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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Bad River Watershed Association concerned over Loss of Local Regulation and Decision Making**

The Bad River Watershed Association is deeply concerned with the recent legislation (LRB 3146/1 & LRB 3408/1) proposed by Senator Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) to significantly weaken local government powers in the protection of water, air and public health. As with the ferrous mining bill and recent attempts to reduce shoreland zoning, degrade groundwater protection, and restrict public access to managed forest lands, this legislation was NOT crafted for the best interests of Wisconsin citizens. Instead, it further strengthens mining company control over local decision making at the expense of air and water quality and public safety.

A 2012 Supreme Court Decision (Zwiefelhofer v. Town of Crooks Valley) upheld a town's nonmetallic mining ordinance against a frac sand mining interest. Senator Tiffany's legislation seeks to overturn the precedent of this case by stripping elected officials in small communities of regulatory power in the face of explosive growth in the frac sand industry. The Ashland Daily Press reported Friday that Tiffany confirmed this bill would also have ramifications in the iron mining industry. As with other recent attempts to roll back control of the public's environmental future, Tiffany wants the new bill brought to hearing within a week, allowing scarce time for citizens and local officials to become familiar with its consequences or to organize a response.

Aspects of the bill potentially most harmful to the Bad River Watershed and its citizens include:

- Prohibit cities, villages, towns and counties from establishing or enforcing permits, regulations, restrictions of use, and monitoring of air and water quality that would affect the proposed activity.
- Prohibit cities, villages, towns, and counties from establishing or enforcing permits, regulations, restrictions of use, and monitoring of the use of explosives in mining.

Our present awareness of the existence of potentially acid-producing minerals (pyrites) and recent verification of the presence of deadly asbestos minerals in the Penokee ore deposit reinforce the importance of local monitoring and regulation of water and air quality. Blasting and waste rock handling and storage practices will have a direct impact on our communities. How these threats may be mobilized in the watershed through movement of water and air make monitoring an essential front line defense of community health. This is not simply an issue of loss of political control—the realities of the

proposed GTac mine raise the prospect of a significant threat to human and environmental health in the Bad River watershed.

The Bad River Watershed Association is headquartered in Ashland, Wis. Founded in 2002, BRWA works to promote a healthy relationship between the people and natural communities of the Bad River watershed. More information about the Bad River Watershed Association is available at [www.badriverwatershed.org](http://www.badriverwatershed.org).

We encourage all Wisconsin citizens to take an active role in communicating their opinion on matters that affect our waters.

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