

IMPAIRMENT OF NATURAL BEAUTY

This is perhaps one of the most controversial allegations. The apparent changes to the landscape which are caused by iron ore surface mining operations are the creation of open pits, rock or "lean ore" piles and tailings basins.

The report, "Surface Mining and Our Environment," speaking of the Mesabi Range in Minnesota, states "the tremendous piles of low-grade or 'lean ore' that dot the countryside may either be considered an attractive feature in an otherwise monotonous landscape or as unsightly, depending upon one's viewpoint."

Such a statement is equally applicable to the appearance of the open pits. The view of the Hull-Rust pit on the Mesabi Range in Minnesota to some degree inspires the same emotion of awe as the Grand Canyon.

The local chambers of commerce consider the pit as a unique tourist attraction as measured by the 80,000 or so tourists who visit the Mesabi Range each summer. It is our viewpoint that the residents of the iron mining areas in Michigan and Minnesota do not consider the views of the pits and piles unsightly and it is obvious that visitors are drawn to those areas by the presence of these outstanding features.

In Michigan the iron ore surface mining operations are scattered in remote areas and therefore are not readily seen by a viewer.

During the active years of iron ore operations there is not much that can be done with the tailings basins, but when the operations have been complete it is our contention that the basins will revegetate naturally or will yield to seeding.

Cleveland-Cliffs and other companies are at the present time engaged in research efforts to ascertain the types of and rate of revegetation. It is of interest to point out that even in the active tailings basins, wild ducks nest and raise families each summer.

The reaction to views of pits and rockpiles can be as varied as the techniques of photography which have been used to illustrate these features. On page 22 and 32 of the report, "Surface Mining and Our Environment," there are pictures of iron ore open pits. These have been taken and printed under conditions that portray the subject in its most favorable light.

MINING PLAN REQUIREMENT

One of the most objectionable features of S. 3132 is the requirement of a mining plan and the granting of a mining license. The preparation of a mining plan in advance of mining will be most burdensome because of the extended life of an iron ore surface mining operation.

The report "Surface Mining and Our Environment" comments as follows:

"Another distinctive feature of open-pit mining is the length of time that mining is conducted" and "some open pits may be mined for many years—50 or more; in fact, a few have been in continuous operation for more than a century."

To illustrate this longevity, the famous Hull-Rust open pit in Minnesota was opened in 1895 and still can be considered an active operation.