



**Wisconsin
Conservation
Voters**

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Wisconsin Conservation Voters Statement In Opposition to the Dangerous Badger Minerals Mining Project

The U.S. EPA has called sulfide mining the most toxic industry in America and estimates that the headwaters of 40% of watersheds in the western United States are contaminated by pollution from hard rock mining. Sulfide mining poisons rivers, disrupts eco-systems, and taints groundwater with heavy metals and carcinogens like lead, arsenic, and cyanide. Given that metallic sulfide mining is the most toxic industry in America, it is essential that we are especially vigilant when putting important waterways like the Wolf River, and its surrounding tributaries and lands, at risk.

Bulk sampling or exploration is where the mining company is allowed to dig a 10,000-ton hole to explore the nature of the metallic deposit before formally requesting a permit to mine. Meanwhile, that site could be exposed to rain and other weather, a problem because metallic mining by its very nature causes acid mine drainage when the sulfides in an ore come into contact with water.

Allowing Badger Minerals to begin the mining process threatens the health and economies of our communities throughout the operation of the mine as well as long after it is closed. There are sulfide mines that were open during the Roman Empire that are still leaking sulfuric acid. If there is a hazardous spill or leakage after the mine is closed, taxpayers and local communities will be on the hook for dealing with this pollution.

The health of our communities and our land and water will be inevitably threatened as recent changes to Wisconsin's mining laws under 2017 Wisconsin Act 134 allows metallic mining companies to operate with far fewer safeguards for our waters and less scrutiny while operating. In addition, that law allows them to walk away from financial responsibility for any damage that occurs after the mine has been closed, leaving communities on the hook financially. The Wolf River, unfortunately, will be the first test case of these new, significantly weakened protections.

In addition to the threats to our health and our water, there are serious concerns about how this short-term, for-private-profit mining operation by Badger Minerals puts Mole Lake, Potawatomi, and Menominee cultural history at risk. Subsistence fishing is affirmed by treaty with the federal government, but more than that, the sturgeon is a prominent figure in the mythic accounts of the Menominee. In late

winter-early spring, when the sturgeon are harvested, a ceremonial cycle of sacred observance takes place. If the habitat of the sturgeon is threatened, the cultural practices are as well.

Likewise, manomin (wild rice), a basic staple of the diet of Native people (especially the Sokagon Mole Lake Chippewa, Potawatomi, and the Menominee), thrives in a delicate, balanced, and healthy ecosystem. Water contaminated with metallic sulfide would disturb that system, impacting the cultural practices and manomin harvest ceremonies observed every summer.

But perhaps of even greater significance is that the proposed drill site lies in a location that is of great archeological and spiritual importance to the Sokagon Mole Lake Chippewa and the Menominee People. Traditional oral accounts for the Menominee determine the drill site is a sacred location named in their cultural narratives. This site also provides the Menominee with a uniquely rich and significant identity - those who have never been removed from their homelands. Mining an archaeological site not only desecrates a sacred space, but negatively affects Menominee worldview and would have lasting consequences for a people that are sustained by oral tradition.

Wisconsin Conservation Voters joins the growing list of communities, tribes, and organizations in Wisconsin who are concerned about the threats to the Wolf River and surrounding lands that the Badger Mineral mine poses. We stand opposed to this project.

We will continue to watchdog this process and will not hesitate to hold elected officials and the Badger Minerals mining company accountable for the pollution and disruption this mine will cause if it proceeds.

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Wisconsin Conservation Voters engages voters to protect Wisconsin's environment.