



## **Environmental Groups Call for Increased Scrutiny of Metallic Mining Rules** ***Changes to DNR Draft Rules Necessary to Strengthen Environmental Protections***

**For immediate release:** October 26, 2020

**Contact:** Peg Sheaffer, MEA Communications Director  
(608) 251-5047 x 3, [psheaffer@midwestadvocates.org](mailto:psheaffer@midwestadvocates.org)

**Madison, WI**—Today, Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA), along with 9 other groups, submitted comments to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), urging the Department to modify draft rules related to sulfide metallic mining. A 2017 bill passed by the state legislature weakened mining laws and prompted the current agency rulemaking process. While the 2017 law constrains DNR's discretion in the rulemaking process, the groups offered numerous comments to bring additional clarity to the draft rules and to strengthen environmental protections.

"The level of risk nonferrous metallic mineral mining brings to our natural resources requires the maximum amount of scrutiny and oversight from the public and the DNR," said Allison Werner, Policy & Advocacy Director at River Alliance of Wisconsin. "It is particularly important to protect our most sensitive areas like trout streams, and outstanding and exceptional resource waters and wild rice waters from sulfide mining pollution."

"These rules provide the framework for protecting Wisconsin's environment from potential mining operations," said Tom Jerow of Wisconsin's Green Fire. "Water resources are particularly sensitive and vulnerable to contamination from sulfide mining."

"Given the large scale of metallic mining operations and the potential for significant harm to the environment, it is essential to scrutinize these rules now, before they are put into practice," said MEA attorney and Equal Justice Works fellow Robert Lundberg. "As we explained in our comments, certain changes need to be made to clarify language related to the bulk sampling process and the protection of sensitive areas. We also urge the DNR to exercise its discretion to hold more than the single required informational hearing before issuing a mining permit."

The DNR is expected to review all comments received during the public comment period and to revise the draft rules based on those comments over the next two months. The agency will then submit the proposed final rules to the Natural Resources Board and the state legislature for approval. Both must approve the final rules by February 27, 2021 for them to take effect.

*Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest law center that works to defend public rights, protect natural resources, and ensure transparency and accountability in government. Learn more at [www.midwestadvocates.org](http://www.midwestadvocates.org) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/midwestadvocates](http://www.facebook.com/midwestadvocates).*

*Formed in 1993, River Alliance of Wisconsin is a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that empowers people to protect and restore Wisconsin's waters. The organization's membership includes more than 1,500 individuals, businesses, and local watershed groups. For more information, visit: [www.wisconsinrivers.org](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org)*

*Wisconsin's Green Fire supports the conservation legacy of Wisconsin by promoting science-based management of Wisconsin's natural resources. Learn more at [www.wigreenfire.org](http://www.wigreenfire.org).*

*Sierra Club is Wisconsin's voice for the nation's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. Learn more at <https://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin>*

###