



THREE ORGANIZATIONS UNITE TO APPEAL CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR SKUNK HOLLOW MINE

By: Erin Ter Beest of the Green Lake Association

GREEN LAKE, WISCONSIN, July 29, 2022- Three local entities—the Green Lake Association (GLA), the Green Lake Conservancy (GLC), and the Green Lake Sanitary District (GLSD)—are joining forces to appeal a conditional use permit for Skunk Hollow Mine.

“Mining operations at this location have the potential to degrade water quality—not only for neighboring water resources, but for Green Lake as a whole,” said Stephanie Prellwitz, Executive Director of the Green Lake Association. “We are asking for a fair, thorough process to review the proposal since so much is at stake. We cannot sacrifice short-term gains for permanent damage to our tremendous ecological assets.”

Nonmetallic mines have been shown to disrupt groundwater levels, which can negatively affect conditions in surrounding springs and deplete local drinking water supplies. Groundwater discharge provides sustained flow to two nearby springs, Powell Spring and Mitchell Glen.

The group has also found records of sulfide minerals within bedrock in nearby parcels. These sulfide minerals do no harm when left alone. However, when exposed to oxygen—during mining operations, for example—a chemical reaction can be triggered that creates acid mine drainage that can cause fish kills in downstream waterways.

Surface runoff from the mine site would drain toward White Creek and Dakin Creek, two trout streams that flow to Green Lake. The GLA recently partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Patagonia, and nearby landowners to re-establish a brook trout population that has been absent from Dakin Creek for over 70 years.

A WDNR survey completed this month confirmed that brook trout are now naturally reproducing in Dakin Creek, a good sign for the fish species. Brook trout rely on clean, cool water to survive. The group worries that development pressure from Skunk Hollow Mine, should it proceed, could potentially jeopardize this ecological milestone.

If plans approved by the Green Lake County’s Land Use Planning and Zoning Committee move forward, the 40-acre non-metallic limestone quarry will be located at the northeast corner of County Highway K and Brooklyn G Road, located one mile from Green Lake’s east end.

The site is one farm field away from Powell Spring and Mitchell Glen, two groundwater-fed, ecologically sensitive systems. Mitchell Glen is a protected site owned by the GLSD, iconic for a 40-foot waterfall within a sandstone gorge and unique flora and fauna that are sustained by the unusual microclimate.

“We understand the need for aggregate material in Green Lake County, but the problem is the location selected for the proposed quarry,” said Lisa Reas, Administrator of the Green Lake Sanitary District. “Mitchell Glen and Powell Spring are two unique properties that are our responsibility to protect.”

The GLC recently acquired Powell Spring, which contains a large cold-water spring that discharges water at approximately 4.5 cubic feet per second during the spring season.

Melissa Curran, Interim President of the Green Lake Conservancy, stated that “permanent protection of Mitchell Glen and Powell Spring have been important community projects, and we want to ensure they will be available for all future generations to enjoy.”

Only landowners within 300 feet of the mine’s property lines learned about the mine after receiving a letter from the Green Lake County Land Use Planning and Zoning Department, advising of a public hearing scheduled in two weeks. Other neighbors who complained about the lack of communication received a notice just before the holiday weekend, on July 1, 2022, about the public hearing scheduled six days later, on July 7, 2022. Two public notices were published in a local newspaper on June 23 and June 30, 2022.

