



**MEMBERSHIP MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wednesday, June 13, 2024 (9:30 AM – 12:00 PM)**  
1003 Discovery Drive | Chisholm, MN 55719  
And via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88401325345>

## MEETING OBJECTIVE

**VISION | Shaping evolving landscapes for future generations.**

**MISSION | A regional collaboration that invests in our diverse community by:**

- Developing opportunities for dynamic minescapes,
- Preserving lands to sustain current and future mining, and
- Providing resources and education

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Optimizing Organization & Communications
2. Investing in Mineland Communities
3. Enhancing Stakeholder Partnerships
4. Educating Partners & the Public

**Check out the updated website: [www.mvpmn.org](http://www.mvpmn.org)**

## MEETING SUMMARY

- Welcome & Introductions
- Presentation: Mesabi Metallics Update
- Presentation: Tamarack Nickel Project Update
- Presentation: Northern MN Historical Mine Interactive Project Update
- Presentation: Hull Rust Mine View – Past, Present, and Future
- Presentation: Legislative Overview
- Adjourn

## WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

### Welcome & Introductions

Elissa Hansen & Caitlin Vander Wal, Facilitators

MVP Facilitator Elissa Hansen welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. She began by briefly reviewing the MVP vision, mission, and meeting agenda. Hansen then led the group in a round of introductions.

## PRESENTATION

### Mesabi Metallica Update

Larry Sutherland, Mesabi Metallica

Next, Larry Sutherland, President and Chief Operating Officer with Mesabi Metallica provided a project update and brief introduction of himself. Within his career, he has been a union millwright at a former taconite facility which sat within the Butler Corridor where Mesabi Metallica exists. He also managed several steel facilities in Indiana, California, and Minnesota amongst other locations which included the management of raw materials to finished steel.

The Mesabi Iron Range geological formation of taconite is about 110 miles long and goes from the North Shore to Grand Rapids area. This formation is responsible for the creation of many jobs within Northern Minnesota. The Butler Corridor where Mesabi Metallica exists is on the west side of this formation. Their project consists of constructing a 7 million metric ton-a-year pelletizing facility. Currently, construction is moving forward and the different facilities are at different stages of completion with the main focus. The infrastructure is all in place including water, electricity, natural gas, and rail connection. Because of their access to rail, they can compete with supply chain routes with BNSF or Canadian National. They are currently doing a permit to mine amendment due to the loss of state mineral leases. They are navigating their construction ramp up around that amendment.

Sutherland showed the site layout and described the different buildings present on the site. They are considered a zero-discharge facility and will be monitoring the control of water to ensure that it is not escaping. Normally the concentrator and the agglomerator are situated near each other; however, they are further apart at their facility to be more environmentally friendly. Once operational, this facility will be one of the cleanest in Minnesota, if not North America, because of their air pollution control design. Since 2023, they have installed 2,500 cubic yards of concrete, 5,300 metric tons of structural steel, 2,000 ft of electrical cable, and almost 193,000 square feet of sheeting.

The Iron Range has not had a new taconite mine since 1977. This facility will attract job seekers who may want employment at this facility. For over 130 years, iron units have been sent out of state to produce steel. They would like this employment to be a benefit to Minnesota by producing steel locally. It is their vision to do this with Green Steel which would create huge social and economic benefits. Since 2020, they have expensed almost \$70 million. Once operational, they anticipate \$28 million being spent on taconite and occupation taxes. Since late 2023, they have contributed \$335,000 to the local communities including Nashwauk City, MN North Colleges, Buck Lake Improvement Club, and others.

The taconite facility has had a \$1.7 billion investment to date and will be a total investment of about \$2.5 billion. This is one of the largest capital investments in the history of Minnesota. The taconite facility alone would create approximately 450 jobs and does not include USW jobs on site and trade union workers.

The older process of creating finished steel produces two tons of carbon per ton of liquid steel. If using green hydrogen to produce green steel, it drives the carbon footprint down to 0.3 tons of carbon per ton of liquid steel and is more environmentally friendly. They hope to produce steel on the Iron Range instead of only pellets because of the revenue spread for taxation benefits. Producing green steel could decarbonize the steel industry, have Minnesota at the cutting-edge of green steel nationally, and have Minnesotans benefit.

The Inflation Reduction Act included tax credits for green energy and green steel. They are discussing with the Department of Energy the potential of utilizing tax credits for the Iron Range to produce green steel. Some parties are concerned that they will compete and replace current companies. Based upon imports, there is room for their green steel within the market without taking away from already established facilities. They continue to push forward to complete the green steel plan with the support of many legislators on the Range and to seek state support for permit amendments due to the termination of state leases.

