

Defending Their Homes

Native American reservations have been disproportionately impacted by mining and often treated as lawless zones by mining corporations. **Environmental Racism** occurs when historically oppressed peoples (like Native Americans) have their living conditions degraded disproportionately to wealthier, white communities. The voices of these peoples get ignored by industrial corporations and the government officials they fund or influence. **Environmental Justice** is what people in solidarity with the oppressed can demand of corporations and their elected officials.

The Bad River Ojibwe Tribe opposes the Penokee Mine and has been pro-active in fighting to defend the land and water. The EPA recently approved a new set of tribal water quality standards that prohibit any projects upstream from polluting waters flowing into their reservation. They are seeking Class 1 Air Quality designation, which would further federally protect their region from mining. Finally, the Tribe released a set of ten principles for any changes to mining laws, that would protect the environment and cultural resources for future generations:

1. Exclude any project proposal that has the potential to cause acid mine drainage.
2. The burden of preparing and submitting a complete application should be entirely on the permit applicant.
3. Provide adequate time for the DNR, the public, federal agencies, and affected Indian tribes to fully review and participate in the process.
4. Maintain existing wetland protection standards and the federal/state partnership in the environmental review process.
5. Correct, don't weaken, the DNR's federal Clean Water Act implementation.
6. Allow contested case hearings with full participation by citizens, including Indian tribes.
7. Do not preempt local control.

8. Allow citizen suits to make sure permit provisions and legal restrictions on new mines will be enforced.
9. Require consultation with Indian tribes by the DNR as part of the permitting process.
10. Contested case hearings should be paid for by the permit applicant or the state.

"The Bad River watershed is a Wisconsin gem and pristine environmental resource, and the Band's cultural identity and way of life is highly dependent upon maintaining the health and integrity of the watershed."

—Bad River Tribal Chairman Mike Wiggins

"This is our land. This is where we live. We can't just pack up and move."

—Bad River Tribal Councilor Frank Connors

What Can You Do?

- Sign the Bad River Watershed Association Petition against weakening Wisconsin's environmental regulations, at <http://badriverwatershed.force.com/MiningLawPetition>
- Join WNPJ's Environment Work Group – contact diane@wnpj.org
- Visit the area to see for yourself what's at stake. Write a letter to the editor about your visit (or write one even if you don't visit).
- Visit www.wnpj.org or www.miningimpactcoalition.org for more information.



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Iron Mining in Wisconsin

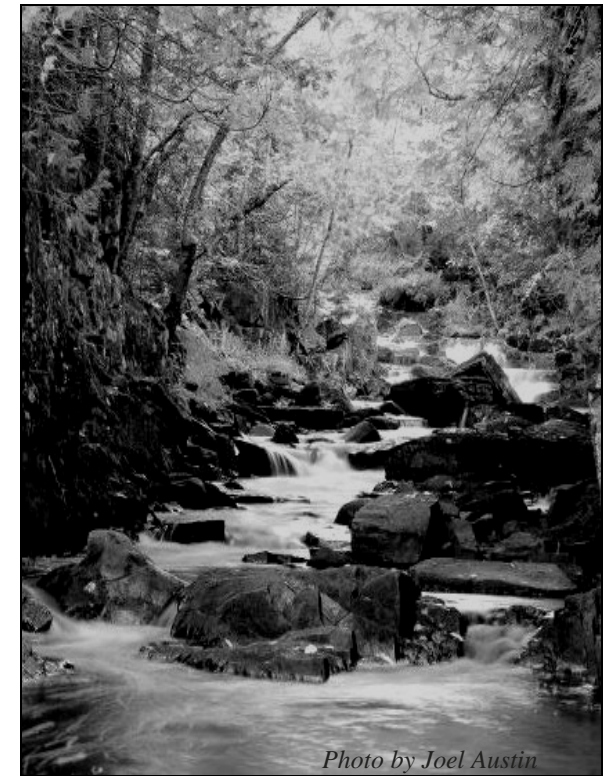


Photo by Joel Austin

An Environmental Justice Issue

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Defend Wisconsin's Environment and Communities!



