



# NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Citizen Resolutions Introduced at Conservation Congress Hearings**

**WISCONSIN:** Concerned citizens across Wisconsin are organizing around the Conservation Congress hearings to show the impacts certain threats have on Wisconsin's natural resources and the hunting and fishing communities that depend on them. Citizens are introducing resolutions in a third of the counties calling for better protection from and analysis of frac-sand mining, tar sands pipelines, and taconite mining.

"I don't think most people in my community recognize the threat the tar sands pipeline poses to our water resources," stated Ronni Monroe, a concerned community member near the pipeline in Lake Mills who plans to introduce a resolution at the Jefferson Hearing. She continued, "We are blessed to have the Rock River, Lake Koshkonong, and other critical waterways like it—these provide recreational areas, fishing opportunities, and create the overall quality of life we all live here for."

Carol Balek, introduced a resolution last year at the Sawyer County hearing and will again this year after her experience. She explained, "I was struck by how many people were unaware of how our community will be impacted by the proposed taconite mine in the Penokees. My neighbors didn't realize it threatens our water here in Sawyer County. As we begin growing increasingly concerned about the potential for frac-sand mining here, I want to ensure everyone knows about the threats frac-sand mining poses as well."

Educating nearby community members is one of the goals of this effort. Elizabeth Ward, the Conservation Programs Coordinator for the Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter, one of the people helping to coordinate this effort said, "The Conservation Congress is a tremendous opportunity to speak to others who care deeply about and depend on Wisconsin's natural resources. Many are concerned about these threats in their communities, and this is an opportunity to show that many throughout the state are concerned as well."

After introduction, the resolutions will be voted on and, upon passage, will be sent to committees within the Conservation Congress. Patricia Hammel with Madison Action for Mining Alternatives, who helped coordinate the effort stated, "We were encouraged to see a resolution that was introduced last year related to frac-sand mining will be on the state-wide questionnaire this year. This gives an opportunity for the entire state to weigh in on these important decisions. We look forward to this continued opportunity."

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*Founded in 1892 by John Muir, the Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club's mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth. The Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is made up of 15,000 members and supporters working to promote clean energy and protect water resources in Wisconsin.*

*Madison Action for Mining Alternatives is a grassroots group of citizens that provides support and solidarity to communities fighting to save water, air, ecosystems, and sustainable economies from proposed or existing mining projects in Wisconsin.*

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## **RESOLUTIONS TO BE PRESENTED AT CONSERVATION CONGRESS HEARINGS:**

**REPEAL THE BAD RIVER WATERSHED DESTRUCTION ACT—** 2013 Act 1, written on behalf of Gogebic Taconite, enacted broad reductions to state mining laws to enable the largest open pit mine in Wisconsin history in the environmentally and culturally sensitive Bad River Watershed of Lake Superior. The proposed mine would have permanently affected groundwater, lakes, streams and wetlands and left behind hundreds of millions of tons of wastes containing asbestos and sulfides that can cause acid mine drainage that leaches toxic heavy metals. Gogebic Taconite halted the mine, stating the site was “not feasible” due to the large amount of wetlands that would be destroyed and required to be mitigated. The Bad River Watershed includes 66 lakes, streams and rivers that are Exceptional and Outstanding Resource Waters. The mine site includes multiple designated trout streams, and the DNR has identified the Penoque Range as an area of high conservation importance. Downstream are the Kakagon-Bad River Sloughs, a National Natural Landmark and Wetland of International Importance comprising 40% of the coastal wetlands of Lake Superior. The iron mining law also enacted sweeping limits on public’s right to participate and challenge mining permitting activities and gave the company huge tax breaks. The law is unnecessary now that Gogebic Taconite is gone.

**BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Conservation Congress supports repeal of 2013 Act 1 because it unnecessarily reduced environmental protections and citizen input and is no longer necessary, and requests that the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board make a similar finding and work with the Legislature to repeal the law.

