M. Watkins/N. Schuldt Notes from the State and Tribal Quarterly Mining Meeting discussion with MPCA regarding US Steel Minntac, January 21, 2016.

- MPCA states that the NPDES permit for the US Steel Minntac tailings basin will be public noticed in 2018, "as soon as possible" at the conclusion of the wild rice rule revision process.
- Further, MPCA is bound by the 2015 legislation which stipulates that permit limits for sulfate to protect wild rice cannot be put into permits unless the permittee specifically requests it.
- MPCA also states that even though both the Tribes and MPCA agree that the Twin Lakes are wild rice waters, not everyone agrees with that (in reference to the litigation risks for permitting).
- MPCA says that waiting until 2018 to reissue the Minntac tailings basin permit will drastically reduce the likelihood of litigation.
- Tribes inquired if MPCA knew of any modifications or improvements in the design of the seepage capture system to be installed on the Dark River side of the tailings basin, in light of the poor performance of the existing capture system on the northeast side of the TB; no definitive information, but MPCA believed they were making some modifications.
- Tribes requested a copy of MPCA's independent review of the sulfate load reduction to Twin Lakes resulting from the seepage collection system installed on the northeast side of the tailings basin.
- Tribes ask for an update of the status of the EPA/MPCA 2013 Agreement to modernize taconite permits. MPCA first replies "the document still exists"; after further clarification of the question being posed, confirmed that no permits have been reissued as a result of the agreement. However, one entry-level hydrologist has been hired; one FTE has been added in water quality standards, one wetlands hydrologist has been hired but is currently working for the US Army Corps and will be returning in April, one other new hydrologist had already been lost, and one MPCA manager has been added. Some of these are shared positions with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Not clear whether this was sufficient staffing to address the backlog of taconite permits.
- Tribes indicated that they would be requesting a joint teleconference with EPA Region 5 and MPCA to discuss the delay in reissuing the Minntac tailings basin NPDES/SDS permit.