

# THE MYTH OF “CLEAN” SULFIDE MINING

FEW THINGS ARE GUARANTEED IN LIFE: DEATH, TAXES, IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT COPPER-SULFIDE MINING NEAR THE BOUNDARY WATERS, ACID MINE DRAINAGE.



Sulfide ore mining involves the extraction of metals from ore bodies that contain sulfide minerals.

The mining process involves crushing the ore, using various chemical agents to extract the trace amounts of metals, then disposing the waste rock and in mine tailings.

Just like iron rusts when exposed to oxygen or water, sulfide-bearing ores produces sulfuric acid, which generates acid mine drainage.

So, when a mine crushes tens of thousands of tons of sulfide bearing rock, it naturally creates a dangerous amount of acid mine drainage that inevitably pollutes the surrounding water.

Pollution is part of the process. It's part of doing business.

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FIRST!**

# A PERFECT RECORD OF POLLUTION

Though sulfide mining is inherently polluting, mining companies and their allies have made unsubstantiated claims that at least eight mines have operated without causing pollution.

Ironically, the mines they point to as “clean mines” all have extensive records of environmental contamination. A closer look reveals these false claims are more fantasy than fact.

- The Justice Department brought a civil action against Bagdad mine for discharging contaminated water and violating the Clean Water Act. The mining company was fined \$760,000.
- After closure, the pit lake water at the former Sacaton (now called Cactus) mine has been acidic in the range pH 3.8 – 4.1.
- The pit lake water at the Cullaton Lake mine has shown excessive acid levels that has seeped toward natural water bodies, violating Canadian Water Quality Guidelines.
- As recently as 2019, the still-operating Eagle mine has violated EPA drinking water guidelines in groundwater downstream from the mine.
- After closure of the Flambeau mine, the copper concentration in Stream C, which crosses the mine site before it joins with the Flambeau River, has been so high that the stream is nearly devoid of life and has been placed on the EPA list of Impaired Waters.
- Although the closure of the Flambeau mine has been widely touted as a success story by the mining industry, the Certificate of Completion of Reclamation does not state there has been no environmental contamination.
- Contaminated runoff from the Raglan mine has been startlingly high.
- Successive closure plans at the McLaughlin mine have proven unworkable as the water quality in the pit lake and tailings pond are so volatile and pose such a danger of spillage that perpetual maintenance may be required.
- The Rainy River mine was fined \$187,500 for discharging ammonia, and another \$100,000 for non-compliance with permits that led to a dam failure.
- The mine effluent discharge from the Stillwater mine has exceeded standards for iron, selenium and total suspended solids, with violations of the Clean Water Act identified every quarter since 2019 until the present.



**FRIENDS OF THE  
BOUNDARY  
WATERS**

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