



Tamarack Water Alliance Community Zoom Meeting Wednesday, April 1st, 2026 10am CT

TOPIC: The Real Story of Taconite SO₄ (Sulfate) Legacy

PRESENTERS: The Mining Guys: Chris Baldwin, Mike Maleska, Andy Baldwin

There is an urgent need to develop a public will for protecting public health in Northeastern Minnesota by delivering factual mining pollution information to as many residents living here as possible. Widespread misinformation has confused the public regarding the issue of sulfate and mercury pollution caused by taconite mining. Mining companies seek freedom from environmental regulation. Economic fears grip the mining community and elections are grossly affected by politicians afraid to take a stand for the environment. Recent legislative action has removed our Citizens Advisory Council within the MPCA. Yet, scientific examination of public sampling data collected monthly for fifty years indicates there is reason to advocate for a moratorium on new mining permits and reexamination of the 1979 regional study.

Chris Baldwin, a retired Mine Engineer, graduate of Colorado School of Mines and currently residing in Hibbing, MN. He was a Mine Manager and engineer for 20 years at Keewatin Taconite, and 4 years at Minorca, and recently, 7 years as Technical Services Superintendent at Haile Gold Mine, a sulfide mine, in South Carolina. He has designed and constructed in both underground and surface mines and helped permit and start up a sulfide gold mine.

Michael Maleska, retired taconite miner, lifelong resident of the rural Hibbing area of NE Minnesota. In 1977 he hired-on at Eveleth Taconite Company as a laborer. He became a member of the United Steelworkers of America, eventually elected to the office of Local Union President - overseeing all union/company activities, retiring in 2019. His family has always been very outdoors-oriented: BWCA, harvesting wild rice, fishing, camping, hunting, and planting 10's of 1,000's of trees.

Andy Baldwin, Chris's son grew up in Hibbing, Minnesota. He has an undergrad degree in biology from Montana State University, and a master's in secondary science education from the University of Washington in Tacoma. He's not currently teaching in the classroom, but enjoys teaching guitar lessons and volunteering as a math tutor. Science communication has been his long term passion, and lately that has become more and more important as he applies what he knows about classroom teaching to public outreach in Northern Minnesota.

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

Action Required

ACTION ALERT: CONTACT YOUR MINNESOTA LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT BATTERY RECYCLING

Please send a message today supporting SF 1690/HF 1426 - Pass battery recycling now.

Find your legislators' contact information here:

<https://gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>

Your help is needed to tell your Minnesota legislators to support clean water and safety by recycling batteries. Currently, Minnesota taxes and fees pay for battery recycling, and most batteries still end up in the trash. Landfill fires from discarded batteries occur weekly throughout the state and result in massive pollution of air, water, and soil with heavy metals. The battery recycling bill will make battery recycling FREE for all Minnesota residents, require producers to pay the costs, increase education about recycling, and create many more drop-off locations across our state.

Please send the message below to them (with any edits you'd like to make) by email, phone, or contact form. Legislators don't receive many personal messages so your voice and effort makes a difference.

I live in your district. Please ensure that the battery recycling bill (SF 1690 HF 1426) is heard and passed this year. This bi-partisan bill will reduce toxic pollution of air, water, and land, save tax dollars, and prevent dangerous battery fires in landfills. Other states already have battery recycling programs and hold producers responsible.

Please make sure that battery recycling bill is adopted without any changes that would weaken its protection of community safety and clean air, land, and water. This is a high priority for me.

Thank you for supporting this important legislation.
[your name and address]

Get Involved

- **You can donate on our website anytime at tamarackwateralliance.org/donate.html.**
- **OR make tax deductible contributions by donating through our 501c3 Fiscal Sponsor at the [Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation](#).** For Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) from an IRA, the EIN for the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation is 41-1761590, Tamarack Water Alliance Fund.

We invite your donations now and throughout the year. Tamarack Water Alliance is all volunteer Minnesota non-profit with no paid staff. Every penny you donate goes to support our hard work educating the public about the risks of sulfide mining to our water, environment, fish, wild rice, and ecosystems.

Your donation goes to support our community educational activities which include tabling at community festivals and parades, participation in other community events, targeted speaking engagements with interested local organizations, monthly informational public zoom calls and an associated email newsletter, website and social media, letter writing campaigns and articles in local news outlets, interviews with media, and other community outreach and canvassing.

