

January 16, 2013

Dear Wisconsin Legislator,

We are deeply concerned about the reintroduction of the Iron Mining bill (2011 AB 426) and the proposed repeal of Wisconsin's common sense Mining Moratorium Law.

Metallic mining proposals, whether for iron, base or precious metals, are the largest and most complex and destructive land uses considered for the state. The impacts from mining and mine wastes require strict and careful monitoring and management to limit environmental damage and negative economic impacts to local communities and the state.

The Iron Mining bill, which exempts the mining of ferrous (iron ore) minerals from the state's current metallic mining law is the wrong way to make mining policy and is such a threat to the environmental and human health protections that Wisconsin citizens have a right to expect, that the bill should be rejected.

This bill, written by mining industry representatives for the single largest mine in state history, severely limits the fundamental right of citizens and Wisconsin's Indian tribes to participate in the mine permitting process. The bill contains widespread exemptions from existing environmental regulations and deprives citizens of the protections to public water rights guaranteed by Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine.

In addition to reintroducing AB 426, legislators have proposed repealing Wisconsin's Mining Moratorium Law. This "Prove It First" Law should be retained and enhanced. It was passed by broad majorities in both the Assembly and Senate. The law addressed the problem of acid mine drainage from metallic sulfide ores such as the Crandon and Flambeau deposits. The law requires that the industry provide an example of a metallic sulfide mine that has been operated and closed without polluting the environment. The industry could not document such an example prior to the passage of the bill in 1998 and they have not been able to do so since. Wisconsin citizens should not be the guinea pigs for unproven mining technologies.

Recent claims that the Flambeau mine in Ladysmith is proof of a metallic sulfide mine that has not caused pollution are false. U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb recently ruled that the Flambeau Mining Company violated the Clean Water Act on numerous counts.

A recent survey of metallic sulfide regulation in the Great Lakes region by the National Wildlife Federation (www.Nwf.org/Mining Report) called Wisconsin's Mining Moratorium an exemplary law.

We invite you to review new briefing papers on the Iron Strip Mine Bill, Wisconsin's Mining Moratorium Law and the Environmental Track Record of Taconite Mining in Minnesota and Michigan were released. The briefing papers are linked below.

We call upon you to uphold the rights of citizens and tribes to participate in the mine permitting process and to guard our natural resources and our right to live in a clean, healthy environment.

Sincerely,

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