

Resolution Calling on the Establishment of a Penokee Hills-Bad River Watershed National Historical and Natural Resources Area

Whereas, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation has been greatly involved in the proposal to create an open-pit iron mine in the Penokee Hills in Iron and Ashland counties;

Whereas, the WWF opposed the weakening of Wisconsin's environmental laws governing the mining of iron ore in Wisconsin;

Whereas, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, including its full 55 member Board of Directors has spent hundreds of hours, including extensive field trips investigating the site of the proposed Penokee mine and the full Bad River watershed from Caroline Lake downstream to Lake Superior;

Whereas, the proposed mining company, Gogebic Taconite, has placed its Penokee mine project on hold and closed its business office in Hurley, Wisconsin citing major regulatory challenges in receiving final mining approval due to the amount of wetlands in and adjacent to the mining project;

Whereas, because the Penokee iron ore body, due to its low iron concentration and its underground configuration, may be too costly to mine with a low profit margin and has been repeatedly explored and not mined by other national iron mining companies over the past 150 years;

Whereas, the Penokee mining site has a vast abundance of valuable water resources, largely being generated by being the location of highest precipitation in the state;

Whereas, the water resources downstream of the Penokee Hills are also very valuable including being the focal point of Copper Falls State Park, the Bad River Indian Reservation, the internationally recognized Kakagon Sloughs wetland complex and Lake Superior, one of the two finest remaining large inland lakes in the world;

Whereas, the Penokee Hills and the Bad River Watershed, besides their high ecological value, have extraordinary archaeological, cultural, historical and recreational value;

Whereas, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation has great concern about the relatively high unemployment rate in communities near the Penokee Hills and has met with representatives of those communities to discuss the local economic situation;

Whereas, the establishment of a major tourism area featuring the rich ecological, historical, recreational and cultural history of the Penokee Hills and the Bad River watershed would provide a very needed increase in employment and the local economy;

Now therefore be it resolved, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, at its 2015 Annual Meeting, in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, on April 10 and 11, 2015, strongly encourages and endorses state, local and federal officials, to plan and establish a Penokee Hill-Black River Watershed National Historical and Natural Resources Area, thereby creating economic growth in the area and protecting these valuable resources for future generations.

Submitted by the WWF Environmental Committee, Russ Hitz and Jim Swanson, Co-Chairs
and by the WWF Forestry and Parks Committee, Jerry Knuth, Chair