Our current focus is on providing education about the risks of sulfide mining, narratives to counter the greenwashing and divisiveness that some mining companies promote, as well as forging connections to other communities concerned about sulfide mines in Minnesota, across the Midwest, and around the world. Thank you for your contributions to our work.

REQUEST Presentation On Risks of Sulfide Mining for your group, Rotary Club, church or community club. Send us an email at waters@tamarackwateralliance.org.

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>).

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

SIGN-UP FOR THIS NEWSLETTER: Encourage your friends, family and neighbors to sign up for the monthly Tamarack Water Alliance email newsletter at tamarackwateralliance.org/php/articlereg.php.

**The Real Story of Taconite SO₄ (Sulfate) Legacy-
The Unvarnished State of Mining in Minnesota
by The Mining Guys**



LTV Steel, idled in 2002 and still leaking, Chris Baldwin

Minnesota's Iron Range has a strong mining culture that has been in place for about 170 years. The quest to convert public mineral resources into private cash is an interesting venture. This industry depends on claim staking as specified in the General Mining Law of 1872 while still never stipulating that any royalties be paid for mining on public domain lands. Driven by the "prospector's promise" of a juicy nugget beneath the next strike of the pick, this topic is never without controversy.

And pressure. Lots of pressure. Residents of the Iron Range lean on their legislators to protect their homes, families, jobs, and communities to raise their families wholesomely and safely like anywhere else in the world. The mining companies also pressure the legislators to enact favorable laws to allow more control of labor disputes, tax relief, and preferable pollution laws to go their way. We even moved the town of Hibbing to get out of the way for them!

COMMUNITIES CAN'T SAY NO TO MINING COMPANIES

There have been accidents. There have been many deaths. There have been mistakes. There has always been danger in mining jobs. When Unions came to power in the 1850's lives got better. But something else eventually developed. Over time it became difficult for the workers and people in their communities to ever say no to the companies. And above all, those laws that were written to prohibit mining companies to run roughshod over our naturally precious and wild areas started getting ignored.

THE UNVARNISHED STATE OF MINING

Our group has been producing a podcast (called ViewsRmine) to educate people about the unvarnished state of mining in Minnesota. Recently, we discussed how the mines have

been collecting discharge water samples for many decades and forwarding those data to the MPCA monthly, only to be ignored by the state regulator. You can view the podcast at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifzJZVVRAxo.

TEN THOUSAND TONS OF SULFATES DUMPED ANNUALLY IN WATERS HEADED TOWARDS BWCA and VOYAGEURS

Simple "back of the napkin" math shows that for many, many years the Minnesota taconite mines have been dumping over 10,000 TONS of sulfates annually into the waters heading into the BWCAW, and Voyageur's National Park, where it continues on to Hudson's Bay via Rainy Lake, Grindstone Lake in Manitoba and the Winnipeg and Nelson Rivers. We also dump about 10,000 TONS of sulfates annually into the St. Louis River, Lakes Superior, Huron, Erie, Ontario, the St. Lawrence River and on to the Atlantic Ocean. And if that doesn't bother you, we dump about 1,800 TONS of sulfates annually into Hay Creek, Hay Lake, Swan Lake, and the Swan and Mississippi Rivers that flow through Big Sandy Lake, and past Aitkin to the Gulf of Mexico.

LEGALLY PERMITTED TACONITE POLLUTION

It's important to remember that all of these effects are due solely to legally permitted taconite mining. It's been estimated that when the Mesabi Metallics facility starts production just west of Nashwauk, that number will easily double, and a copper-nickel operation has the potential to have impacts profoundly higher than this.

IMPACT ON WILD RICE AND FISH

Our group has done over a dozen onsite presentations demonstrating the effect of sulfates on wild rice waters, not because we are activists, but because this information is so alarming, for us, not speaking out is impossible. Bacteria in the soils beneath those waters feed on those sulfates, contributing to the methylation of mercury also found in those waters and subsoils. Fat-soluble methylmercury is taken up by micro-invertebrates, water insects, minnows and through bioaccumulation, it builds up in Minnesota game fish such as northern pike and walleye. Some lakes now have prohibitions on eating those fish. This is a serious human health hazard that could possibly begin to affect people who eat them.

STUDY: ONE IN TEN BABIES HAVE TOXIC LEVELS OF MERCURY

A study done some 10 years ago was discontinued when it was discovered that 1 in 10 babies born in NE Minnesota had TOXIC levels of mercury in their bodies. The definition of 'toxic' in this study is considered to be the threshold level of mercury to cause learning defects and brain development issues.

