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**More Rhetoric On U.P. Mine Project**

Supporters of the proposed Kennecott "Eagle" nickel mine in the Upper Peninsula say that the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has taken a positive environmental story out of Wisconsin, flipped it upside-down and is trying to portray it as a negative environmental story in Michigan.

But a NWF spokesperson said it's the mining company that's trying to twist the facts.

The issue deals with the Kennecott company turning a former Wisconsin mine into a nature preserve. The NWF claimed the former site is significantly polluted and the mine shouldn't soak up any pride over that. As an attempt to smear Kennecott's reputation in Michigan, NWF put out a press release giving its spin of the events.

"I would say their (NWF) news release includes a significant amount of misinformation regarding what happened in Wisconsin yesterday," Eagle Mine Project Manager Jon **CHERRY** told *MIRS* this afternoon. "What we saw in Ladysmith is that an area can be mined without causing negative affects on the (nearby) Flambeau River and then be successfully restored.

The story out of Wisconsin on Thursday was that the Flambeau Mining Company is slated to receive a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources certificate stating that 85 percent of a former copper mine south of Ladysmith has been restored to its natural state without environmental harm. It should be noted, however, that environmental groups opposed the certificate of completion agreement.

Flambeau Mining is a subsidiary Kennecott Minerals Co., the same firm that wants to open the Eagle Mine at Yellow Dog Plains in Marquette County. The mine at Ladysmith opened in 1993 and hauled away ore containing copper, gold and silver until 1997, when reclamation began.

The agreement came only after the mining company agreed that roughly 15 percent (32 acres) of the former mining area would not be included for restoration. The news release issued today by the NWF focuses on those 32 acres, arguing that they remain polluted and the Ladysmith mining experience should serve as a warning for Michigan.

"But if your definition of restore is that the water quality has been restored, this site does not meet that standard. The fact is that it's polluted," NWF Attorney Michelle **HALLEY** told *MIRS*.

Meanwhile, mine officials claim the 32 acres in question (basically the open pit area of the former mine) were not included because Ladysmith officials

want to convert it to an industrial park area. They claim the town requested that it be allowed this "alternate use" in order to utilize the mine buildings already on the site, which also includes a trailhead and parking for the adjacent equestrian trails. The mining company also notes that the WDNR operates a facility on a portion of the 32 acres.

"They may have a facility on the site, but I'll guarantee you that they're not drinking water from the site," Halley said, pointing out that it's not uncommon for a local community to utilize the "spoiled" portion of a project, like the Flambeau mine for something like an industrial park.

But Eagle Mine supporters argue that the Flambeau Mine was a harbinger of positive expectations for the Eagle Mine Project in Michigan. A judge ordered that the Flambeau mining company receive the highest possible amount of the \$11 million bond it was required to post. Cherry said that is proof the site was restored.

The NWF disagreed, stating in the news release, "They have publicly admitted through their actions that the Flambeau Mine is polluting. Kennecott has broken its promise to Wisconsin's citizens not to pollute. The more citizens learn, the riskier Kennecott's proposed Eagle Mine in Michigan looks."

#### *Facts about the two mines*

When it opened in 1993 the Flambeau Mine was the first metallic mine to open in Wisconsin in decades. The site attracted hundreds of protesters during various demonstrations to oppose it, warning it would pollute the Flambeau River, which apparently did not happen.

During its five years of operation, the mine produced 181,000 tons of the metals valued at more than \$500 million. Wisconsin netted about \$14 million from a mining tax. The WDNR issued no citations for violations of pollution standards at the mine.

If it opens, the \$150 million Kennecott Eagle Mine is expected to produce about 250 million to 300 million pounds of nickel and 200 million pounds of copper over its life. It is estimated that the mine would create approximately 120 full-time jobs and more than 350 indirect jobs needed to support mine activities.

The Eagle Mine would be a small underground mine; the ore deposit is about six acres. Approximately 90 acres of the 1,600 U.P. acres either owned or leased by Kennecott will be used for surface operations.

Eagle would be the only primary nickel mine in the U.S., and is expected to produce an estimated 250-300 million pounds of nickel. Nickel and copper today are among the most highly demanded metals, used by a wide array of industries.