



## National Wildlife Federation to Challenge Michigan's Approval of Dangerous Mine

**MARQUETTE, MICH. (January 15)**—The National Wildlife Federation today vowed to challenge a Thursday decision by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to allow a controversial mine to proceed—even though the decision by the agency contradicts opinions by internal experts who have warned that the mine is unsafe and could result in a mine collapse.

“The mining plan is unsafe, and the DEQ’s decision to let it proceed is flawed, illegal and goes against the interests of the people of Michigan,” said **Michelle Halley, an attorney representing the National Wildlife Federation**. “We will challenge this decision to protect Michigan from this dangerous form of mining that has proven to be unsafe to people, communities and wildlife in other states.”

The decision to issue two permits for the Upper Peninsula mine—known as the Eagle Project—also flies in the face of a recent decision by an administrative law judge, who concluded that the grounds on which the mine would be constructed is a sacred site to native people that should be protected.

The National Wildlife Federation criticized the timing of the decision, which was made before an administrative law judge had finished reviewing new information that the DEQ itself had requested to evaluate the risk the mine could pose to people and water quality. The decision comes days before the authority to decide on the mining permits would have been shifted to the newly appointed director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

“Instead of leveling with the people of Michigan, the Granholm Administration has chosen to push a controversial decision forward without a full accounting,” said Halley. “The result is a decision that short-changes the people, wildlife and economy of Michigan. We will appeal this decision and seek justice elsewhere.”

The National Wildlife Federation’s Halley said that groups opposed to the mine—including the Huron Mountain Club, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve—intend to appeal the decision.

The permits allow a controversial mining project to move forward that would fence off a documented indigenous sacred site and allow the discharge of pollutants to ground water and surface water. The mine would change the nature of the region from valuable wildlife habitat to an industrial park.

The Eagle Mine is the first mine in Michigan that aims to extract metals from sulfide ore bodies. This type of mining—known as hard rock mining in the West—often produces, as a byproduct, sulfuric acid that can prove deadly to rivers, streams, fish and wildlife for decades after closure of the mine.

The Eagle Mine would be adjacent to the Salmon Trout River—one of the last mainland U.S. rivers used as spawning grounds by the Coaster Brook Trout.

“Any final decision on this mine and the fate of the Great Lakes is a long way off,” said **Cynthia Pryor of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve**, a local group opposing the mine. “We will fight this project, because it is unsafe and because the process has been perverted, for as long as we can.”

The National Wildlife Federation is America's largest conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

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