

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Northeastern States District Office
LLESM03200

Environmental Assessment

NEPA #: DOI-BLM-ES-030-2018-0002-EA

Addition of Terms and Conditions for Renewal of Hardrock Leases, MNES 001352 and MNES 001353

Date:	December 2018
Type of Action:	Hardrock Mineral Lease Renewal
Serial Number:	MNES 001352 and MNES 001353
Location:	Superior National Forest, Lake and St. Louis Counties, Minnesota
Project Acreage:	Approximately 4,864.78 acres
Proponent Address:	380 St. Peter Street, Ste. 370, St. Paul, MN 55102

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below. Projects that are considered reasonably foreseeable future actions are projects that would occur by or in 2023. Projects that would occur after 2023 are highly uncertain and thus do not meet the criteria of being reasonably foreseeable.

Projects that are not ripe for decision but are reasonably foreseeable are included within this analysis. The BLM has analyzed a total of 18 projects (Table 2), with geographic overlap that have the potential to affect the human environment. Resources carried forth for analysis within this EA have been considered. Other resource areas have not been considered as they will have no potential additive effect to the human environment.

Currently, mining in the SNF is not economically feasible, however if a Preference Right by Lease Application (PRLA) project is approved it may become economically feasible. The combination of the current leases, the Lessee's private leases, and the new proposed lease that has been requested (PRLA) would be sufficient for the lessee to construct and operate an economically viable mine. Due to the potential cumulative effect should all of these things occur, the mining plan of operation is included within this cumulative effects analysis.

Mineral Actions

There are multiple mineral actions proposed in the general area of the SNF, as contemplated and allowed by the Forest Service's 2004 Forest Plan. Each action could have an effect on the shared resources of varying degrees. Negative environmental effects to resource areas relevant to this analysis include forest and vegetation removal, loss of wildlife habitat, potential impacts to water quality, additional air emissions, loss of recreational ability within the project footprint, and additional noise to the project area and its surroundings. The future mineral actions will be subject to project specific National Environmental Policy Act analyses, during which the necessary consultations, would be required to disclose and mitigate impacts to fish, wildlife, and cultural resources. Should any wetlands and/or other Waters of the United States be impacted, the appropriate permits would be necessary. Additionally, for any mining, the State must provide approval of any mining plan of operation.

CHAPTER 7 - REFERENCES

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- MPCA. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. 2018. *Annual Air Quality Index Summary Reports*. Accessed on December 12th 2018. <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air/annual-aqi-summary-reports>
- University of Montana. (2007). *The economic role of metal mining in Minnesota: Past, present, and future*. A report prepared for Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy and the Sierra Club. By Thomas Michael Power, Economics Department. Missoula, MT: University of Montana.
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- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. (2018). *Web Soil Survey Mapper*. Accessed December 19th, 2018. <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm>