

AVAILABILITY OF LAND

In the State of Michigan and Minnesota, iron mining operations to date have affected a very small part of the total acreage in those States. The Secretary of Interior, in his report "Surface Mining and Our Environment," shows on page 110 that 2,200 acres in Michigan and 67,700 acres in Minnesota have been disturbed by iron ore mining.

In relation to the 37,300,000 acres in Michigan there has only been 0.006 percent of the total area of the State involved in iron ore surface mining, and of Minnesota's 53,800,000 acres, only 0.12 percent has been affected.

The report "Surface Mining and Our Environment" indicates that the annual increment of acreage involved in mining metallic minerals is not known exactly but that it can be calculated roughly as 8,000 acres annually. Iron ore is only part of the metallic minerals mined and contributes a small portion of this increased use of the land each year. The increase in Michigan and Minnesota is negligible.

In both of these States iron mining has been and is presently being carried on in sparsely populated areas. In the four counties of Michigan in which the iron ore mining operations are located, there is an average of 25 persons per square mile; and in those counties in Minnesota in which the iron ore mining operations are located, there is an average of 30 persons per square mile.

These figures contrast with population densities, for example, of 137 people per square mile for Michigan, 237 in Ohio, and 806 in New Jersey. The light population densities in these mining areas documents the fact that there is no great demand for land, and therefore the iron mining industry is not withdrawing land from use that is needed for other purposes.

The iron mining industry is the largest industry and the prime employer in each of these mining areas in Michigan and Minnesota. Many of the other businesses support and serve the mining industry and its employees.

There is little competition for other commercial or industrial uses of the land in these areas. Soil and climate make the Michigan and Minnesota mining districts marginal for agricultural purposes.

In addition, the areas involved in iron mining surface operations are of low-quality for recreational uses. This fact, coupled with the vast acreages held by the State and Federal Government which are available for recreational purposes, argues that there is no significant diminution of recreational land.

For forestry purposes, the areas which have been involved in iron ore surface mining in Michigan are very insignificant. It is my observation that the second growth on the Mesabi Range has been scrub timber of low value. Moreover, in both Michigan and Minnesota mining is the highest value use that can be made of the land.

EROSION AND LANDSLIDES

There has never been a problem of any measurable proportions involving either erosion or landslides related to iron ore mining operations in Michigan and Minnesota.