



## **Tamarack Water Alliance Community Zoom Meeting Wednesday, September 4, 2024 10am CT**

*Hello from the Tamarack Water Alliance!* If you are new to our email list we welcome you. Local residents who volunteer with Tamarack Water Alliance compile and send this monthly newsletter to share updates, invitations, and informational articles.

Everyone is invited to attend our open community virtual Zoom meeting on **Wednesday, September 4, 2024 at 10am. Topic: Mining, Lake Life, and Our Family Stories with Anna Battistini.** Anna is a resident of Emily, who still owns the family farm that was settled by her first ancestor. For the last three years she has been involved in advocacy to protect her land and mineral rights she owns from a new proposal to mine manganese in a deposit that has been previously deemed not worth the effort. The deposit lies underneath several lakes and beneath the town of Emily. Anna will share her family mining background stories, advocacy work, and the lessons she has learned protecting her land.

**Register for the meeting and receive the Zoom link [here](https://tamarackwateralliance.org/php/eventreg.php?eid=16)**  
(<https://tamarackwateralliance.org/php/eventreg.php?eid=16>)

**Download** Tamarack Water Alliance fact sheets/flyers [here](https://tamarackwateralliance.org/resources.html#flyers)  
(<https://tamarackwateralliance.org/resources.html#flyers>)

**Sign-Up To Receive Updates from the DNR** on Talon Metals Environmental Impact Statement here [here](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/tamarack-nickel-project.html) (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/tamarack-nickel-project.html>)

If you believe nickel-sulfide mining is too risky in Aitkin County, Tamarack Water Alliance

has yard signs with this messaging available. Your \$6 donation helps defray costs. Email [waters@tamarackwateralliance.org](mailto:waters@tamarackwateralliance.org) to arrange pickup of your sign.

**Volunteer** with the Tamarack Water Alliance. Send us an [email](#) at [waters@tamarackwateralliance.org](mailto:waters@tamarackwateralliance.org).

Encourage your friends, family and neighbors to [sign up for the monthly Tamarack Water Alliance email](#) newsletter at <http://eepurl.com/hOboEb>.

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## Mining, Lake Life, and our Family Stories

**Anna Battistini, resident of Emily, artist, land steward**

### **Family Mining Involvement**

I usually describe myself as an "artist and steward of land." I'm the fifth generation of my family to live in the town of Emily, Minnesota. I still own the land that was settled by my first ancestor in this area.

I come from miners on both sides of my family. My Italian side was recruited from Italy directly to the mines in Virginia, Minnesota. My grandfather was a miner, and grandma was a nurse. They teamed up to fight the original proposal to mine Manganese here in Emily in the 1990's, when I was still a teenager. Back then, my grandfather spoke to the miserable living conditions he'd witnessed near mining operations, and my grandmother argued about the threat to our public health.

My grandfather worked in several different mines over the years. Like other families, he moved to where the work was, spending long stretches of time away from his family. Open space near the mines would populate with mobile homes brought there for the miners to live in. The men living there were often bored, lonely, and bad behavior was rampant.

### **Emily's Evolution**

When it was time to retire, my grandparents moved back to the family land in Emily. Emily has never been a mining community. From the time loggers came through the area, the economy has been based on recreation. People came to Emily to get away from industry, from the dirt and dust of the factories, mines, and more urban areas of Minnesota.

Emily was a working-class community, never fancy or expensive. It was a place that regular folks could afford to enjoy a piece of Minnesota's cabin country. The lakes were settled by

families with very small cabins. Nowadays, those small family cabins are getting updated. New families are moving in from the cities, investing their money into lake homes that they expect to be part of their family for many generations.

### **Northeastern Minnesota's Essential Recreational Economy**

The seasonal and recreation population is an essential part of our economy in northern Minnesota. The revival of towns like Crosby can be directly linked to investment in recreation. Those of us with history on the Iron Range know all too well that even though mining is culturally important, and has supported many families for short periods of time over the years, mining is not really a sustainable economy. It's a boom followed by a bust. It brings people to the area with the promise of good jobs, but leaves no means of supporting those families when the ore runs out.

