

**RESOLUTION #15-2020
LANGLADE COUNTY BOARD**

INTRODUCED BY: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**INTENT: CALL FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION TO PROTECT THE WOLF
RIVER WATERSHED FROM THE IMPACTS OF METALLIC
SULFIDE MINING.**

WHEREAS, there are known metallic sulfide mineral deposits in and around the Wolf River Watershed, and a company was recently granted a license to drill exploration holes in the headwaters of the Wolf River, with the intent to locate an open-pit Metallic Sulfide Mine at that location adjacent to Langlade County; and

WHEREAS, as the defining natural feature in Northeastern Wisconsin, the Wolf River is designated as a natural scenic river and Outstanding Resource Water; and

WHEREAS, the Wolf River is one of the largest watersheds in Wisconsin, encompassing land and water resources within Forest, Oneida, Langlade, Menominee, Shawano, Outagamie, Waupaca, and Winnebago Counties, and thirty-four townships, before draining into Lake Winnebago, and ultimately Lake Michigan; and

WHEREAS, the Wolf River provides a unique habitat for a variety of plants and animals such as trout and other freshwater fish, which would be negatively impacted by discharges related to mining; and

WHEREAS, one of the unique habitats along the Wolf River in Langlade County is located at the Upper Wolf River Fishery Area. This segment of the Wolf River known as the "Oxbow Rapids" has been designated a State Natural Area, and includes numerous seep springs and several spring runs; and

WHEREAS, the loss of the Wolf River as a clean and unpolluted river serving the kayaking, tubing, rafting and fishing communities would have a significant and unrecoverable impact to the tourism businesses in Langlade County; and

WHEREAS, the DNR has invested hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to protect the Wolf River Watershed, and the failure to protect this investment represents poor fiscal management by allowing mining or exploration within the headwaters of the Wolf River; and

WHEREAS, the history of mining near such pristine habitats has demonstrated that it is not an "if", but rather a "when" scenario, of a major environmental catastrophe happening; and

WHEREAS, the potential impacts to the watershed of metallic mining include long term leaching of acid-producing wastes into the groundwater and watersheds which would harm natural habitats, sport-fishing and essential sources of drinking water and impact tourism based economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the hazardous wastes generated by metallic mining would degrade water quality and present risks to human health and the environment in Wisconsin,

and sulfide mines are the largest source of taxpayer liability under the EPA's Superfund cleanup program; and

WHEREAS, the metallic mining within the Wolf River Watershed would result in the irreversible loss of significant cultural resources of the Menominee, Potawatomi, and Ojibwa Tribes of Indians of Wisconsin, including American Indian grave-sites and other areas of historical significance; and

WHEREAS, recent State Laws (including 2017 Wisconsin ACT 134) lifted the ban on metallic mining and the current permitting process for metallic mining leaves governmental entities “downstream” of potential mining impacts without any voice in the approval process when the mining activity occurs outside of municipal boundaries. The current permitting process provides limited opportunity for public comment, environmental analysis, accountability, oversight and local control; and

WHEREAS, since the County’s authority is derived from the State, this resolution represents a “call for action” to the State Legislature and Governor, to grant more authority to Counties with respect to the permitting process and regulation of metallic sulfide mining, specifically when that activity occurs outside municipal boundaries.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Langlade County Board of Supervisors strongly opposes the current State permitting process for metallic sulfide mining in Wisconsin, including metallic mineral exploration, and calls upon the Wisconsin DNR, the Wisconsin State Legislature, and Governor to adopt new rules which would deny permits for any metallic sulfide mine within the Wolf River Watershed area until the deficiencies in the current permitting process are resolved to identify and address state-wide and local environmental impacts by allowing all units of government within the Wolf River Watershed to participate in the permitting process for any proposed mining project within the Wolf River Watershed; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Langlade County Board of Supervisors calls upon the State Legislature and Governor to repeal 2017 Wisconsin ACT 134, and to enact new Legislation that provides greater protection of the Wolf River Watershed from the impacts of metallic sulfide mining, and that grants greater local control to Counties and other local governmental units to address local concerns related to metallic sulfide mining and exploration.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of the Resolution be forwarded to Governor Evers, the County’s representatives in the Wisconsin Legislature and the U.S. Congress, the Oneida County Clerk and the Wisconsin Counties Association.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

David J. Solin, Chairman

Ronald M. Nye

Don Scupien

Ben Pierce

William Livingston

FISCAL NOTE: No fiscal impact at this time.

Adopted by the County Board of Langlade
County this 17th day of March, 2020.

Judy Nagel, Langlade County Clerk