Sutherland entertained questions from the group.

## PRESENTATION

## **Tamarack Nickel Project Update**

Jessica Johnson, Talon Metals

Talon Metals Director of Government and Community Relations Jessica Johnson then gave an update on the company's Tamarack Nickel Project. See slides for further details.

Their team is focused on exploring, discovering, and developing mineral resources in Minnesota including high-grade nickel and copper. They have been developing their team to be able to see the project all the way through which now includes around 100 employees. About 80% of the team is based in Minnesota and has been the result of efforts in hiring locally. They operate in Minnesota but have started to expand in Michigan and North Dakota. They have key partnerships developed with Tesla, United Steel Workers, and Rio Tinto. Talon is the majority holder on the project with 51% ownership and is working to own up to 60%. They have received government funding through the Department of Energy for their work in North Dakota and from the Department of Defense for mineral exploration activities in Minnesota and Michigan.

The United States has been looking to secure more domestic supply chains for critical minerals without relying on international sources. Currently the top countries producing high-grade nickel include Russia, Canada, Australia, and China. Currently, they are exploring the "plumbing of an ancient volcano" in Tamarack essentially through mineral exploration for high grade nickel and copper. To be considered a high-grade nickel, it must be 1%. In comparison, Tamarack is considered a very high grade with intercepts from 9% to 12%.

Through funding through the Department of Defense, they received 20.6 million dollars for exploration. This could be used for purchasing more equipment, hiring more staff, or for other needs related to exploration. They will continue to move forward with this support. Johnson shared a map showing where they have proposed the underground mine near Tamarack, Minnesota, and where their proposed surface facilities. They anticipate the total footprint to be 80 acres. They began their exploration in Michigan in June and have one drill rig there currently. Prior to drilling, they had a community open house in Michigan to allow community members to meet the team and build transparency.

Their second big focus is their underground mine plan. Last June of 2023, they submitted their environmental assessment worksheet for the underground mine design. Their goal is to start construction in 2027. This would have a 7-10 year mine life. They estimate will have about 300 employees during full production compared to the 100 currently. In the environmental review process, they have received two rounds of comments from state agencies and tribal governments and tribal organizations. They are currently developing their responses to these comments and want to take time to consider their comments within the design before moving forward with the EIS. They are trying to respond to four key areas or themes in the process: reduced land disturbance, reduced wetlands impacts, avoidance of contact water, and avoidance of exposure of the sulfide bearing ore to the atmosphere.

For their work in North Dakota, they received \$114.8 million from the Department of Energy to support the battery minerals processing facility. They are working on the final stages of securing an industrial site in Mercer County, North Dakota. They hope to kick off the review process this summer and progress the review work.

Outside of this work, they are looking at the different ways to utilize the resources being mined out of the ground with the least amount of waste. They have partnered with national labs and companies who are also doing this research to explore these possibilities to get full utilization from the resources.

Johnson fielded comments and questions from meeting participants following the presentation.

## **P R E S E N T A T I O N**

### **Northern MN Historical Mine Interactive Project Update**

Sarah Carling, Community and Economic Development Associates

Community and Economic Development Associates (CEDA) Northeast Regional Director Sarah Carling shared about the Northern MN Historical Mine Interactive Project. See slides for further details.

CEDA is headquartered near Rochester, Minnesota and has had a contract with Itasca County doing community development work since 2019. The county commission identified seven communities for them to work with and brainstorm ideas. Throughout these conversations, they learned that these communities felt that people did not have a reason to stop and visit. Identified untapped resources included mine pits and strong historical narratives. As a result, they have been trying to find a way to link the communities together and have a positive economic impact that encourages people to visit these different communities. Each has unique attributes that can be explored and showcased. Initially they had 10 communities identified and now have almost 40 such as Crosby, Grand Rapids, Chisholm, and many more. Partners for their project include Visit Grand Rapids, IRRR, ARDC, Itasca County Historical Society, Visit Grand Rapids, and others. The project today now has written historical narratives and collected historical images and videos. These were gathered to create an interactive map. The interactive map is in the final stages with a release date of Fall, 2024.

Carling shared the link of the rough draft of the interactive map. The website has interactive tabs to help explore cities within the range. All of the videos and images have been shared with the communities to assist with their marketing. Many of their websites and marketing are outdated because of the lack of funding. By sharing these, they are helping the communities leverage this information to update their own websites and social media. Once this website is final, they hope to work together to promote the interactive map to drive people to the communities on the range.

