

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact: Nick Choate**

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**(202) 225-4735; (202) 374-4779**

**STUPAK STATEMENT ON DEQ APPROVAL OF KENNECOTT MINE**

**WASHINGTON** – The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) announced Friday the final approval of permits for a sulfide mine northwest of Marquette to be operated by Kennecott Minerals Company, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto. The following statement may be attributed to Congressman Bart Stupak (D-Menominee):

"I am disappointed DEQ has decided to approve permits for Kennecott's sulfide mine in northwest Marquette County along the Yellow Dog River. Having had time to thoroughly review the information, there are a number of concerns I have which still need to be addressed.

"I am not opposed to mining. I remain very supportive of mining in the U.P. However, these permits represent the first time the state is allowing sulfide mining. State officials must take their time and make sure sulfide mining is safe. It is critical that comprehensive independent studies be completed before additional permits are issued. Once permitted, I am fearful as many as six additional sulfide mines will be allowed to operate on the shores of the Great Lakes, jeopardizing the world's largest body of fresh water.

"DEQ has allowed their permits without requiring an Environmental Impact Statement to be completed. I also believe comprehensive baseline hydrological and geological studies should be conducted by an independent third party. While DEQ has, as I have advocated, required Kennecott to provide a financial assurance bond, I remain concerned that the negotiated agreement does not provide enough funding and does not cover a long-enough period to address potential contamination. Environmental damages often do not surface until years after a mine is out of operation and can be costly for local and state governments to clean up. Contaminated sites cost significantly more to clean-up than the \$17 million set aside for this project. With the seepage of kiln dust into Lake Michigan at Bay Harbor, CMS estimates \$93 million will be needed to abate the environmental damage, and the ground water leakage has not yet stopped. We must make sure the state and local community won't be left with an expensive clean-up years down the road.

"I also have significant concerns, given the state of Michigan's budgetary situation, that DEQ will not have adequate resources to ensure Kennecott is complying with all safety and environmental standards that it has promised to meet. The proposed sulfide mine will require well-trained inspectors to enforce air and water pollution control standards established in the permits. The Kennecott Company, rather than the taxpayers, should be responsible for providing the state with the funding needed for the inspectors.

"The Kennecott Company has yet to prove the sulfide mine will not degrade the community, watershed, air quality or ecology of the area. While the DEQ permits have been approved, additional permits are required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. I will continue to urge EPA and DNR to thoroughly review this proposed sulfide mine."

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