**STATEWIDE MORATORIUM ON FRAC-SAND MINING IN WISCONSIN—** The DNR states Frac Sand mining and processing sites now number more than 150 in 2015 versus fewer than 6 only 5 years ago. DNR states that the “footprint” of these operations can be up to 5,000 acres and the industry could grow 200% larger than current production. The continued explosive growth of this industry threatens public health and safety, property values and dramatically changes our landscape due to loss of wildlife habitat, scenic bluffs and farmlands. Frac Sand mining and processing sites are not required to conduct air sampling for dangerous air impacts including the smallest particulates that can cause cancer-causing silicosis. These operations may cause surface and groundwater pollution from acid mine drainage and chemicals used to wash sand. Several operations have been found in noncompliance of state law and/or have caused pollution when ponds overflowed. They also impact wetlands, groundwater, threatened and endangered species, and turn peaceful rural areas into noisy, dusty, dangerous industrial zones. A citizen petition citing serious concerns about the explosive growth of frac sand mining led to the Natural Resources Board’s recent unanimous vote to publish a Strategic Analysis of Frac Sand mining by early 2016. The Board agreed that this comprehensive scientific study of environmental and public health impacts was necessary to inform future decision-making on regulation of the industry.

**BE IT RESOLVED,** the Conservation Congress supports a moratorium on the issuance of new state Frac Sand mining and processing permits by the DNR until recommendations from the DNR Strategic Analysis can be implemented.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REVIEWS ON TAR SANDS PIPELINES—** WHEREAS Enbridge Energy Corp., a Canadian company, is currently using Pipeline 61 to transport tar sands “dilbit,” heavy crude oil diluted with toxic chemicals through a pipeline running from Superior to Delevan, Wisconsin and then to northern Illinois where it is processed and shipped out. Enbridge proposes to triple the pressure and flow of oil from the current 400,000 to 1.2 million barrels per day, exceeding the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, without any increased safeguards. Enbridge also plans another pipeline which would run alongside Line 61. These tar sands pipelines run under or through major rivers including the Wisconsin, Rock, Flambeau, Namekagon and Nemadji and wetlands at the headwaters of the St. Croix and Brule, among others. Enbridge has experienced over 800 pipeline leaks and spills since 1999 including the largest tar sands spill in U.S. history, impacting the Kalamazoo River in Michigan. Tar sands, unlike traditional oil, sinks in water; five years later, the Kalamazoo river has not been successfully restored and costs have exceeded \$1 Billion. A major spill of sinking dilbit and the chemicals it contains, including carcinogenic benzene, into a wetland or waterway would be disastrous for fisheries and wildlife habitat. Jefferson, Dane, Wood, Walworth, Adams, and Rock Counties have passed resolutions asking the DNR to hold public hearings on Enbridge’s pipeline expansion.

**BE IT RESOLVED,** That the DNR should conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement process on the risks of the Pipeline 61 expansion with public hearings throughout Wisconsin before allowing Enbridge to construct any new pipelines.

**MAINTAIN WISCONSIN'S MINING MORATORIUM** Metallic sulfides are the primary cause of acid mine drainage (AMD) from mining. AMD leaches toxics such as sulfates, phosphorous, and heavy metals such as mercury, lead, copper, arsenic, and more into rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands. AMD has poisoned thousands of miles of rivers and streams in the US and Canada. The Mining Moratorium Law established a "prove it first" permit condition requiring a company proposing to mine ores containing metallic sulfides prove that mining in similar ores has been done safely without causing environmental harm. The legislature - including then Representative, Scott Walker - overwhelmingly approved the law and Governor Thompson signed it in 1998. There is mining industry interest in state deposits found in metallic sulfides that pose risks from perpetual pollution caused by acid mine drainage. The new iron mining law written by Gogebic Taconite enacted in 2013 exempted iron mining in the Penokees from the Moratorium despite the presence of significant amounts of sulfides there. Until 2013, iron mining was subject to the Moratorium Law. The mining industry has yet to provide any successful examples of safe mining in metallic sulfides almost 20 years later.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Conservation Congress supports preservation of the Mining Moratorium Law and supports strengthening the law to include iron mining because the mining industry has yet to prove that mining in metallic sulfides is safe and requests that the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board make a similar finding and work with the Legislature to support the law.