

**The  
Annual Report  
of the  
Inspector of Mines**



*Photo by Paul Pluskwik*

**2019**

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**ANNUAL REPORT**  
of the  
**INSPECTOR OF MINES**  
St. Louis County, Minnesota

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**2019**  
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**THE ST. LOUIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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District 2 ..... Patrick Boyle, Duluth, Minnesota  
District 3 ..... Beth Olson, Duluth, Minnesota  
District 4 ..... Paul McDonald, Ely, Minnesota  
District 5 ..... Keith Musolf, Duluth, Minnesota  
District 6 ..... Keith Nelson, Virginia, Minnesota  
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District 2 ..... Terry Snyder  
District 3 ..... Leo Trunt  
District 4 ..... Burl Ives  
District 5 ..... Ben DeNucci  
Jeff Walker ..... Itasca County Auditor  
Vic Williams ..... Itasca County Sheriff, Itasca County Mine Inspector

February 25, 2020

**THE HONORABLE BOARDS OF COMMISSIONERS**

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY  
COURT HOUSE  
DULUTH, MN 55802-1202**

**ITASCA COUNTY  
COURT HOUSE  
GRAND RAPIDS, MN 55744**

Dear Chairs Jugovich, DeNucci and Commissioners:

The Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines for 2019 is herewith submitted.

Mining activity for 2019 showed a strong production schedule for both St. Louis and Itasca Counties. A total of 38,665,148 tons of natural ore and taconite were shipped from area operations compared to 40,986,054 in 2018. Mining related employment increased and was reported at 4,105 individuals. This was an increase of 151 employees compared to the 3,954 reported in 2018. These positive numbers mark three consecutive years of steady production. The total work hours reported for area mining operations was 8,517,320 for the year.

The number of active mining operations in the area during 2019 remained at six, these include: ArcelorMittal Minorca, Hibbing Taconite, Keetac, Minntac, Northshore, and United Taconite. All six of these facilities reported 12 months in operation during the year.

Progress was made by several area operations toward the objective of growth during the coming years. These include PolyMet, who continued efforts to obtain the final mine permits associated with the NorthMet project (copper/nickel/precious metal mining) and Twin Metals, who submitted their formal mine plan of operation this year and continued to move forward with efforts directed toward their semi-precious metal mining project near Ely.

2019 was marked with the loss of industry and mine safety advocate, former State Representative and County Commissioner Tommy Rukavina. Also of significance was the opening of the new mine view by the City of Hibbing, which showcases area mining operations and provides a public viewing opportunity.

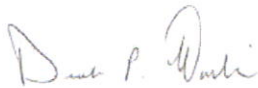
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During 2019, area mining operations reported a total of 7 lost time or serious accidents. This is a significant decrease in comparison to the 14 experienced in 2018. Unfortunately, one fatality was reported during the year. This tragic incident occurred at the Arcelormittal Minorca Mine on November 5, 2019 and points to the importance of our shared commitment to the safety of all those who work in the mining industry.

St. Louis County Mine Inspectors successfully completed all required inspections of area operations mandated by Minnesota State Law Chapter 180, Section 180.03 during 2019.

Acknowledgement and appreciation is extended to both Labor and Management for their continued interest, efforts and cooperation in the field of Safety and Health throughout the mines and plants in St. Louis and Itasca counties.

Respectfully submitted,



Derek P. Harbin  
Inspector of Mines  
St. Louis County



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