

Q: Are the current drilling activities in Schoepke Township considered exploration or bulk sampling?

A: Badger Minerals is currently engaged in nonferrous metallic mineral exploration as defined by s. 293.01(5) Wis. Stats:

*“Mineral exploration” or “exploration”, unless the context requires otherwise, means the on-site geologic examination from the surface of an area by core, rotary, percussion or other drilling, where the diameter of the hole does not exceed 18 inches, for the purpose of searching for nonferrous metallic minerals or establishing the nature of a known nonferrous metallic mineral deposit, and includes associated activities such as clearing and preparing sites or constructing roads for drilling.*

Q: What’s considered bulk sampling?

A: Bulk sampling would typically occur after a mineral deposit has been identified through exploration and the operator needs to collect specific types of samples to determine a project’s economic or technological viability. Bulk sampling is defined in s. 293.01(2m), Wis. Stats as follows:

*“Bulk sampling” means excavating in a potential mining site by removing less than 10,000 tons of material, including overburden and any other material removed from any portion of the excavation site, for the purposes of obtaining site-specific data to assess the quality and quantity of the nonferrous metallic mineral deposits and of collecting data from and analyzing the excavated materials in order to prepare the application for a mining permit or for any other approval. Bulk sampling does not constitute prospecting within the meaning of sub. (18).*

Q: Is metallic mineral exploration a common activity in Wisconsin?

A: The State of Wisconsin has issued five exploration licenses in the past 25 years:

- Nicolet Minerals (Crandon Deposit)
- Aquila Resources (Reef Prospect)
- Aquila Resources (Bend Prospect)
- Gogebic Taconite (Gogebic Iron Deposit)
- Badger Minerals (Schoepke Site)

Q: How often does exploration lead to a mine?

A: According to the US Forest Service, only 1 in 5,000 to 1 in 10,000 prospects ever turn into producing mines in the U.S.: ([https://www.fs.fed.us/geology/anatomy\\_mine.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/geology/anatomy_mine.pdf)). None of the five exploration licenses listed above led to an operating mine. The Flambeau Mine in Rusk County, which began operating in 1991 and was reclaimed in 1999, is the most recent metallic mineral mine permitted and operated in Wisconsin.

Q: What are the next steps if Badger Minerals decides to develop a mining project?

A: Before deciding to pursue a mining project, the company would first need to conduct extensive drilling and other analyses to delineate the deposit and determine whether it is economically viable. Any mining proposal would involve a significant amount of planning, data collection, analysis, and permitting through local, state, and federal agencies. DNR permitting for a mining proposal would involve approval from numerous DNR programs, require an Environmental Impact Statement to inform the public and decision makers, and include multiple opportunities for public involvement through hearings and public comment periods.

Q: Several of the current active drilling sites are located on land enrolled in the Managed Forest Land (MFL) program. Isn't mining a prohibited activity on MFL properties?

A: MFL program is a state forest tax program for Wisconsin landowners. The intent of MFL has remained the same since 1985 and that is to encourage the management of private forest lands for the production of future forest crops for commercial use through sound forestry practices, recognizing the objectives of individual property owners, compatible recreational uses, watershed protection, development of wildlife habitat and accessibility of private property to the public for specific recreational purposes.

The current site activity is metallic mineral exploration, not a commercial mining project. Exploratory drilling is not specifically prohibited under Wisconsin's Managed Forest Land program as established in Ch. 77, Wis. Stats.

The law requires DNR to evaluate the eligibility and compliance of proposed land uses with MFL in terms of being developed for commercial recreation, industrial use and/or activities compatible with sound forestry. The DNR maintains that the proposed exploratory drilling does not impede, interfere or prevent the practice of forestry or otherwise require the lands to be withdrawn from the MFL program at this time.

Mining is not compatible with MFL. If mining operations commence, it will be a violation of chapter 77 and the DNR will work closely with the landowner to address specific violations and, if necessary, withdraw lands from MFL.

Q: What if bulk sampling is proposed? Would that be acceptable on MFL-enrolled property?

A: There is no proposal for bulk sampling under s. 293.01(2m) (Wis. Stats.) right now. If bulk sampling were to be proposed, the DNR would need to review the specific proposal to determine what permits and approvals would be required from a variety of DNR programs, including MFL.

Q: What happens to the site once drilling is completed?

A: Upon completion of exploration activities, exploration licensees are responsible for completing the drill hole abandonment and filling procedures established in NR 130.06(1), Wis. Adm. Code, and for site grading and revegetation. Once the drillhole has been properly filled and sealed and the site is adequately reclaimed, as determined through a site inspection, the DNR would issue a certificate of completion for that drilling site and would adjust the amount of the performance bond covering the exploration activities.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: The DNR maintains information related to the Badger Minerals exploration project under the “Schoepke Site” tab of our metallic mining project webpage: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Mines/Projects.html>

Specific information related to Managed Forest Law (MFL) can be found at: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/forestlandowners/mfl/>