United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Superior National Forest Supervisor's Office | 8901 Grand Avenue Place Duluth, MN 55808 218-626-4300

File Code: 5430; 1950
Date: January 9, 2017

Dear interested individuals, agencies and organizations,

I have signed the NorthMet Project Land Exchange Final Record of Decision (ROD), authorizing a proposed land exchange with PolyMet Mining, Inc. (PolyMet). The Land Exchange Proposed Action as modified was selected for implementation.

Under this decision, the Forest Service will convey about 6,650 acres of federal land, located in St. Louis County to PolyMet, and will acquire about 6,690 acres of non-federal lands located in St. Louis and Lake Counties in northeast Minnesota.

The decision will transfer the federal land owned by the Forest Service to PolyMet who controls the sub-surface (mineral rights). PolyMet intends to develop an open-pit 'copper-nickel-platinum-group-metals' mine (NorthMet Mine) on the conveyed federal land. This decision is for the land exchange only. Other governmental entities have the responsibility and authority to make decisions related to permitting the mining project, primarily the State of Minnesota and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Under the decision, the Forest Service will also acquire non-federal lands to be managed as national forest for tribal and public benefit and use.

My land exchange decision resolves the conflict between the surface (non-mineral) property interests of the Forest Service and PolyMet's proposal to access the privately owned minerals (subsurface). I took into account a very complex mix of environmental concerns, public input, interpretation of existing rights, and tribal trust responsibilities in making this decision. While my decision cannot resolve all issues, I believe it best serves the public interest.

The Final ROD also addresses the instructions issued by the Regional Forester related to the objections received on the Draft ROD. The Final ROD is available on our website; go to https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects and then open the link to the NorthMet Project webpage. Limited paper copies of the Final ROD are available upon request.

I realize there are very strongly held and divergent viewpoints and opinions about this project. I appreciate all the effort, engagement and wide ranging comments voiced by tens of thousands of Minnesotans and citizens across the country. Whatever your viewpoint on the NorthMet Project Land Exchange, your involvement is very important and welcomed as we manage the Superior National Forest into the future.

If you have any questions on the Final ROD, please contact Michael Jiménez at mjimenez@fs.fed.us or (218)-626-4383.

Sincerely,

Constance Cummins

CONSTANCE CUMMINS
Forest Supervisor