

Mineland Reclamation: Restoring Native Vegetation



- The city of Virginia and United Taconite restored the native vegetation between the city and the active mining operation. Two large barrier berms were planted with a mix of conifer trees including white spruce, white pine, red pine and jack pine.
- Successful and robust vegetation growth on reclamation sites can be challenging because the surface may not be conducive to plant growth. Adequate water and nutrient-rich soil are needed for long-term growth. The nutrients of the surface were amended to create optimal growing conditions. University of Minnesota soil testing lab analyzed the surface growing medium for nutrient contents, in which the reclamation design team made recommendations for amendments to enhance plant establishment and growth. A pre-made biochar product and compost were added to the soil for nutrient additions and surface moisture retention.
- Under Minnesota state law, vegetation cover must reach 90% within three years of a mining operation ceasing and no longer disturbing the surface.
- The project elevated the community's visual aesthetics and provided a sound and safety barrier. Residents and tourists now have access to views of unique topography and naturalized landscapes as they travel the Iron Range's main Highway 53 thoroughfare.
- The project showcases how mining-impacted land is cared for in the region through partnerships between the mining industry, local communities and the state of Minnesota.

Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation provides funding to assist with highly visible development and restoration of mining-impacted lands in northeastern Minnesota.