



John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

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HAND DELIVERED

Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler,

Thank you for your service and leadership at the EPA. I appreciate you taking the time to visit Wisconsin and my hometown of Marinette. Wisconsin boasts beauty rarely matched by other parts of the country and a wide array of natural resources. These assets are at the heart of our citizens' wellbeing, tourism and the outdoor economy, and play a key role in the success of industry located here. Protecting our natural resources is something we take seriously.

However, Wisconsin faces a stiff set of environmental challenges that deserve EPA's full attention and response. As you visit Northeast Wisconsin, I would like to highlight two of the most pressing issues in the 89th Assembly District: per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) contamination, and the proposed "Back 40" mine in Lake Township, Michigan.

Marinette holds the unfortunate distinction of being the area most affected by PFAS contamination in Wisconsin. It is also one of the most significant hotspots in the entire country. Decades of poorly contained firefighting foam and other possible sources resulted in groundwater and other known environmental contamination spanning several square miles. As the responsible party has been working through their site investigation and cleanup over the last few years, regulators at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have said the remediation would be improved if PFAS were regulated at the federal level. I am aware of EPA's work on the PFAS Action Plan, and am hopeful your agency works as expeditiously as possible to complete the objectives set forth within it.

The second issue I would like to highlight is Aquila Resources' proposed "Back 40" mine on the Menominee River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. EPA has delegated regulatory authority to Michigan's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, but any negative effects of the mine will impact northern Wisconsin and others downstream in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin DNR has stated they will implement monitoring efforts along the river, but will otherwise be left on the sidelines if the mine is approved. For these reasons, I am asking EPA to give Wisconsin a

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seat at the table in the permitting process for the “Back 40” mine. Interstate and federal collaboration have resulted in major progress toward removing the Lower Menominee River as an Area of Concern. It would be a shame for these efforts to all be for naught, especially if mining commences without a full slate of regulatory input from the state that stands to lose the most should operations go awry.

Thank you again for making the trip and visiting Marinette. We have a lot to be proud of here, but ultimately need EPA’s leadership to help us overcome some of the environmental challenges here, especially PFAS and the “Back 40” mine. I appreciate your consideration.

Regards,

John Nygren
State Representative
Assembly District 89