

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.

“This is our land. This is where we live. We can’t just pack up and move.”

–Bad River Tribal Councilor Frank Connors

The Bad River Ojibwe Tribe opposes the Penokee Mine and has been pro-active in fighting to defend the land and water. The EPA approved a 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. Despite offering commonsense principles for new mining legislation that would have protected our water and ensured due diligence on any mining proposal, the Tribe was not consulted during the process of rewriting the mining law. Their treaty rights to hunt, fish, and gather in ceded territory, affirmed by Federal Circuit Court’s 1983 Voigt decision, were systematically ignored by majority Republican lawmakers during the legislative process. Wisconsin’s Public Trust Doctrine, which states that the waters of Wisconsin are owned in common and protected for use by all, was also violated by the passage of the new law.

“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

What Can You Do?

The Bad River Tribe has vowed to fight the mine through court challenges and direct action, including land occupations in the Penokee Hills. They are receiving support from the other Ojibwe tribes of Wisconsin and white allies through the Mining Impact Coalition’s Penokee Hills Education Project and statewide environmental groups. You can help defend the Penokee Hills and Lake Superior by taking action in one of these ways:

- Donate to the **Bad River Defense Fund, P.O. Box 39, Odanah WI 54861**
- Sign the Petition on www.wnpj.org/mining
- 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/mining for more information.



WNPJ
122 State Street #405
Madison, WI 53703
www.wnpj.org
608-250-9240

Iron Mining in Wisconsin

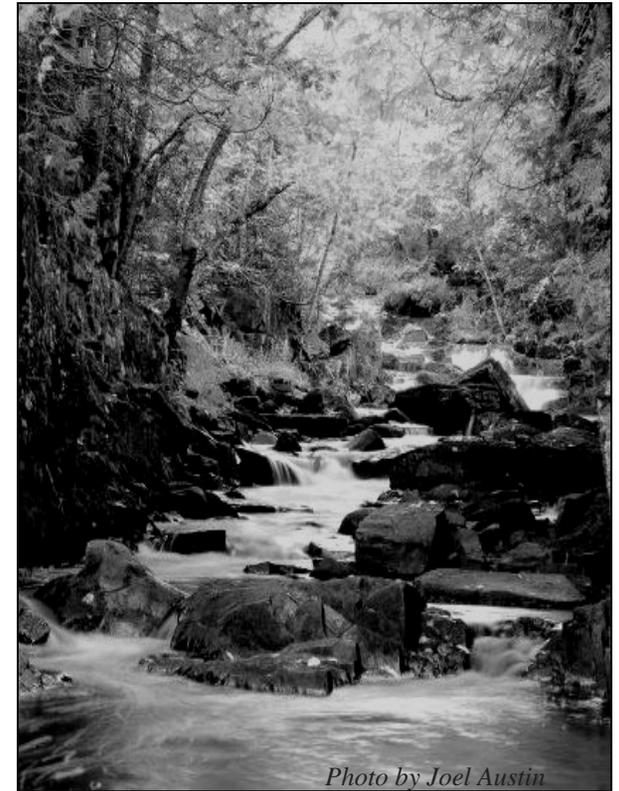


Photo by Joel Austin

**An
Environmental Justice
Issue**

www.wnpj.org

Defend Wisconsin's Environment and Communities!



The Hull-Rust-Mahoning Mine on Minnesota's Mesabi Range

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?

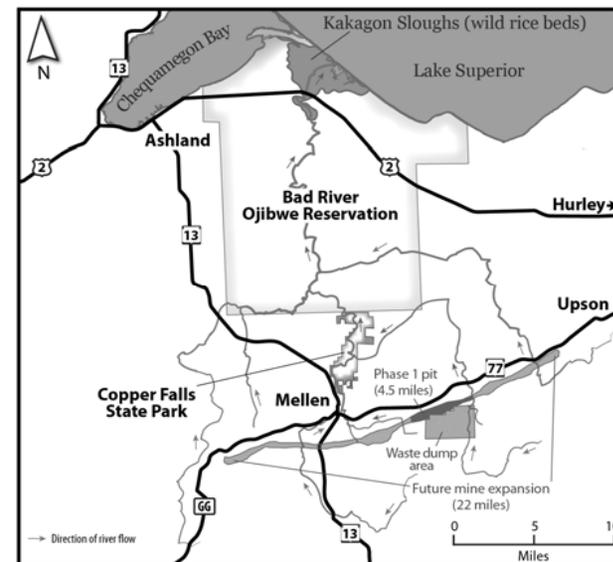
The mine area is at the headwaters of the Tyler Forks and Bad Rivers, which flow north into the Bad River Indian Reservation and empty into Lake Superior at the Kakagon Sloughs, the largest wetlands on Lake Superior and source of wild rice for the Bad River Anishinaabe (Ojibwe/Chippewa) Tribe. The potential 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. The recently-passed iron mining law allows the mining company to fill wetlands and navigable waterways with waste rock and reduce the volume of groundwater in the aquifer.

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 and parts of the iron deposit itself are known to contain Pyrite (iron sulfide). A Lawrence University geology study found that



the first phase of the mine alone could release 1.3 million tons of sulfur, as well as mercury, arsenic, copper, zinc, and phosphates (which cause algae blooms and fish kills), into Lake Superior tributaries.

Communities at Risk

The mining communities of Minnesota and Michigan haven't seen long-term economic benefits from mining. Iron Range economies are very volatile, with wide "boom/bust" swings in employment depending on world metal prices (currently in a "bust"). Technological advancement has meant steadily increasing productivity and fewer workers needed to mine. The public would not benefit from the mine, since under the new mining law—paid for by \$15.6 million in campaign donations by pro-mining corporations—the company would pay *zero taxes* if they do not make a profit.