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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 5, 2015

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Sierra Club Statement on Gogebic Taconite Closure

Madison: The Sierra Club applauds Gogebic Taconite's (GTac) decision to withdraw operation from Wisconsin and halt the permitting effort for what would have been the state's largest and most destructive mine. GTac's announcement comes two years after Governor Walker signed 2013 Act 1, the Bad River Watershed Destruction Act written by GTac based on false science to gut environmental protections and enable swift permitting of the proposal while destroying and damaging irreplaceable lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and wildlife habitat and threatening world class natural resources such as Copper Falls State Park, the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs, and Lake Superior. GTac's proposal would have resulted in permanent destruction in the Penokee hills while leaving behind hundreds of millions of tons of waste rock containing asbestos, toxic heavy metals and sulfides that could produce acid in perpetuity. The Sierra Club announced opposition to the mine immediately after its proposal in 2011 and is proud to be a part of the strong statewide grassroots movement that has led to GTac's departure.

The announcement does not mean that the Penokees and the Bad River Watershed are protected from unsafe mining proposals. GTac does not own the land and mineral rights and a new company could assume GTac's leases and continue work on the proposal at any time. GTac's political boosters in the legislature and Governor's office caused significant damage to Wisconsin's environmental protections and democracy by passing the Bad River Watershed Destruction Act despite overwhelming public opposition and strong scientific evidence demonstrating short and long-term damage. The Sierra Club will work to repeal the special interest legislation written by and for GTac; for permanent protections for the Penokees and for a sustainable economy and jobs for northern Wisconsin that does not include the permanent destruction and hazards of boom and bust mining.

"It took Gogebic Taconite (GTac) roughly 4 years to determine what has been obvious to local Wisconsin citizens and the Bad River Tribe from day one when a giant open pit iron mine was proposed for the pristine Bad River Watershed: mining in this area is not feasible. GTac and the GOP have unethically used this proposal for Governor Walker's political ambitions by giving false promises of jobs they had no ability to deliver to residents in northern Wisconsin. Unlike the boosters of this unsustainable boom and bust mine proposal, the Sierra Club will work to support real, sustainable jobs in tourism, clean energy, forestry, family farming, healthcare, education, and more that won't sacrifice our land, water, and wildlife for future generations," said Shahla Werner, Director, Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter.

"The Sierra Club will continue to work to permanently protect the Penokees and the Bad River Watershed from unsafe iron mining. We will work to repeal the laws written by Gogebic Taconite

(GTac) based on false science and equally false promises that gutted environmental protections for this single proposal. Governor Walker and the Republican Legislature GTac are willing to sacrifice northern Wisconsin in exchange for campaign donations to further their political ambitions. The Governor and the GOP-led legislature gave Gogebic Taconite everything it wanted and gave state residents nothing in return." said Dave Blouin, Mining Committee Chair, Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter.

The Sierra Club will work to repeal 2013 Act 1 that enacted broad and sweeping reductions to environmental protections for iron mining. Act 1 was based entirely on the false and disproven premise that iron mining cannot produce acid rock drainage in the Penokees. We will work to overturn 2013 Act 81 that enacted a special interest exemption from Managed Forest land withdrawals for the landowners of the proposed mine. That exemption allowed the landowners to avoid the tax payments required of all other landowners enrolled in the state Managed Forest program who wish to withdraw lands from the program. The Sierra Club will work to support the Class 1 Air Redesignation application by the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The Redesignation would improve air quality and the health of thousands of northern Wisconsin residents and wildlife. The Sierra Club will also work to support strong local control over mining developments to ensure that local interests and residents are protected.

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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 land and water resources in Wisconsin.