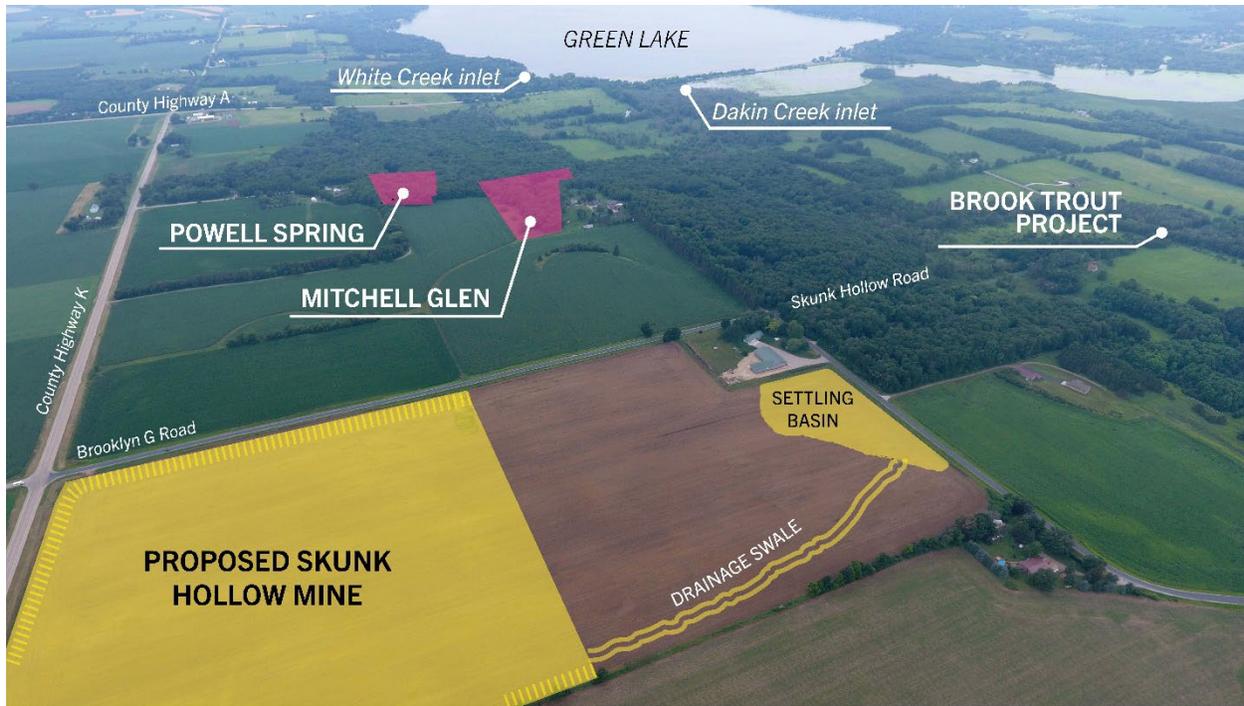
“We are not opposed to mining, but we are concerned about mining *here*,” said Stephanie Prellwitz, Executive Director of the GLA. “We contend that we did not have adequate time to coordinate site-specific studies to understand the full ecological impact of Skunk Hollow Mine—and the water resources surrounding it are too precious to hinge on a lack of information or a rushed process.”

Green Lake and its surrounding watershed—including Powell Spring and Mitchell Glen—are exceptional resources to the community that the Green Lake Association, Green Lake Conservancy, and Green Lake Sanitary District work tirelessly to protect. On behalf of these water resources, ecological treasures, and the community, the three organizations are uniting to appeal the Skunk Hollow Mine conditional use permit.

If you support these three organizations in their efforts to delay the approval of Skunk Hollow Mine, sign a petition at www.greenlakeassociation.org/skunk-hollow-mine.

###

Photos and captions below



Aerial overview of the approximate location of the Skunk Hollow Mine and its stormwater features in proximity to Green Lake and surrounding water resources. Groundwater flows from the proposed mine site northwest, toward Green Lake. Photo by Mat and Henry Boerson; graphics by the Green Lake Association.



The source of Powell Spring pours out from the side of a limestone rock face, located just below the cabin shown in this image. Powell Spring is dependent on groundwater and is located 2,000 feet from the proposed Skunk Hollow Mine site. Photo provided by the Green Lake Conservancy.



Mitchell Glen, an iconic Green Lake landmark owned by the Green Lake Sanitary District, supports a remarkable biodiversity of plants and animals, and provides ecosystem services that benefit the public. Photo provided by Tom Eddy.



Dave Bolha, a WDNR stream biologist, shows off a young-of-the-year brook trout in Dakin Creek that was found during a fish survey in July 2022. The fish is proof that brook trout are now naturally reproducing and are not solely reliant on stocking. Brook trout have been missing from Dakin Creek since the 1950s, require clean and cold water to survive, and were recently restored after an effort by the Green Lake Association, Patagonia, and WDNR.