Crosby was a hard place to make a living just a few decades ago. Now it's bustling with people and shops, restaurants and other small businesses. What would the people of Crosby say if someone tried to reopen the mines?

And yet in the town of Emily, this idea of opening a new mine in the middle of beloved lake country is being considered. Yet, the miners they want to put back to work have aged out of the workforce. The skills required for modern mining have not been taught or developed with younger generations of locals. There is no proud history of mining to resurrect in Emily, Minnesota. There is, however, a history of failed mining proposals here.

### **New Proposal to Mine Manganese in Emily**

A deposit of Manganese was discovered about 100 years ago. The deposit stretches across the currently proposed mining area, beneath several lakes, and then wraps back around directly under downtown Emily. Several companies have come and gone over the years. This deposit was deemed not worth the effort and abandoned by the mining companies time and again.

In 2021 I received a letter in the mail informing me of a new mining company's request, Northstar Manganese, for mineral leases on land near my house. I was shocked to see on the map that the request for leases included my family's 80 acres, and did not acknowledge my ownership.

Over the last three years I have been involved in advocacy to protect my family land whose mineral rights I own. I have experienced harassment from the mining company and have been a champion of my landowner rights with the DNR. The issue has become increasingly complicated due to the involvement of our electric cooperative, as well as the claims that

this manganese is necessary for the electrification of our energy systems.

### **Advocacy To Protect My Family Land**

What I have learned :

- The mining company will say whatever they need to say to try and intimidate landowners into submission.
- The laws are written to favor the mineral rights owner, not the surface owner. .
- As citizens of the State of Minnesota, we need to examine the mining laws AND the process of tax forfeited land. Should not this tax forfeited land be returned to the rightful owners, the tribes that signed treaties for the land generations ago?
- The mining company doesn't care about you or your town or good jobs for your citizens. To them, you are something to be managed and to be "socialized" so that you do not get in the way of their profits.

My question: who benefits from mining plans and promises, and who pays the price when things don't go as planned, or when the promises are not kept?

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*"Many mines throughout history have polluted waterways and produced toxic waste that scarred landscapes for generations. They also require astronomical amounts of water to operate. **Stewart Udall, who ran the US Interior Department under Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, described mining as a 'search and destroy mission.'**"*

Ref: Bill Carter, Boom, Bust, Boom: a Story About Copper, the Metal That Runs the World (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 115.

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## Who We Are

Tamarack Water Alliance is a group of local residents and landowners working together with others from across Minnesota to protect water and community health from the dangers of sulfide mining near our beloved lakes and wild rice beds, at the headwaters of the Kettle River and in the Mississippi River watershed. Visit our website [here](https://tamarackwateralliance.org/index.html) (https://tamarackwateralliance.org/index.html)

A proposal by a foreign owned mining company, Talon Metals/Rio Tinto to mine nickel and other metals near Tamarack in Aitkin County threatens the health of our communities. This kind of sulfide mining, especially in water-rich environments, has never been done without severe impacts to water and the health of those downstream. Mining here is also a threat to environmental justice and the long-term economic security of nearby native and rural communities.

Review our [community slide presentation](https://tamarackwateralliance.org/docs/TamarackMineConcerns-Consolidated.pdf) (tamarackwateralliance.org/docs/TamarackMineConcerns-Consolidated.pdf) and download [informative flyers](https://tamarackwateralliance.org/resources.html) (tamarackwateralliance.org/resources.html):

- Talon Mine Risks,
- Geology of Aitkin County,
- High Sulfide Mines Create Acid Mine Drainage,
- Nickel Not Needed for Future EV Batteries,
- Minnesota's Prime Wild Rice Lakes Under Threat,
- Minnesota Regulators Poor Record In Protecting The Environment,
- Eagle Mine Environmental Report & Saving Our Meager Nickel Reserves
- Prove It First! (The AFL-CIO Has Its Facts Wrong!)

We will be sending this monthly newsletter to keep you informed about this project, to share information and opportunities to act, and to invite you to gatherings where you can connect with others who share a passion for clean water and community health.

