



Tamarack Water Alliance Community Zoom Meeting Wed. August 2, 2023, 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, August 2, 2023 at 10am CT. Tom Anderson will go over Talon Metals Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) that Talon filed with the DNR and the additional risks it presents to our community and water rich environment of Northeastern Minnesota. Talon's EAW expands on the risks we have identified earlier.

We are concerned about the **2.3 million gallons of water or more** Talon plans to pump per day from our aquifers. **Blasting 24/7, 2 to 3 times a day with ammonium nitrate** will cause the ground to shake over 7,300 times within a 10 year "life of mine" and could cause building foundations built on sand to sink / shift over a period of time. In addition the blasting will open more fissures underground so that much more than 2.3 million gallons of water will need to be pumped. **Talon plans to dump the sterile water treated with Reverse Osmosis into a ditch that flows into Big Sandy Lake. Temporary rock storage areas will not be lined**, nor will dust mitigation be addressed from these storage areas. **Venting will only "reduce" but not eliminate toxic sulfide particles from the air.**

Talon continues to push toward an environmental disaster with no attempts to study or quantify the serious impacts they intend inflict.

Sign-Up To Receive Updates from the DNR on Talon Metals Environmental Impact Statement

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/tamarack-nickel-project.html>

Download Tamarack Water Alliance fact sheets

<https://www.tamarackwateralliance.org/resources.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 to arrange pickup of your sign.

Volunteer with the Tamarack Water Alliance. Send us an **email** at waters@tamarackwateralliance.org.

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

The Value of Fishing and Fishing Habitat by Lynn Sue Mizner and Michaa Aubid

Aitkin County's environment is characterized by water. More than 90% of the land is classified as wetland of one kind or another – peatlands, marshes and open-water wetlands are some of them. Wetlands are increasingly important to the survival of living creatures as weather becomes more unpredictable. They have a mitigating effect on extreme weather because they can store carbon and huge amounts of water that would otherwise cause flooding. Wetland ecosystems also have a filtering function, cleaning the water and releasing it free of sediment and pollutants that arrive with storms and floods. They are involved with recharging groundwater resources over time. Those hydrologic functions can be impaired by ditching, drainage and compaction of delicate wetland soils caused by driving or building on them. This is one reason for concern about proposed mine development in Tamarack, Minnesota.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation's **National Hunting and Fishing Day – Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation** report states that over 1.6 million hunters and anglers support the state's economy, spending over \$8.4 million on outdoor activities and generating over \$103 million to support the conservation efforts of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The Minnesota nonprofit **MN-Fish** states that, “**With over 10,000 lakes and 69,000 miles of rivers and streams, fishing ranks as Minnesota's #1 outdoor activity!** It supports over 91,000 jobs and generates a whopping \$9.9 billion in annual state economic benefit! Minnesota ranks 2nd nationally in resident fishing participation and is the 3rd most popular fishing destination in the nation.”

Our wetlands are an important habitat for fish. They provide feeding, spawning and/or nursery areas for many species of freshwater fish. Wetlands support a diversity of plant communities including trees, rushes, reeds, and floating and submerged aquatic plants. Wetlands play an integral role in the ecology of the watershed, and the combination of shallow water, high levels of nutrients and primary productivity (plants and algae) is ideal for the development of organisms that form the base of the food

web and feed many species of fish, amphibians, shellfish and insects.

This role in reproduction is one reason wetlands must be protected from contamination by industrial pollutants. Acidification of water by sulfates, like those created by mining, can cause mercury to be released from rocks and sediments. It can create **methyl mercury** that harms the development of hatching insects, fish and birds. The uptake of mercury by invertebrates that are a food source for fish gives the toxic metal an entryway into the food chain as the fish are eaten by larger fish, birds and mammals (bears, otters, humans) in a process called biomagnification. The mercury becomes a permanent part of the bodies of creatures at the top of the food chain, causing physical, mental and reproductive harm.

Because of the natural and human-caused presence of mercury in northern Minnesota lakes, rivers and wetlands, the Department of Health has created **fish consumption advisories** for water bodies in the state. When industry, development and transportation cause increases in mercury levels, a water body can move from less restrictive to more restrictive classifications with regard to fish consumption. This affects recreational fishers who want to eat the fish they catch. It has a greater impact, however, on subsistence fishers who rely on fishing to supplement their family's food supply. Published data about elevated mercury in a lake can also be expected to affect its desirability as a recreational fishing destination and even property values around the lake.

