

September 2, 2013

TO: Tom Tiffany/Glenn Grothman

RE: Senate Bill 278 and public access to managed forest land that is located in a proposed mining site.

You probably realize the real reason for GTac asking for yet one more exemption from Wisconsin law has nothing whatsoever to do with protecting their workers. One incident of a foul-mouthed, misguided group last June has not been repeated. The true reason for GTac asking to bend rules so they can lock the public out is that they do not want any further exploration of the area by hydrologists who might identify additional cold headwater streams that give life to our abundant trout fishery.

They don't want scientists exploring and documenting wetlands that collect, then slowly release, the abundant rains and snow melt, preventing flooding and erosion for many miles downstream. They fear identification of plant and animal species that exist in the area and might raise concerns about their destruction in favor of a mine.

They don't want geologists poking around for fear of them finding asbestos or pyrite and alerting the public to the dangers. This entire process, from the day we first heard of Gogebic Taconite, has been sorely lacking in SCIENCE. That is apparently what the mining company wants. You appear poised to make another mistake to the benefit of a company and the detriment of the people of Northern Wisconsin.

Throughout the so-called hearings (so called because those who were supposedly listening responded in favor of an inexperienced LLC passing out campaign contributions instead of to the overwhelming majority), legislators spoke of how desperate the Ashland/Iron County area is financially. So why now, would you suggest that two of the poorest towns in those counties be screwed out of the back taxes that are legally owed to those communities?

Managed Forest Land rules and regulations are well defined. Many of us abide by them and have for years. The rule is that if you no longer want to offer your forest to others for recreation, you pay the back taxes--just as I would or my neighbors would. But a billionaire who wants to rape our land for profit is exempt? For a company that has made all sorts of promises about bringing prosperity to our area, GTac has certainly sent a lot of contributions to legislators to buy their way out of following the rules.

Why should this mining company who would allegedly spend over a billion dollars to 'improve' our region get a special deal exempting them from following Managed Forest laws? I'm disgusted and embarrassed at the way Republican lawmakers have accepted mining company 'contributions' to allow them to walk all over the citizens of this area and the most basic protections of our environment.

MFL rates rules were designed to offer more open forest lands for citizens. The law allows only 160 acres per owner, per municipality as 'closed' managed forest land.

Do the right thing for the citizens of Wisconsin and DO NOT PASS SB278

Bobbi Rongstad

Iron County