



NEWS RELEASE



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Conservation Congress Results Show Citizens Want Mining Safeguards and Review of Tar Sand Pipelines

Madison: Final results from the annual statewide Conservation Congress Spring Hearing held on April 13 demonstrate significant statewide support in favor of mining safeguards and environmental review of Enbridge's proposed tar sands pipelines. Overwhelming majorities supported resolutions for: repeal of 2013 Act 1 – the law written by Gogebic Taconite for its now-abandoned iron mine proposal; a statewide moratorium on new frac sand mining permits until the state acts to strengthen state laws; to require an Environmental Impact Review of Enbridge's tar sand pipelines proposal; and to support the Mining Moratorium Law in effect for metallic mining. **Each of these resolutions was approved by 3-to-1 margins or more across the state.** The DNR tabulation of results can be using the link "2015 Citizen Resolution Results" at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/About/WCC/springhearing.html>.

Repeal of 2013 Act 1, the enabling legislation that removed many of the state's mining protections was approved in 13 of 14 counties with a vote count of 685 in favor and 190 against or 78% approval.

The resolution directing the DNR to support a moratorium on new frac sand mining permits until recommendations from a recently approved DNR cumulative impacts study was approved in 14 of 15 counties with a vote count of 641 in favor and 207 against or 76% approval.

The resolution supporting an Environmental Impact Review of Enbridge's proposed tar sands pipeline was approved in 18 counties with 1108 voting in favor and 161 voting against or 85% approval.

The resolution supporting the current Mining Moratorium Law was approved in 9 counties with 519 votes in favor and 102 opposed or 84% approval.

Madison Action for Mining Alternatives (MAMA), the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice and the Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter worked together to develop the resolutions for introduction by concerned residents at the April 13 hearings. The four resolutions follow below on pages 2-3

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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; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives. 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.

RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED AT CONSERVATION CONGRESS HEARINGS:

REPEAL THE IRON MINING LAW

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 permanently affect groundwater, lakes, streams and wetlands and leave 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 Penokee 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.

RESOLUTION: MORATORIUM ON NEW STATE PERMITS FOR FRAC SAND MINING AND PROCESSING

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.

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 STATEMENT FOR 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.

RESOLUTION: PRESERVE THE MINING MORATORIUM LAW

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.

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.

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