



## **Tamarack Water Alliance Community Zoom Meeting Wednesday, March 6, 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, March 6, 2024 at 10am CT. Topic: Mapping MEPA: How to Engage in Minnesota's Environmental Review Process, presented by Joy Anderson, Supervising Attorney, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA).** Anderson will explain will explain Minnesota's environmental review process, what to expect, and how you can get involved.

**Download** Tamarack Water Alliance fact sheets at <https://www.tamarackwateralliance.org/resources.html>

**Sign-Up To Receive Updates from the DNR** on Talon Metals Environmental Impact Statement [here](#)

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](#) (<http://eepurl.com/hOboEb>).

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## **Mapping MEPA: How to Engage in Minnesota's Environmental Review Process**

**by Joy Anderson, Supervising Attorney, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)**

To residents concerned about a proposed development project, the process of environmental review can be confusing and even mysterious—involving complicated statutes, lengthy timelines, and long technical documents. But the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, or MEPA, is intended to provide ordinary citizens an opportunity to express their concerns about proposals that might affect the environment in their communities. Because of MEPA, Minnesotans have a voice when developers propose projects that might harm the land, water, air, wildlife, and other natural resources of our state. For citizens to effectively engage in environmental review, however, they must understand the process and how they can participate.

### **Triggering Environmental Review: EAW or EIS?**

Not every proposed project goes through environmental review. Most commonly, to trigger review, the project must meet one of the specific thresholds listed in Minnesota's rules—for example, industrial facilities over a certain square footage, or feedlots that house certain numbers of animals.[1] Residents also may petition for review of projects they think may affect the environment that do not meet one of the thresholds. Depending on the type, size, and scope of the project, it may require either a shorter Environmental Assessment Worksheet ("EAW")—which is intended to determine whether the project has the potential for significant environmental effects—or a longer Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") that considers not only the project as proposed, but possible alternatives to it. Metallic mineral mines or processing facilities, such as Talon Metals' proposed Tamarack nickel mine, require the longer EIS.

### **EIS Process: What are the steps?**

The EIS process is often lengthy. For complicated projects, it can take years to complete. First, the agency gathers information from the project proposer to create a draft scoping document that sets forth the issues and project alternatives to be studied in the EIS. Once this process is complete, the agency issues a Scoping Decision that sets the scope for the study. Next, the agency actually conducts the required study and issues a Draft EIS setting forth the results. Then, the agency considers comments on the Draft EIS, responds to them, and issues a Final EIS. Finally, the agency reviews the Final EIS and declares whether or not it is adequate—that is, whether it meets the requirements of MEPA and accurately sets forth information about the potential environmental effects. Notably, this finding of adequacy does not mean that the project will not affect the environment or that the project will be permitted. It simply means that the anticipated effects have been studied and understood and that the EIS portion of the process is complete. After all of this, a party may challenge that decision in court. No governmental body can make decisions about the proposal—such as whether to grant a permit—before the EIS process is complete.

**Commenting: What makes an effective comment?**

Residents have multiple opportunities to participate in environmental review, either through written comments or by commenting at public meetings. The agency must open public comments periods on (1) the draft scoping document (at least 30 days), (2) the Draft EIS (at least 25 days), and (3) the Final EIS (at least 10 days). The agency also must hold at least one public meeting on the Draft EIS.

Public comments are critical because an agency must respond to all timely, substantive comments received on a Draft EIS. These comments may lead to changes in the project, they can help to lay the foundation for any potential appeal, and they can even inform the agencies decision about whether to move forward with the project at all. To be most effective, a comment should not simply voice general opposition to the project or critique elements outside the scope of environmental review. Instead, an effective comment should focus on specific environmental impacts of the proposal that the EIS ignored or did not fully address, explain why the studied impacts are unacceptable, or discuss mitigation measures that could help improve a project.

Only with robust public participation can environmental review become not merely a mass of technical documents but an actual vehicle to accomplish MEPA's goal of ensuring that human beings and nature can exist in productive harmony. Having more Minnesotans understand environmental review will help protect Minnesota's environment for years to come.

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### **Mining Threatens All Our Communities**

*by Melanie Benjamin, chief executive/chairwoman of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.*

from opinion exchange, Minneapolis Star Tribune, January 22, 2024

...History is littered with examples of Indigenous communities being exploited for the resources on our ancestral land; a legacy of profits being prioritized over our people's health, cultures, traditions, water and land....

...This issue hits particularly close to home as the proposed Tamarack Mine, a nickel mine brought forward by Talon Metals, is located within 1.3 miles of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community. Nickel mines have a consistent track record of pollution, both during and after operation. Abandoned hard rock mines have contributed to the contamination of an estimated 40% of the country's rivers and 50% of its lakes. The proposed Tamarack nickel mine is a threat to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe — to our people, to other Indigenous groups, our land and to the broader Minnesota population and our state's natural resources and watersheds....

Read full article

<https://www.startribune.com/mining-threatens-all-our-communities/600337690/>

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## Who We Are

**Tamarack Water Alliance** ([tamarackwateralliance.org](http://tamarackwateralliance.org)) 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.

A proposal by a foreign owned mining company 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, ([tamarackwateralliance.org/docs/TamarackMineConcerns-Consolidated.pdf](http://tamarackwateralliance.org/docs/TamarackMineConcerns-Consolidated.pdf))

Download informative flyers: (<https://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

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.



