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Proposed Decision on Kennecott Mining Application Announced

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Agency: Environmental Quality

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The Department of Environmental Quality announced today a proposed decision to approve a series of permits to the Kennecott Eagle Minerals Company to conduct sulfide mining operations at the proposed Eagle Project Mine. The proposed decision follows a period of extensive review by the DEQ of Kennecott's application, supporting information, and public comment.

The Eagle Project Mine proposes to produce nickel, copper, and other metals from a small but rich metal sulfide deposit located about 25 miles northwest of Marquette. Kennecott would use underground mining methods that are designed to avoid impacts to the nearby Salmon Trout River or adjacent lands. The entrance to the mine, as well as the associated surface facilities, would be at a remote upland location, and the ore would be transported by truck and rail to a processing site in Ontario. Kennecott proposes to backfill the mined-out areas with waste rock, gravel, and cement and reclaim the entire area to its original condition at the conclusion of mining.

The proposed mining project is the first to be subject to Michigan's new Nonferrous Metallic Mineral Mining rules that were enacted in December 2004. The rules, among the most stringent in the nation, were drafted by a multi-stakeholder work group led by the DEQ in response to concerns over potential environmental impacts from mining of metallic sulfide ores.

Michigan's mining law sets strict and comprehensive requirements for all aspects of the mining operation including storage, treatment, and disposal of ore, waste rock, and other materials. The permitting process under the law requires an environmental impact assessment, a detailed mining and reclamation plan, and a contingency plan. In addition the law requires financial assurance to cover remediation and reclamation costs, reporting of accidents and releases, post-closing, and annual status reports. At the end of a mine's life, the site and surrounding area would have to be reclaimed to establish a self-sustaining ecosystem that

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