UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

APR 0 1 2019

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL
AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair McCollum:

On behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, I am responding to your February 25, 2019 letter regarding the EPA's review of a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit issued by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for PolyMet Mining Inc.'s Northmet mining facility in St. Louis County, Minnesota. You specifically requested that the EPA make available to the public a copy of any written comments or concerns prepared by EPA staff regarding the Northmet mine permits, including any annotation to indicate which concerns were shared verbally.

It has long been the practice for EPA staff to have verbal conversations with their regulatory partners, tribal or state, as they work through complex permitting decisions. Region 5 Administrator Cathy Stepp has been specifically encouraging EPA staff to work more collaboratively and speak "face-to-face" with state officials to ensure prompt and accurate exchanges of information. This type of communication is essential to promoting better strong between the Agency and the state and tribal entities.

At this time, the EPA is currently reviewing our records as they are potentially responsive to several Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for records pertaining to this permit dating back to mid-2017. Any records found to be releasable will be made available to the public upon the completion of this review period. We will be in touch with you to provide updates as we work to complete this review.

If you have further questions, you may contact me, or your staff may contact Travis Voyles in the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at Voyles.Travis@epa.gov or (202) 564-6399.

Sincerely,

Troy M. Lyons
Associate Administrator

cc: The Honorable David Joyce, Ranking Member