09-02-15

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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