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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and Allies Call on Minnesota Officials to Prioritize Clean Water Over Nickel Mining**

*Water Over Nickel initiative addresses complexity of clean water crisis and green energy needs in a bid to protect water, land, cultural traditions, and communities from damaging nickel mining practices in Minnesota*

March 14, 2023 – ST. PAUL, MINN. -- The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe today announced the launch of [Water Over Nickel](#), an initiative to protect Minnesota’s water, land, people, and cultural traditions from the negative impacts of nickel mining. National and local allies and experts joined the Band for today’s announcement, including [Earthjustice](#) and the [Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy](#) (MCEA).

Water Over Nickel will raise collective awareness of the risks associated with the Tamarack Mine, a nickel mine proposed by Talon Metals Corp. The proposed mine is located just 1.3 miles from the homes of Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community members at Round Lake, and near cultural sites, including Rice Lake and Sandy Lake. The surrounding watershed flows into the Mississippi River and St. Croix watersheds, putting critical downstream drinking water sources and natural habitats at risk.

“Nationally and globally, we are facing a clean water crisis caused by drought, pollution, infrastructure decline, and overconsumption,” said Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Commissioner of Natural Resources Kelly Applegate. “Minnesota is blessed with abundant clean water resources, and they are not to be taken for granted. While the Mile Lacs Band of Ojibwe is concerned about the threat of climate change and determined to find solutions to slow its impact on our environment, in the case of the proposed Tamarack Mine we are asking our leaders and regulators to prioritize clean water over nickel.”

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies metal mining, such as the nickel mining process in the proposed Tamarack Mine, [as the most toxic industry in America](#). Talon Metals claims that the nickel sourced from its mine will be used in electric vehicle batteries. Talon Metals has yet to provide the public with details to support its claims that it will engage in responsible mining practices.

“The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe believes that advancements in green technology are critical to protecting our planet from the effects of climate change,” said Applegate. “At the same time, we must ensure that these advancements do not endanger our natural environment or indigenous

communities. We are honored to have allies like MCEA and Earthjustice join us in the Water Over Nickel initiative. The willingness of our allies – and organizations like Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes (MAST) and Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC), who have signed resolutions voicing concerns about the proposed Tamarack Mine – to join us in this issue tells us that protecting clean water is an urgent and shared concern. We are the caretakers of a fragile ecosystem that is the heart of our culture. It is not for sale. We are not for sale.”

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe introduced Water Over Nickel at a public event in St. Paul, Minnesota on Tuesday, March 14. The event opened with an invocation from tribal elder Joe Nayquonabe and a drum group. Mille Lacs Band Chief Executive / Chairwoman Melanie Benjamin addressed supporters and Minnesota officials in attendance. Other featured speakers included Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) Environmental Specialist Esteban Chiriboga, MCEA CEO Kathryn Hoffman, and environmental scientist Amy Myrbo.

“Historically, mining laws have offered almost no protection from the destruction of iconic spaces and sacred lands, or from the harmful health effects in frontline communities,” said Earthjustice Managing Attorney of the Tribal Partnerships Program Gussie Lord. “We have to transition to a clean energy economy as quickly as possible, and we have to do it without repeating the same mistakes that led to this crisis. We stand with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe in their concern regarding this nickel mine and the threats it poses to the clean waters and critical habitats of Minnesota.”

*Mille Lacs Band leaders and Water Over Nickel allies are available for interviews upon request. Event footage, photos and logos can be provided for media use. Additional information about Water Over Nickel and the risks associated with the proposed Tamarack Mine can be found at [www.waterovernickel.com](http://www.waterovernickel.com) and on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).*

## **About Water Over Nickel**

Water Over Nickel is an initiative by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and allied organizations to protect Minnesota’s people, natural resources, and cultural sites from the negative impacts of nickel mining. The initiative’s efforts are grounded in a commitment to preserve Minnesota’s natural environment and water resources for generations to come.

Learn more about Water Over Nickel at [www.waterovernickel.com](http://www.waterovernickel.com).