

Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality - Tomahawk, WI (July 23, 2019)

Public Testimony of Dave Noel, Oneida County, WI

My name is Dave Noel. I live in Eagle River, WI.
I am a retired engineer.

I want to commend the Task Force for their interest in solving existing water quality problems within the state. However, I urge you to also recognize the opportunities for prevention.

Healthy surface waters are critical to the northwoods economy.

Oneida and Vilas Counties have one of the highest concentrations of freshwater lakes in the world. People live and visit the northwoods because of these pristine waters.

- Revenue from tourism was \$440 million (2017).
- Assessed residential waterfront property value is \$9.5 billion (2018).
- Over 75% of all residential value is in waterfront properties (2018).
- Seasonal waterfront homeowners contribute an estimated \$130 million per year to the local economy.

If lake and river water quality deteriorates, waterfront properties values will erode, tourists will find other areas to visit, and seasonal homeowners will spend less time at their lake homes. These are facts. The impact to home price values alone is devastating.

In 2018 significant changes went into effect regarding non-ferrous metallic mining in Wisconsin. The changes contained within Act 134 opened the northwoods surface waters to sulfide contamination in the form of acid mine drainage. There seems to be a belief by many that modern technology has made metallic mining safe for the environment. This is simply not true. Modern mining technology is instead making it easier to mine lower-grade ores, which results in larger amounts of reactive wastes requiring permanent safe disposal. There are no new technologies to mitigate the need for the storage of the sulfide ore waste in tailings ponds for hundreds of years. Yes, I said hundreds of years !

There has never been a successful, environmentally safe metallic sulfide mine operation in the US. Never! Metallic sulfide mining represents a clear and present danger to our wetlands and surface water, and because of this it deserves your attention.

This is your opportunity to protect the surface waters of northern Wisconsin. Don't wait until it's too late, forcing the state to hold hearings on how to clean-up our waters from the devastating impact of acid mine drainage.

Your call to action is to repeal Act 134 and bring back the "prove it first law" that protected our valuable surface waters and natural resources.

Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Attached source documents:

- (1) [*Economic Value of Lakes & Rivers in Oneida County, WI*](#) (D. Noel 2019)
- (2) [*Impact of Water Clarity on Home Prices in Oneida & Vilas County, WI*](#) (T. Kemp 2018)