



OFFICE OF THE CHAIR
**MENOMINEE INDIAN
TRIBE OF WISCONSIN**

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Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, February, 24, 2017

Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin Challenges

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ)

Approval of Aquila Resources' Back Forty Mine Permit

(Keshena, WI) – The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin has formally filed a petition for a contested case hearing on the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) approval of the Back Forty Mine Permit issued on December 28, 2016. The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin's petition was filed Friday February 24, 2017 with the Michigan Administrative Hearing Office. The petition for a contested case hearing is the first step in challenging the MDEQ's decision to approve the mining permit for the proposed Back Forty Mine.

"The MDEQ and Aquila Resources Inc. are well aware of the Menominee Indian Tribe's close cultural connection to this area and our serious concern in regards to our cultural resources and mounds, including our ancestral burial sites located within the impact area of the proposed mine. Despite these valid and well documented concerns a full evaluation of the cultural resources and mounds threatened by this project never occurred" stated Gary Besaw, Menominee Tribal Chairman.

The Mining Permit is one of four required permits for the proposed Back Forty Mine. On December 28, 2016, the MDEQ approved Aquila's Nonferrous Metallic Mineral Mining Permit and the Michigan Air Use Permit to Install for the project. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and the permit for wetland impacts are currently under consideration before the MDEQ. The proposed Back Forty Mine project consists of a planned open pit metallic sulfide mine a mere 150 feet from the banks of the Menominee River. The Menominee River, which forms the boundary between Upper Michigan and Wisconsin, is the place of origin for the Menominee Tribe. A diverse mixture of governments, environmental groups, citizen's groups and grassroots groups are opposed to the mine and its disastrous impacts.

Last Thursday, the University of Michigan following the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) confirmed the Menominee Tribe's cultural affiliation with remains taken from the Backlund Mounds and Village Site in the 1950's. The Backlund Mounds and Village site are just one of many culturally significant sites of the Menominee Tribe that lie within the footprint of the proposed Back Forty Mine.

The Menominee Indian Tribe is steadfast in its commitment and responsibility to protect its sacred sites, and the people and wildlife that depend on the Menominee River watershed, the largest watershed in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. For more information on Menominee's efforts visit www.noback40.org.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE February 24, 2016 Contact: Gary Besaw Tribal Chairman (715)799-5114

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