

Department of Environmental Quality
Public Comment Process for the Proposed Aquila Back Forty Mine Project

Aquila Resources has applied for permits from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) for the Back Forty project, a proposed open pit gold, zinc, and copper mine and processing facility in Lake Township, Menominee County, Michigan.

Proposed Actions

The MDEQ is seeking comments from interested persons on three pending permit decisions for the Back Forty Project. Approval of each application is necessary for the facility to begin operation. Rather than requiring citizens to provide comments separately on each of the three proposed decisions, the MDEQ has elected to hold one consolidated hearing and public comment period. Below is a brief summary of each permit application:

1. **Air Use Permit** – The proposed mine and mill operation requires a permit for new sources of air emissions. The proposed mine and ore beneficiation and processing facility must meet state and federal air quality requirements. The draft permit conditions include emission restrictions and operational requirements.
2. **National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES)** – The proposed mill operation requires a permit to discharge to surface waters of the state. The permit contains conditions and requirements to assure that all water quality standards will be met and the designated uses of the receiving waters will be protected.
3. **Nonferrous Metallic Mineral Mining Permit (Part 632)** – The proposed mine and mill operation requires a mine permit, which includes financial assurance, to conduct mining and milling operations. The draft permit specifies conditions to assure the mine and milling operation meets the requirements of the law and will protect natural resources, the environment, and public health.

A fourth permit application, for impacts to wetlands, will be considered by the MDEQ in a separate review process.

Public Participation

The MDEQ will accept written comments on the proposed actions through **November 3, 2016**. A public hearing will be held at the at Stephenson High School gymnasium, W526 Division Street, Stephenson, Michigan 49887, on **October 6, 2016**, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

All interested persons are encouraged to present their views on any or all of the proposed actions either at the hearing or during the comment period. There are four methods for a person or organization to provide their input on the proposals:

1. Speak during the Public Hearing.
2. Provide your written comments at the Public Hearing.
3. E-mail your comments to the designated MDEQ mailbox at: **DEQ-Mining-Comments@michigan.gov**. After submitting your comments, you will receive an automated confirmation.
4. Mail your comments to MDEQ Back Forty Comments, Office of Oil, Gas, and Minerals, 1504 West Washington Street, Marquette, MI 49855.

A person or organization may both speak at the public hearing and provide comments through the other methods listed above. The comments received will be distributed to the MDEQ staff reviewing the Back Forty Mine proposal. All comments presented by **5:00 p.m. on November 3** will be considered prior to final action.

Public Hearing

The public hearing is an opportunity for individuals and organizations to provide verbal testimony before the MDEQ on the proposed mine and the proposed permit actions. As people enter the hearing location, they will be encouraged to complete an attendance card. These attendance cards have two purposes: to identify individuals who wish to speak during the hearing, and to establish a mailing list for later mailings regarding the proposed facility. Those wishing to speak during the hearing should complete a colored attendance card while those not wishing to speak should complete a white attendance card. This will allow the MDEQ to quickly identify the cards of those wishing to provide testimony. A person can complete a colored attendance card at any time during the hearing. Also, a person is not required to speak if they have completed a colored attendance card. Everyone completing an attendance card will be included on the mailing list.

Throughout the hearing hours, technical staff of the MDEQ will be available in an area adjacent to the hearing room to answer questions regarding the MDEQ's reviews and proposed actions. There will not be any formal presentations. Additional copies of the staff analyses and documents will be available.

Inside the hearing room, seated at a table at the front will be the Hearing Officer and the MDEQ decision-makers or representatives. There will be a microphone and podium facing the table at the front of the seating area. This microphone is used by the public to provide their testimony. The hearing is for testimony only.

Questions regarding the proposed project will not be answered in the hearing room.

At the beginning of the public hearing, the Hearing Officer will read a brief statement on the purpose of the hearing and the procedures that will be followed during the hearing. Using the submitted colored attendance cards, the Hearing Officer will then begin calling persons to testify at the microphone. Because it is expected that many people will want to speak, testimony will be limited to **five** minutes. A speaker may indicate that they wish to testify again and their attendance card will be placed in line behind those who have not yet spoken.