

## **Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board**

### **Key Activities and Issues Report for September 27, 2017 Laurentian Vision Partners Meeting**

#### **Improvements to Highway 169:**

Construction work nears completion upgrading to 4 lanes 1.5 miles of current 2 lane highway east and west of Taconite, Minnesota. WMMPB is now involved in planning efforts including possible alignment changes to upgrade the remaining 9 miles of two lane highway 169 to four lanes to complete the Cross Range Expressway.

#### **Captive Rail:**

WMMPB has been actively involved in the Regional Rail Initiative which has an objective of improving competitive freight rail options across the Mesabi Range. Current efforts have focused on West Range Connector studies which are progressing.

#### **Hill Annex Mine State Park:**

Major reductions and the renewed possibility of park shut-down by MN DNR Parks and Trails Division resulted in accelerated WMMPB activity to counter that possibility. WMMPB members view the park as having potential to become a tourist destination site and providing important opportunities for mineral-related history and education while preserving accessibility to its substantial iron ore resources for future mining. State and local government units are working together to develop an alternative long term plan for the park.

#### **Continue mining tours:**

WMMPB envisions another field tour next summer to educate local government officials and employees, as well as the general public, about the importance of the mining industry and other significant activities in the local economy. These field trips typically include tours of operating mines and plants, mineral exploration and development projects, and businesses and activities related to mining in this region even if not themselves directly involved in mining.

#### **Comprehensive planning:**

WMMPB continues its efforts to develop and coordinate comprehensive planning and zoning rules and ordinances involving and for its members.

#### **Industry Developments:**

People are carefully watching Western Mesabi mining industry developments. Resumption of operations at Keetac was a good development and people are watching developments with regard to reactivation of the former Magnetation facilities and new developments on the former Butler site.

**Financial issues:** Fiscal disparities inequities and loss of local tax income due to state granting of conservation easements are financial issues needing to be addressed as priorities.

**Rising pit water:** Rising water in both the Canisteo and the Arcturus to Hill Annex groups of idle open pit mines is raising concerns and addressing them has become a WMMPB priority again.