

The Back Forty Mine

Why is this important?

- Aquila Resources wants to develop an open pit (2000ft wide x 750ft deep) massive gold-zinc sulfide mine 150ft from the Menominee River, which forms the boundary between Wisconsin and Michigan.
- The Menominee River is the largest river system in the Upper Peninsula with a 4,000 sq. mile drainage system.
- The Menominee River is culturally significant as a major prehistoric travel corridor for indigenous peoples and the source of Creation for the Menominee Indian Tribe.
- The Menominee River watershed supports sturgeon spawning, strong populations of small mouth bass, walleye, northern pike and trout.
- Dewatering the mine pit can lower ground water levels around the mine, harming the Shakey Lakes Savanna, a 1,520-acre natural area, part of the Escanaba state forest.
- Metallic sulfide mines in the United States will pollute up to 27 million gallons of fresh water per year. The main reason is acid mine drainage which occurs when mineral deposits containing sulfides are exposed to air and water during excavation.
- Metallic sulfide mines have contaminated 12,000 miles of river and streams in the United States. When exposed to air and water the resulting sulfuric acid can release harmful metals like arsenic, lead and mercury into surface and ground waters, threatening local water supplies and human health.
- The vast majority (97%) of the rock ends up being sulfide-bearing waste rock that is stored in tailings dams at the mine site. The waste contains cyanide used to extract gold during processing on-site.
- This mine poses a major threat to the Menominee Indian Tribe's cultural resources. Over 20 of Menominee's known cultural sites are within the project area. Including Burial mounds, prehistoric garden beds and prehistoric village sites.

- Biologists estimate there are only 3,000 sturgeon of breeding age in all of Lake Michigan, down from an estimated two million of them at the turn of the century. Their population will not expand unless they can reach spawning habitat. The Menominee River, likely the birthplace of many old sturgeon in Lake Michigan, is ideal habitat.
- After years of planning, the City of Marinette and WDNR, with financial support through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, have begun Menekaunee Harbor restoration activities. 2014 activities included removal of the failing seawall and removal of 27,100 cubic yards of contaminated sediment and 31,900 cubic yards of excess sediment.
- Five hydroelectric dams on the Menominee River prevent all lake sturgeon from migrating up the river from Lake Michigan to reach their prime spawning and rearing habitat. Two of the five hydro dams are within the AOC; these serve as the initial barriers to passage and have contributed to the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat beneficial use impairment. The Menominee Fish Passage Partnership, comprised of state and federal agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, and a private energy company, is developing safe and effective ways for lake sturgeon to move around the dams.
- \$7.8M has been secured through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and private sources to move lake sturgeon around two Menominee River Dams as part of the Menominee River Sturgeon Passage Project.