OBLIGATION TO PROTECT MINNESOTA'S WATERS FROM COPPER-NICKEL MINING

We the people have the ability, dare-I-say the OBLIGATION to bring these issues to fore and see to it that the waters of Minnesota are never subjected to such an offensive end as that which sulfide-ore Copper-Nickel mining would bring. **There is currently no Cu/Ni mine in Minnesota.** Knowing the disregard the MPCA, DNR, and mining companies bear with respect to our air, water, and public health we must deny this type of mining anywhere in our watery state until such time as we face the fact that we are apparently unable to enforce the weak mining laws we already claim to be protecting our treasures.

THE MINING GUYS

Chris Baldwin is a retired mining engineer residing in Hibbing and active in mining-related water pollution matters. Andy Baldwin (Chris's son) has a Master's degree in secondary education and Biology and resides in Hibbing. Mike Maleska is a retired taconite miner and labor union president residing in Hibbing.



Winter Lake Ice, LAnderson

"...Don't assume government agencies will step up and protect the environment... They aren't and they won't..."

"Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Impaired Waters list (2024 most recently posted) contains over 6,000 bodies of water that are impaired. Aitkin County residents may find some familiar names among them. Big Sandy: nutrients; Minnewawa: nutrients; Round: mercury in fish tissue. Round Lake is the nearest to the "exploratory" drilling by Kennecott Exploration Company that has been taking place since Sept. 7, 2000. It is now in impaired status due to mercury in the fish and limited consumption of any fish from the lake is recommended..."

"... I contacted the MPCA - their final response to my concerns: they will not comment further on the matter and referred me to the DNR. The DNR decided in September 2025 that an Environmental Assessment Worksheet was not required for the "exploratory" drilling taking place for over 25 years. I requested (and paid for) inspection documents, since the DNR was the signatory on the lease. They are inconsistent and incomplete at best. Usage of unlined ground sump dumps and composite mats allow unobstructed, free access of pollutants into the earth, aquifers, wetlands, lakes and streams..."

Government Promises Made and Broken, Anne Hawkinson, former Round Lake resident,
Aitkin Independent Age, February 18, 2026

www.messagemedia.co/aitkin/opinion/letters/letters-from-readers---2-18-26/article_03d591a5-de63-42f6-8625-a1153a7c2945.html

Talon Delays Economic Feasibility Study Until After EIS

"...we can't understand why Talon Metals refuses to produce an economic feasibility study for their proposed underground nickel mine in Aitkin County until after the scope of environmental review analysis (the EIS) is determined. As recently as August 2025, Talon told us that its feasibility study would be done by the end of 2025. We're still waiting...."

"...there are too many unanswered questions as we approach the scoping part of environmental review...Delaying the Talon feasibility study until after the EIS scope is determined would give us and our neighbors in north central Minnesota even more reason to mistrust Talon's plan and our State regulators...."

""...why would Talon be allowed to move through environmental review toward permitting without first demonstrating that transportation of waste rock and ore, processing and tailings disposal in North Dakota is feasible? No other mine in the United States uses a similar plan..."

Hold Talon Metals Accountable For A Toxic Bait-and-Switch, Joyce Burdick and Kim Randolph, Aitkin Independent Age, Feb. 11, 2026.

https://www.messagemedia.co/aitkin/opinion/letters/letters-from-readers---2-11-26/article_b358fe36-82ad-4863-aa4c-023df26e814c.html

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
- Talon Dumping Toxic Drilling Waste,
- Minnesota Declares Round Lake Impaired
- High Sulfide Mines Create Acid Mine Drainage
- Nickel Not Needed for Future EV Batteries
- Minnesota's Prime Wild Rice Lakes Under Threat,
- Difference Between High Sulfide Mining and Taconite Mining

- Minnesota Regulators Poor Record In Protecting The Environment
- Eagle Mine Environmental Report & Saving Our Meager Nickel Reserves
- Is There Really A Talon Tesla Supply Agreement? (no)
- Rio Tinto: A History of Corruption
- Green Bridge Metals -Canadian proposed sulfide mine near Duluth seeks to acquire battery rich mineral assets
- Copper and The Green Economy
- Prove It First!

We will send this monthly newsletter to keep you informed about this project, to share information and opportunities to act to protect clean water and community health.

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