From a purely economic perspective, recreational angling constitutes one of the largest components of outdoor recreation in the U.S.. In a report published by the American Sportfishing Association, the organization reported that in 2016 recreational fishing generated over \$49 billion in retail sales and contributed \$125 billion to the national economy (ASA, 2018). At the state level, anglers spent \$41.8 billion within the states where they live and \$7.9 billion beyond the borders of their home state. The spending by residents supported 802 thousand jobs worth \$38 billion in wages and income.

All land in what has now become our beautiful Aitkin County was ceded to the United States before Minnesota was a state with the 1855 treaty between the federal government and Mississippi, Pillager, and Winnibigoshish Bands of Chippewa Indians. All treaties with Chippewa Nation Bands protect the rights of modern Ojibwe-Anishinaabe (Chippewa) people to hunt, fish and gather in the ceded territories in perpetuity (forever). The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the rights of the Ojibwe to hunt, fish, and gather on the lands ceded by treaty. The Federal 8th District Court in Minnesota has also affirmed those rights, most recently in "Operation Square Hook" (2014) which reaffirmed that exclusive fishing rights secured in the 1855 treaty to the Mississippi, Pillager, and Winnibigoshish Bands' members still apply today.

The rights of Ojibwe-Anishinaabe fishers are important for countless reasons. Fish are an important component of the healthy, natural diet that was traditional among the Anishinaabe. Families who embrace those traditions are working to decolonize their foodways by turning away from processed and commodity foods. They are teaching their children to enjoy foods such as wild rice, maple syrup, berries, venison and fish

that build health and food security and are culturally appropriate. The right to take fish allows people to reconnect with cultural traditions that surround important cultural foods and to pass those traditions down to future generations. Some families include traditions like drying and smoking fish as part of their family economy and rely on them to reduce their expenditures on less-healthy purchased foods.

Fishing rights secured in treaties are defined by what Indian nations understood in the context of the time at which they were signed. That means the right to hunt, gather and fish implies the right to have those foods be available and free from toxic residues such as pesticides and heavy metals. It also implies protection of the wetlands, lakes and rivers that provide habitat for those and other traditional foods.

Lynn Mizner is a farmer and resident of Palisade, Minnesota. She is a treaty fisheries specialist and holds a M.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from the University of Minnesota.

Michaa Aubid contributed to this article. Aubid is East Lake Anishinaabe and a staff member of the Minisinaakwaang Leadership Academy near McGregor, Minnesota.



CALL TO ACTION

Protect the St. Croix River from Upstream Sulfide Mine Pollution Deadline August 8, 2023

The National Park Service has asked for your input on their plan for the Wild and Scenic St. Croix River. You can tell the Park Service to protect the St. Croix from Talon Metals nickel mine pollution! Please comment by August 8th. No nickel mine should be allowed upstream of the St. Croix River.

Talon Metals/Rio Tinto plans to mine a “massive sulphide mineralization” with high levels of sulfide and toxic metals. Drilling in the huge 30,000 acre area controlled by Talon Metals has already found sulfide ore along the West Branch Kettle River, which flows downstream to the St. Croix River.

No sulfide mine has operated in a water-rich environment without contaminating surface and/or groundwater with acid mine drainage, toxic metals, or both. The St. Croix River is already impaired due to excessive mercury in fish. Adding sulfide mining pollution would increase toxic mercury contamination harming wildlife and human health.

Please comment on the Park Service “topic questions,” which ask you to describe your experiences on the St. Croix, your hopes for the future, what barriers interfere with your experience, and how the Park Service could address these barriers.

Please emphasize as a “issue/topic” of importance and for your personal comment that you don’t want a nickel mine to contaminate the St. Croix River watershed. Ask the Park Service to contact the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and make sure that impacts of mining the entire Talon Metals mineral deposit are studied in environmental review so that the Wild and Scenic St. Croix River will not be polluted with sulfate and toxic metals.

Thank you for **commenting by August 8** to protect the St. Croix River from Talon Metals sulfide mine pollution. Your unique voice can make a huge difference.

Who We Are

Tamarack Water Alliance (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)

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.

