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## True costs of mining need to be understood

By Letter to the editor from Fern Arpi- Duluth, Minn.

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Sulfide mining proponents are stating that Minnesota has strict environmental laws. This could have been the case if the Legislature had paid attention to the recommendations of the \$4.2 million Copper Nickel Study, released in 1979. The purpose of the study was to get good laws on the books when mining was not imminent. The price of copper dropped; AMAX pulled out; the Legislature did nothing.

Environmentalists were remiss in not pushing for sound legislation at that time.

Several facts should be kept in mind. Sulfide or non-ferrous mining poses greater threats to the environment than does iron mining. With our abundance of water sulfide mining is different here than in Arizona or Australia. The St. Louis River already has such a high mercury content that it is temporarily excluded from statewide efforts to reduce mercury. Some of this has to come from local sources.

The interconnecting system of rivers and lakes in the Boundary Waters and in Quetico Provincial Park is found nowhere else in the world and deserves protection. In addition, fourteen state parks in northeastern Minnesota, Voyageurs National Park, the Wolf Center, and the Bear Center attract a host of visitors that will not come to northern Minnesota if there are fish advisories or if we have warmer summers and winters without snow due to climate changes aggravated by sulfide mining.

Citizens need to know the difference between sound science and junk science submitted in reams of documents by the sulfide mining companies. The science of Rachel Carson was sound as is that of biologists and ecologists working for state and federal agencies, educational institutions, tribal and non-profit groups. Economic analyses must produce accurate figures on income from jobs and tax revenues, expenditures for needed housing, schools, roads, medical and other services, costs of perpetual treatment of waters plus damages to wetlands, threats to endangered species, and health effects so that sound choices can be made about a permit to mine.

Critical thinking involves use of both parts of our brains. Love of money should not outweigh love for Mother Earth and our life support systems.