After completing the interactive map, they will need to create interpretive signs for each of the communities. These signs will have similar information about the historical narratives with QR codes to this information. Carling shared an image of one of the interpretive signs. They hope to make these movable signs to accommodate the flexibility needed for future mining in the communities without losing the established work. Finally, they are looking for a natural, permanent owner for the project and are looking for suggestions for someone to take it over long term.

Participants did not pose any questions after the presentation, although Carling welcomes feedback and constructive thoughts and suggestions.

## P R E S E N T A T I O N

### **Hull Rust Mine View – Past, Present, and Future**

Nick Arola, City of Hibbing

Director of City Services for the City of Hibbing Nick Arola shared about the Hull Rust Mine View project. See slides for some information.

The Hull Rust Mine View is the world's largest open pit mine and is designated as a historic landmark which the City of Hibbing operates seasonally. They conservatively estimate it receives 25,000 visitors a year and has been coined the Grand Canyon of the North. It covers roughly 5,000 acres and is 8 miles wide. As it attracts so many people from around the world, they hope to leverage this asset and expand upon local tourism.

The original mine view was established in the 1990s by the City of Hibbing and the Hibbing Historical Society to educate the public on mining in the community and the region as well as its global impact. The relocation to the mine view started back in 2017 and was prompted by Hibbing Taconite expanding its mine pit. With the expansion of operations, there was a land swap completed to be able to move the mine view to a new location. To move this project forward, they developed partnerships with IRRR, the Blandin Foundation, the Ben Owens Foundation, St Louis County and others to develop it to where it is today. Arola shared pictures of the location of the old and new mine view locations in 2017 and 2023.

They are nearing completion of the project. One building, roughly 900 square feet, is dedicated as their maps and geology space. The main building is about 2300 square feet and will serve as the visitor center area including restrooms and

exhibition space. These will have a deck which shoots over the edge of the pit to get views, photographs, and watch operations below.

The final step they have is to finish the interior exhibition space which still has a funding gap. They will have temporary exhibition items when they do open until finalized. They hope to have a more enhanced educational component from what they have had in the past. They are making a parking lot with ADA accessibility and will connect water and sewer in the Fall of 2024.

Participants did not pose any questions after the presentation, although Arola welcomes questions.

## P R E S E N T A T I O N

### Legislative Overview

Joe Henderson, MnDNR

In the final scheduled presentation of the day, Joe Henderson, MNDNR, shared an update about the legislative session. See slides for further information.

It was a very busy legislative session. Recently ,exploration and discovery of world class deposits of hydrogen and helium in Lake County highlighted the lack of gas rules. As a result of conversations and legislation came the ability to explore product of gases and requires the DNR to do three things. First, they must develop the structure for leasing and exploration of these gases. Second, they have to establish a technical advisory team including specific departments to establish legislation for a temporary permit. This needs to be provided to the legislature by January of 2025. This would allow the DNR and other agencies to permit the exploration and production of gas as early as they can get permits out following enactment of that legislation. Finally, they have to begin rule making for the regulation structure for the same extraction and production of gas. They have two years to have a rule making process done. While they are working on this, no commercial production or extraction can occur until the DNR can issue the permit.

During the US Supreme Court Tyler versus Hennepin, they ruled Hennepin County could not keep the proceeds from the sale of property it had seized because of delinquent tax. They could only keep the amount to pay back the tax bill and related fees but required the remaining amount to be returned to the owner. Because of this, Minnesota had to change their laws to be constitutional. Next, they had a class action lawsuit from other Minnesotans for similar takings to Tyler which was settled for \$109 million for both surface and mineral rights. Moving forward, properties must be auctioned and excess profits must be returned to the owner. Because this includes mineral rights, a whole new program was created to assess these mineral values and what goes back to the original owner.

Final updates included:

- Legislation for the Drill Core Library for the DNR was a priority for the DNR but there was no bonding bill. With the lack of a bonding bill, it was not able to move forward. They will need to explore how they will find funding for this or wait for further legislation.
- They also proposed a change to the inflation in the algorithm for nonferrous royalties. There had not been an adjustment since 1995. They feel that this should be changed and will be launching a rulemaking effort to adjust this rule through a public and transparent process.
- Minerals Coordination Committee has been extended for seven years.
- The Hill Annex Mine State Park has been closed. It has been transitioned back to mining which was intended when it was created.
- They received money for legal funds to help defend itself in litigation that continues to come against permit decisions.

Henderson entertained questions from the group.

## A D J O U R N

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 PM. Save the date for Late October/early November, for the next MVP Partnership meeting.



Mineland Vision  
Partnership thanks its  
financial contributors!