

# Mesabi Nugget Update

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Hoyt Lakes, MN (Northland's Newscenter) - Mesabi Nugget started production in January of 2010 and has continued to break their own records.

It's a product that plant manager Jeff Hansen says is vital to keeping the Iron Range alive.

"Having that product that can be sold to the growing part of the steel industry, when there is a down turn there is still going to be a demand," said Hansen.

That growing part of the steel industry are electric arc furnaces, which the 97 percent pure iron nuggets produced at the Hoyt Lakes facility is able to go directly into, something taconite pellets aren't able to do.

"The taconite pellets that are produced on the Iron Range are not in the metallic form; therefore they cannot be fed into the electric arc furnace and cannot participate in the growing part of the steel industry," said Hansen.

Production at the plant started in January of 2010.

2011 has seen record production, with March producing around 100,000 tons, and April eclipsing that record.

Hansen admits however, the plant's start up hasn't been easy.

"The start up of this facility has not gone as well as we'd have liked. It's had some speed bumps along the way, but that's part of developing new technology," said Hansen.

Hansen says most of those speed bumps have been with equipment, and the new-ness of the technology.

All have been addressed in some form by the 90 employees working at the Mesabi Nugget facility.

While some come from a non mining background, there are some like Dennis Gauthier, who used to work at the taconite plant in Forbes.

"It's exciting, we are doing something that has never been done before. I think that is the biggest difference; at my last mining job it [the process] was already established, where here we are kind of pioneering," said Gauthier.

Gauthier says after working at both facilities, he is excited to be a part of what many see as the new generation of mining on the Iron Range.

"This has the potential to change the Range, and to be a part of that and tell me kids and my grand kids, to be able to say that I was a part of that, it means a lot," said Gauthier.

Mesabi Nugget will see a brief shut down during May in an effort to make improvements on some of the equipment in the plant, to help the company reach their goal of producing 500,000 tons annually.

Mesabi Nugget is mostly owned by American based Steel Dynamics.

Watch video: <http://www.northlandsnewscenter.com/news/iron-range/Mesabi-Nugget-Update-121960064.html>