

NEWS RELEASE – February 19, 2026

Contact: Nick Letzkus

letzkus@smenet.org

2026 SME Minnesota Conference Returns to Duluth for Three Days of Exclusive Programming



2026 SME Minnesota Conference

April 14-16, 2026 | Duluth, MN

From April 14-16 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth, MN, the SME Minnesota Conference will bring together mining, metallurgy and mineral professionals from across the upper Midwest to discuss new advancement and technology shaping the industry.

Continuing a rich tradition, this year's event includes a first-class roster of expert speakers, two days of technical sessions centered on mining innovation, sustainability and workforce development, a large trade expo with more than 140 exhibitors showcasing new industry technology, and a field trip to the ME Elecmetal Foundry featuring live production of abrasion-resistant steel castings for mining and construction.

In addition, attendees may choose to add an educational short course, offering 4 Professional Development Hours (PDHs), to their registration. *Environmental: Reclamation Today: Adding Value and Connection by Repurposing Mined Lands* starts from the premise that mine closure, despite its serious implications, can add value to mining communities and future mining

projects. *Processing: Iron to Steel: The Journey from Pellets to Steel* outlines the journey that pellets undergo as they leave the taconite facilities to eventually end in steel products.

“The SME Minnesota Conference is a can’t-miss opportunity for professionals and students to stay ahead of the knowledge curve as the industry continues to rapidly evolve,” said Jordan Erickson, Chair of the 2026 Minnesota Conference and Environmental Engineer at Cleveland-Cliffs. “We encourage you to take full advantage of the wide array of opportunities to network and advance amongst your peers this April in Duluth.”

Featured Speaker – Ethics Course



Scott Gischia, PE (AZ, MI, MN), PMP, MineraLogic, will present “Drawing a Line in the (sometimes gray) Sand: Ethics in Environmental Practice.” Gischia has over 25 years of mining industry experience that has focused on multimedia environmental compliance and permitting to support complex projects from the development stage through operations and into closure. His areas of expertise include air emissions, water quality, wetlands and mineland reclamation. He carries a strong understanding of both the Federal and State-specific regulatory review, permitting, compliance and enforcement processes and has extensive experience in working directly with regulatory agencies.

Featured Speaker – Opening Plenary



Jamey Jones, Science Coordinator, USGS Earth Mapping Resources Initiative, will present “Critical Mineral Mapping Across the U.S. and in the Lake Superior Region Under the USGS Earth Mapping Resources Initiative.” This talk will provide an overview of the USGS Earth Mapping Resources Initiative (Earth MRI) with an emphasis on recent and planned work in the Lake Superior region. Selected case studies will highlight the integration of new Earth MRI datasets to better understand the geologic framework and critical mineral potential of below-and above-ground resources.

Featured Speaker – Closing Plenary



Ibrahim Yucel, Principal Consultant, CRU Consulting, will present a comprehensive historical and forward-looking outlook for the Great Lakes iron ore market. This analysis includes an overview of the North American steel value chain, commentary on key underlying market drivers for long-term changes in finished steel demand, regional crude steel production and process mix, and steelmaking raw material mix.

The SME Minnesota Conference has been taking place in the region for over 90 years, providing professional development to one of the nation's largest mining sectors. To learn more about the 2026 SME Minnesota Conference, including schedule details and registration information, visit SMEMNconference.org.

About SME

The Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration (SME) brings together the mining and mineral industry's brightest and most dedicated professionals. Over 14,000 global members advance their careers with the world-class technical resources, educational programs, networking opportunities and professional development tools from SME. Our members are focused on sharing best practices for safety, environmental stewardship and moving mining forward. SME. *Inspiring mining professionals worldwide.*