



101 W. Main Street #353, P.O. Box 875, Ashland, WI 54806

To: Members, Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy, and Small Business
From: Bad River Watershed Association
Re: Updating Wisconsin's Metallic Mining Laws
Date: October 27, 2011

My name is Darienne McNamara, and I am speaking on behalf of the Bad River Watershed Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in regards to possible updates to Wisconsin's metallic mining laws.

The Bad River Watershed Association is a nonprofit citizens group, formed in 2002. We work to involve all citizens in taking care of our home watershed and maintaining its integrity for future generations. Our members—farmers, loggers, fisherman, canoeists, hikers and more - volunteer their energy, time, and ideas to keep the land and water of our home in great shape.

We often get confused with the Bad River Tribe, but we are not the Bad River Tribe, nor do we speak for the Tribe. The Bad River Watershed Association is a data driven organization. We strive to take the emotion out of what will be a series of challenging decisions regarding a potential mine in the Penokee hills, which are at the headwaters of the Bad River Watershed.

We have members who are very interested in seeing this mine built and others who are very opposed to the mine. Regardless of these viewpoints, everyone cares about making sure that we have enough clean water. This isn't about jobs verses the environment; it's about making sure that jobs and the environment are on equal playing fields.

Over the past several weeks we've gathered over 1,400 petition signatures from concerned citizens, organizations, and local governments. Our petition states that "Companies seeking to establish mining operations in Wisconsin should meet requirements that protect water quality and supply, while providing opportunity for public input. Current environmental regulations should not be weakened."

The impetus for this petition comes from frustration with a Legislature pushing rapid changes to our environmental and mining laws without allowing adequate public input. This spring we saw draft mining legislation that gutted environmental, community, and citizen protections from mining impacts. If it had been introduced, major changes to Wisconsin law affecting this area for decades, would have been decided in days. Now, we again see attempts, through a special session, to weaken environmental protections that would have a direct impact on a mine-permitting process. We hear rhetoric from the Legislature that we need to have a new mining bill passed by the end of this year.

We believe this is unacceptable and irresponsible lawmaking. Our message to you is "SLOW DOWN." If Wisconsin's mining law needs updates, then we suggest initiating a process like occurred when the law was written in the 1970s. Such a process should involve all interests. Mining companies, business groups, tribes, environmental groups and other citizens should be at the table. Consensus could be reached, and we would all be proud of the process and the final product.

The Bad River Watershed is a rare gem, from spectacular views at Mt. Whittlesey, to roaring falls at Copper Falls State Park, to the epic wild rice beds in the Kakagon/Bad River Sloughs. Like everywhere in Wisconsin, the people who live here, value clean water. We value transparency. We value fairness and accountability, and we want to ensure that our decisions today leave a positive legacy for our children.