

THE MINING Journal

Editorial: Kennecott research

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In the late 1990s the United States Geological Survey published “Potential for New Nickel-Copper Sulfide Deposits in the Lake Superior Region.” The article tells us that scientists from the USGS have been working in cooperation with colleagues from the state geological surveys and universities to evaluate potential for mineral resources for the nation.

Who is the state geological survey? It’s located in the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and consists of chief geologist Hal Fitch, geologist Steve Wilson and geologist from Gwinn, Joe Maki. Who is the university working in cooperation? Michigan Technological University and its mining and geology departments.

The public input sessions on the permit for the Kennecott nickel-copper mine are available on disc using the Freedom of Information Act, and comments from the DEQ by Dr. Allan M. Johnson, mining/geological consultant and professor emeritus at Michigan Tech indicate that Kennecott didn’t even discover the ore body they call Eagle Project.

Dr. Johnson states he was a part of a research unit at the former Institute of Mineral Research at MTU in the 1970s, and they undertook the original core drilling at the discovery outcrop and also did the subsequent chemical analysis at MTU’s lab.

Taxpayer monies at the federal and state levels are subsidizing sulfide mining so that a mining corporation can come into Michigan, be basically told where to drill and develop the ore body — making huge profits despite local opposition.

It seems reform of the 1872 mining law, currently being attempted again, is not the only reform we need. Having severed mineral rights from your surface rights in 2007 still is archaic. Tax-depletion allowances, cheaper shipping rates, cheaper diesel fuel rates are but a few of the necessities on this dinosaur.

For Kennecott lobbyists to imply that the Fifth Constitutional Amendment will be used in the form of “takings” legislation against the State of Michigan if a mining permit is not issued is nothing short of a bully technique, especially since Kennecott does not own any of this nickel-copper ore body. They are leasing only. Takings strategy should only be allowed when a highway has to go through someone’s house, not by a foreign corporation on public land.

Chuck Glossenger

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