An open-pit iron ore mine in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

What's Being Proposed?

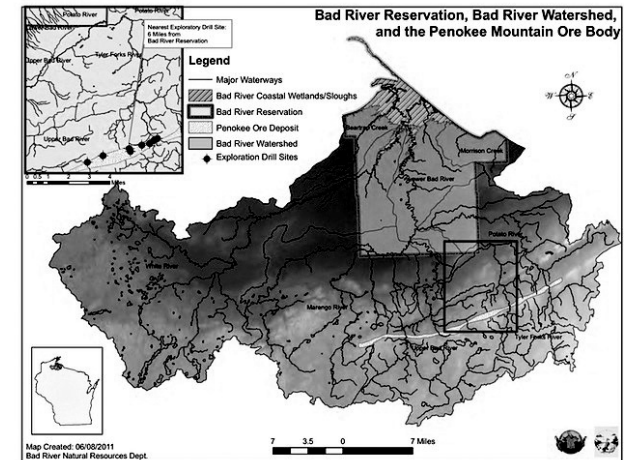
Gogebic Taconite (G-Tac), a subsidiary of The Cline Group, has proposed a 4 ½-mile long open pit iron ore mine in the Penokee Hills of Northern Wisconsin. This would be the first phase of an eventual 22-mile strip of open-pit mining, stretching from west of Mellen, in southern Ashland County, to Upson, in Iron County. The land is privately-held managed forest land, 35 square miles of rugged and unbroken north woods habitat, a migration corridor and natural carbon sink.

What's at stake?

The mine area is at the headwaters of the Tyler Forks and Bad Rivers, which flow north into the Bad River Indian Reservation and empty into Lake Superior at the Kakagon Sloughs, the largest wetlands on Lake Superior and a major source of wild rice for the Bad River Anishinaabe (Ojibwe/Chippewa) Tribe. The potential mining zone impacts more than 50 miles of streams and rivers, many of them designated trout streams. It is in the recharge zone of the Penokee Aquifer, which many residents rely on for clean drinking water. Mining would transform the area from forested hills to an industrial strip, with heavy machinery, truck traffic, deep pits, and waste rock piles hundreds of feet high.

Iron Mining: What's the Record?

Thanks to a twenty-year grassroots struggle by a coalition of environmental organizations, sportsmen's groups, and Native American tribes in Wisconsin, in 1998 the state passed a law (signed by then-governor Tommy Thompson) prohibiting sulfide mining in the state until mining companies can show an example of an environmentally safe sulfide mine. To date, one has never been found. Sulfide mining targets minerals like copper, lead, zinc, gold, and silver that are contained in sulfide ores, which generate sulfuric acid when exposed to air and water. *But G-Tac's proposal is for an iron mine, not a sulfide mine, and thus doesn't fall under the purview of Wisconsin's mining moratorium law.*



However, iron mining isn't "safe" either. Downstream from Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range, the St. Louis River is polluted with high levels of mercury and sulfates, resulting in fish consumption advisories and a 100-mile-long wild rice "dead zone." That's because to get to the iron, a vast amount of overlying rock must be removed, some of which contains heavy metals and sulfides. In the Penokees, the overlying rock is known to contain Pyrite (iron sulfide), and sulfide deposits exist on the western and eastern ends of the range, and possibly elsewhere.

Communities at Risk

The communities of the Mesabi Range haven't consistently benefited from mining economically, either. Iron Range economies are very volatile, with wide "boom/bust" swings in employment depending on world metal prices. Technological advancement has meant steadily increasing productivity and fewer workers needed to mine. Powerful mining corporations often influence state governments to avoid paying a fair share of taxes to benefit the communities they impact.