the region – are ready and able to embrace a new era of advanced mining technology, backed by a commitment to responsible environmental practices in one of the most mineral-rich areas in the world.

Your staffs have other ideas, such as blocking any new mining projects in a vast swath of the Arrowhead Region and the good jobs that go with them. Your contrived process is undermining and displacing a well-established, legally mandated and fair review process that's been in place for mining projects for decades, and which came about because mining opponents who want the Northland to be only a playground applied enough political pressure on a former administration to get their way.

Your most recent stalling tactic was to extend the public comment period for your proposed moratorium, or land withdrawal, on new mineral or land development on 235,000 federal acres in northeastern Minnesota. An added hearing today in St. Paul is part of the extension – and we won't be attending.

The March 16 hearing in Duluth was designed to accommodate Duluth and Twin Cities audiences and it did. The familiar cast of self-styled "green" critics and anti-mining organizations turned out in force to voice the same scripted alarmist case they always do. Let's get one fact straight – the withdrawal area is outside of the Boundary Waters and is an area designated for multiple uses, including mining.

No one should even pretend this is about gaining new information or insight. It's about politics, theatrics and stuffing the comment box with sentiments opposed to mining in Minnesota and our region's way of life.

How many hearings do we really need? Why must the people with the greatest stake, whose jobs and regional economic viability are at risk, have to keep turning out for these charades? When was the last time federal agencies held a hearing up North on projects in the Twin Cities, such as the Green Line or St. Croix River Crossing?

We're fed up with jumping through federal hoops, burning gas, vacation days and family time to sit through your endless, taxpayer-funded meetings. It's death by a thousand cuts. If you want to have a meaningful conversation about our region, our lands, waters or minerals, you'll hear from us loud and clear at the last public hearing in Virginia, Minnesota, on July 25.

Enough is enough. No more delays. Return to a fair process. We'll see you in Virginia.

In solidarity:

- Area Partnership for Economic Expansion (APEX)
- Fight For Mining Minnesota
- Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
- Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce
- International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49
- Jobs for Minnesotans
- Laborers District Council of Minnesota & North Dakota
- Laborers Local #1091
- Laborers Local #1097
- Laurentian Chamber of Commerce
- MiningMinnesota
- Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council
- Minnesota Pipe Trades Association
- North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters
- Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS)
- United Steelworkers District 11
- Up North Jobs Inc.