



NEWS RELEASE

Sierra Club Maintains Opposition to Weakening Environmental Regulation for Mining

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Contact: Dave Blouin, Mining Committee Chair (608) 220-4040

The Sierra Club today announced renewed opposition to any proposed legislation designed to further enable Gogebic Taconite's (GTac) proposed open pit-strip mine near Lake Superior. The Sierra Club has consistently stated the current state regulatory program has proven capable of judging the environmental impacts of any type of mining proposal and there is no scientific or policy justification for changing state law for iron ore mining proposals.

“Senators Schultz and Jauch have offered alternative legislation that strips much of the most objectionable content from AB 426/SB 488, the Open Pit Strip Mine bill,” said Dave Blouin, State Mining Committee Chair. “Unlike their colleagues in the Assembly who rushed to approve AB 426 despite strong public opposition, the Senators have demonstrated a willingness to respond to public concerns. While the substitute amendment is a significant improvement, we remain opposed to both the GTac proposal and legislation designed to move it forward. The environmental track record of modern iron ore mining in Minnesota and Michigan demonstrates that Wisconsin has much to fear if AB 426, the Open Pit Strip Mine bill moves forward.”

The Sierra Club maintains that only the highest and most protective standards should be used to judge the largest mine ever proposed in Wisconsin, to be located in a sensitive and pristine watershed feeding the Bad River and Kakagon Sloughs and Lake Superior. Blouin continued, “We agree with Senator Jauch’s statement that there should be no special treatment and exception to environmental policy for mining projects.” The Sloughs are a unique and irreplaceable cultural resource for the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe and are a recognized and designated *Wetland of International Importance** due to their cultural and ecological importance.

Our research has found that all 9 operating taconite mines in Minnesota and Michigan have serious recent air and water quality violations, resulting in nearly \$10 million in fines, stipulations, and cleanup orders over the last 10 years alone. The Environmental Track Record report can be found at:
<http://www.wisconsin.sierraclub.org/documents/TheEnvironmentalTrackRecordofTaconiteMining.pdf>

The Environmental Track Record of Taconite Mining report does not even include the recent fine of \$240,175 for air pollution violations by Northshore Mining, owned by Cliff’s Natural

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Resources in Silver Bay, MN. Announced on February 8, Northshore Mining was fined for more than 30 violations for particulate matter between May 2010 and November 2011 at its taconite processing plant in Silver Bay. Monitoring found that Northshore was generating excessive taconite dust, a federally regulated pollutant that can cause serious heart and lung ailments for both workers and the public. |

* In December, 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs a *Wetland of International Importance*, or Ramsar site. The site now awaits official addition by the Ramsar Secretariat to the official Convention *List of Wetlands of International Importance*.

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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.