

Alexandra Thebert
Executive Director
Save the Wild U.P.
P.O. Box 562
Marquette, MI 49855

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Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
Water Resources Division, Permits Section
P.O. Box 30458
Lansing, Michigan 48909

To Whom it May Concern:

I write as the Executive Director of Save the Wild U.P. (SWUP) to submit formal comment regarding Permit No. GW1810162 -- the draft groundwater discharge permit at the proposed Eagle Mine.

In addition to the technical and environmental issues concerned citizens have thoughtfully outlined, we are dismayed and disappointed by the lack of transparency within the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

We at Save the Wild U.P. requested in advance of the March 25th Public Hearing several documents that we knew that the MDEQ had sent out. Those included a soil review, a surface water review and a hydrogeologic survey, and we were told that those would not be given to us in advance of this hearing.

Rather than fully submit to the scrutiny of a Public Hearing and Comment Period, the state's own press materials declared the permit already renewed, and Lundin Mining used state regulator remarks praising this weakened permit in its press releases -- a sign that the industry and regulators lack healthy distance.

The MDEQ neglected to include the March 25th Public Hearing in its own March 24th calendar of events announcing Public Hearings -- despite including numerous March 24th events. Additionally, on March 26th when a correction was issued to update the calendar, the groundwater discharge public comment period was again not included in this announcement.

The MDEQ's own weblink in its announcement of the Public Hearing does not function, and the MDEQ did not include this groundwater permit in its own database of groundwater permits open for public comment, showcasing outrageous disregard for the public.

There have been other instances in which concerned citizens have requested basic information about the fees with permitting at the Eagle Mine site and they have been asked to submit Freedom of Information Requests.

Fundamentally, the Eagle Project lacks a NPDES permit and we feel that the MDEQ is skirting regulations by not requiring a NPDES -- to the great detriment of our watersheds -- and is perplexing given the public statements by state regulators that the discharges of the Eagle project will become surface waters.

We are dismayed that the MDEQ would hold a Public Comment Period but not announce a Public Hearing until after the comment period has closed -- and we are not aware of precedent for such actions. Further, when Ms. Jeanette Bailey was asked why a Public Hearing would not be announced until after the initial comment period had closed, she said that she did not want to hold a hearing "just to rehash old issues" -- implying the concerns regarding elevated permissible pollutants in our ground and surface water stems from ideological grounds rather than the scientific analysis and scrutiny we've applied.

We feel that these actions -- and lack of interest in citizen participation -- speak poorly of the Department. We hope that the MDEQ will join us in supporting citizen engagement by making information clear and accessible -- and adherent to the MDEQ's own protocols.

Sunshine is the best disinfectant and transparency and public scrutiny are the best tools for a healthy democracy. Democracy is built on information and discourse -- and should be encouraged by our public bodies and institutions. Good ideas can withstand transparency and public scrutiny -- and it speaks poorly of the MDEQ that they've made concerned citizens struggle to obtain basic information about such a potentially hazardous mega project as the Eagle Mine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Thebert".

Alexandra Thebert

CC: Susan Hedman, EPA Region 5