

Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board

Report on Key Areas of Focus and Activity for June 14, 2023 Mineland Vision Partnership Meeting

Significant recent areas of focus and activity for the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board include:

1. WMMPB sought legislative support for three priority areas: (a) state funding to support DNR planning and construction to address the problem of rapidly rising waters in the Canisteo and Arcturus-Hill Annex open pit mine complexes, where uncontrolled outflow is predicted to occur as waters continue to rise with no current natural outlet for either of those pit groups and with the situation requiring revisions due to the 2022 discovery of zebra mussels; (b) funding and schedule certainty for completion of the remaining eight miles of the cross range expressway, for which some initial studies are already underway due to 2021 legislation; and (c) ensuring policy stability for continued operation and maintenance of the Hill Annex Mine State Park until such time as active mining resumes there. Items (a) and (b) both received substantial support by the close of the legislative session and the 2021-funded first phase study regarding the remaining two lane portion of the cross range expressway is being completed by MN DOT.
2. WMMPB is very interested in developments related to mining projects, especially in the western Mesabi area with its substantial iron-bearing resources, including MagIron, the future course for the Mesabi Metallics project and site, direct reduction grade pellets at Keewatin Taconite, and other projects and possibilities.
3. WMMPB continues efforts to protect the mineral resources of the western Mesabi area so they are available for future mining development. It also pursues a more timely role for local government units in issues having to do with leasing, permitting, operation, and post mining land use, and in development and use of the mineral resources of northeastern Minnesota including the western Mesabi regarding critical and strategic minerals. Its efforts include review of the Iron Mining Overlay District of the Itasca County Zoning Ordinance and its administration including coordination with municipalities and townships. It also includes educating local government units, their staff, and others regarding important aspects of the mining industry which can be important considerations in local land use planning and other decision-making. This is also considered a priority for 2023.