



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is the state agency with primary responsibility for regulating environmental aspects of metallic mining activities. Activities related to ferrous metallic mining are subject to regulation by the DNR under subchapter III of Chapter 295, Wis. Stats. This regulatory framework was established in 2013 Wisconsin Act 1, passed by the Wisconsin State Legislature and signed by Governor Walker in the spring of 2013.

Gogebic Taconite, LLC, Mining Activities

In the spring of 2013, the DNR issued an exploration license to Gogebic Taconite, LLC, under the new ferrous mining law.

The company has obtained samples from eight exploration drill sites and is now seeking approval for further sampling. The department has created a team to review the information that has been submitted, and the agency is seeking comments from the public on the company's proposed bulk sampling activities and the preapplication description of the potential mine project.

Bulk Sampling Activities

Gogebic Taconite submitted materials for a proposed bulk sampling plan to the DNR on June 18 and July 28, 2013. The purpose of the proposed bulk sampling is to collect ore samples, which will provide the company with information needed to design processing facilities if a mining project were to be developed.

The company has proposed to remove approximately 4,000 tons of rock from 4 or 5 sites located in the town of Anderson, Iron County, Wisconsin, and the town of Morse in Ashland County. Rock samples will be removed using excavation equipment. Sampling could also involve some blasting activity, though the company is reviewing the need to use explosives.

The samples will be transported to an off-site facility for testing and analysis. After the bulk sampling activity is completed, each site will be re-sloped and re-vegetated.

The following steps are required before any bulk sampling activity can occur:

- the department must identify necessary approvals and the company must submit applications for all approvals required for bulk sampling;
- following submittal of the applications, the DNR has 30 days to determine if the applications are complete;
- once an application is complete, the department has 30 days or 60 days to issue a decision for permit coverage; and
- any bulk sampling activity must be conducted at locations that result in the fewest overall adverse environmental impacts.

Preapplication Notice of Intent

On June 18, 2013, Gogebic Taconite also submitted a preapplication notice of intent to file an application for a mining permit. The preapplication serves to provide notice to the DNR and other interested parties that the company may submit an application for a mining permit at some time in the future, but no sooner than 12 months from the date of submittal of the preapplication notice.

The notice of intent does not request authorization or approval for any mining activity. It includes a description of the proposed mining site and operating procedures.

The following steps are required in response to the preapplication notice:

- the DNR must hold a public hearing to obtain comments on the preapplication notice;
- the DNR must identify any approvals that may be needed for the potential mining project;
- the department must inform Gogebic Taconite of the requirements for the submission of an Environmental Impact Report and any other information needed for the agency's completion of an Environmental Impact Statement; and
- the company and the department must meet with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies.

The preapplication notice is the beginning of a process of information sharing that will help Gogebic Taconite determine whether and when to file an application for a mining permit.

For More Information

The public can view additional information on the DNR website at dnr.wi.gov/topic/Mines/Gogebic.html. People can sign up to receive email updates on the project through that page by clicking on the link "Subscribe to Gogebic Taconite project email updates."

Gogebic Taconite's project materials are also available at the Hurley Public Library, 405 5th Ave. N., Hurley, 715-561-5707; and at the Vaughn Public Library, 502 West Main St., Ashland, 715-682-7060.