

Modern mining makes both economic growth and environmental stewardship possible

Wisconsin Mining Association study identifies best practices in other states, concludes Wisconsin needs to modernize its mining laws

MADISON — Wisconsin Mining Association (WMA) released today a study done for the organization by international mineral industry consultant Behre Dolbear on how other states have managed to create good mining jobs while honoring their environmental responsibilities.

Testifying at a Wisconsin State Senate Select Committee on Mining hearing, Tim Sullivan, former president and CEO of mining equipment manufacturer Bucyrus International and chair of the WMA said, "Investors, mining companies, federal, state and local regulators, policy makers and tribal governments across the nation have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve a reasonable and responsible balance that yields good jobs, much needed tax revenues and welcome profits. Was it always

easy? No. Did everyone always get exactly what they wanted? Probably not. Did they sell out their environmental heritage or their take a pass on their regulatory responsibilities? Absolutely not!"

The newly released study identifies five hallmarks of modern mining best practices in the United States, including: 1. recognizing that federal, state, tribal and local governments all have a role, and the process works best when the state is the lead and coordinating agency; 2. regulations work best when they provide clear pathways with precise environmental standards and objectives; 3. permitting and enforcement procedures work best when they contain reasonable and predictable timelines based on the scope, magnitude and complexity of the project; 4. in best practice states, the mining industry is engaged with state legislators and regulators to ensure that best management practices, most current technologies and recog-

nized characterizations are incorporated into legislation, regulations and site planning standards; and 5. it is important that the process be transparent and actively include all stakeholders early in the process to resolve possible conflicts.

"It is clear," Sullivan said, "that Wisconsin's current mining laws do not reflect either the technological advances developed and implemented in the mining industry over the past quarter of a century, or the regulatory advances that now serve as best practices in the United States and elsewhere.

In his testimony, Sullivan highlighted the economic importance of the state's mineral deposits, telling legislators, that "today, some of the richest mineral deposits in our country lie buried under Wisconsin and thousands of good jobs are buried there with them. Everyone here is familiar with the estimates that suggest that the Gogebic iron ore deposit could

generate more than 3,000 good paying jobs in the Iron and Ashland counties area. Wisconsin is also endowed with known deposits of zinc, copper and gold and prospective deposits of nickel. How many jobs are waiting in those sites?"

Sullivan indicated that seizing these two opportunities is now the focus of the Wisconsin Mining Association. "We look forward to working with environmental engineers, regulators, conservationists, legal experts, representatives of the mining industry and policy makers to ensure our laws provide clear pathways with precise standards and objectives, contain reasonable and predictable timelines, and do not create unnecessary road blocks that prevent responsible mining from occurring in Wisconsin," the WMA Chair said.

Sullivan agreed with Governor Walker that the first priority should be the passage of a ferrous mining bill that could encourage investors to support the massive research

effort required to permit an iron mine in Northern Wisconsin. Sullivan indicated that the WMA believes that the logical starting point for this effort is the Finance Committee version of AB426, which, he said, "reflects extensive input from experts and the public and which we believe will benefit from the best practice research we presented here today."

Sullivan concluded his testimony stressing the need for further reforms to encourage the development of the state's base metal deposits. "A positive and effective response to Wisconsin's iron mining opportunities is absolutely critical, but there is other work to be done," he said, "Wisconsin also has rich base metal deposits and action on ferrous mining must be quickly followed up with a focus on modernizing current regulations so that those jobs and brighter economic futures can also be made available to the people of our state."

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