Wisconsin Resources Protection Council

IS THE FLAMBEAU MINE HARMING THE FLAMBEAU RIVER?

Between 1991 and 2011 Kennecott was required to test walleye in the Flambeau River for heavy metal accumulation, both upstream and downstream of the Flambeau Mine site. Before the mine was built in 1993, the upstream walleye had higher levels of copper and zinc in their liver tissue than the downstream fish. That reversed in 1996 (at the height of mining); for the next ten years (1996-2006) higher levels of copper and zinc were measured in the downstream fish. A graph of the 2005 data is shown below.

**Flambeau Mine Walleye-ometer**

![Graph showing walleye data](image)

What the future holds for the walleye in the Flambeau River is unknown. Polluted groundwater from the Flambeau Mine site continues to enter the river through fractured bedrock, but, with the end of mandatory testing of walleye in 2011, Kennecott is now “off the hook.”

Kennecott Lied to the People of Wisconsin

The Flambeau Mine pit was dug to within 150 feet of the Flambeau River. During the permitting process, people were worried that groundwater polluted with heavy metals would get into the river from the mine site. Kennecott responded by telling the people that there was nothing to worry about because the bedrock between the mine pit and the Flambeau River was like the “Hoover Dam.” The plaque pictured below was actually posted at the mine site:

![Plaque stating the bedrock is like the Hoover Dam](image)

Only later did the public learn that Kennecott had lied. An open records request of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources revealed that Kennecott knew in 1989, before the mine was built, that the rock between the pit and the river was “fractured” and that the contaminated groundwater leaving the mine pit would “flow directly into the bed of the Flambeau River.” That includes the water contaminated with sulfate and manganese shown in this brochure!

Protect the Water!

Expose the Myth of the Flambeau Mine

Save the Penokee Hills

Kill AB 426!

If the current mining laws in the State of Wisconsin could not protect public waters at a mine as small as the Flambeau Mine, there is no way that the weaker regulations proposed in AB 426 will be able to protect the Bad River and Lake Superior from being polluted by the monstrous mine proposed for the Penokee Hills.

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The Myth of the Flambeau Mine

If you go to the website of Kennecott Eagle Minerals Company (a subsidiary of Rio Tinto of London), you will find the following Q&A:

Q: Has there ever been a metallic mineral mine that succeeded in protecting the environment?

Kennecott says: “Yes. Not only has there been, but at the Flambeau Mine in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, Kennecott Minerals is the company that successfully designed, operated, and reclaimed a sulfide host metallic mineral mine while protecting the environment from adverse impact.”

The above statement from Kennecott is **blatantly false**. The groundwater at the Flambeau Mine site is **highly polluted**, and we have the graphs to prove it.

**Sulfate Pollution in the Water at the Flambeau Mine Site**

In Minnesota, the sulfate standard set to protect wild rice is 10 mg/l. There is a well at the Flambeau Mine site that has registered sulfate levels close to 1800 mg/l – 180 times the standard set to protect wild rice.

According to Kennecott, it’s going to take **3,000 - 4,000 years** for sulfate and various metals that are polluting the groundwater at the Flambeau Mine site to return to normal!

**The groundwater has been polluted forever.**

**Water is Life!**

The Flambeau Mine pit was 32 acres in size, a half mile long, 550 feet wide and 220 feet deep.

If the Flambeau Mine were a pea, the mine proposed for the Penokee Hills would be a watermelon.

Kennecott told the people of Wisconsin that manganese levels in the groundwater at the Flambeau Mine site would end up being about **550 ppb**, but a well located 600 feet from the Flambeau River has registered levels of **42,000 ppb** - **75 times higher** than predicted! Drinking water with that much manganese in it is known to cause the kind of nerve damage seen in Parkinson’s disease.

We need to STRENGTHEN Wisconsin’s mining laws, not weaken them.

It’s as simple as that.