

Anne Hurlburt, City Administration; City of Scandia
14747 209th St. N.
Scandia, MN 55073

May 17, 2012



Re: Zavoral/Tiller Mine Operation

We are owners of the Marine General Store in Marine on St. Croix. We are concerned that the following issue is inadequately covered in the DEIS document for the Zavoral/Tiller mining plan: effect of the mining operation on attraction of tourists to nearby businesses and possible remedies to affected businesses for reduced tourism.

We worry that the mining operation will materially diminish local tourism by degrading key environmental qualities of the area that make it a tourist destination. Visitors come to the River or Marine to get away from the traffic and the noise of the city. Many of our customers come here to camp in the peace and quiet of nearby William O'Brien State Park. These visiting campers, boaters, nature lovers, and scenic drivers contribute to nearly half of our revenue. Without this attraction to the River and the Park, we would not have a viable business in Marine. Businesses in Scandia would be similarly affected, e.g., Todd's hardware, Miester's restaurant, Scandia Store, Scandia Cafe. We believe there must be some quantitative and authoritative study of the effect of the mining operation on the local tourist business.

It is self-evident that the traffic and noise caused by all the mining trucks will affect the attractiveness of the area to tourists, because it will have an effect on the tranquility and rural character of this region that are significant to its draw as a tourist attraction. Everyone living along highway 95 hears the big trucks coming down 95 and 97. On the river nearby, this truck noise is amplified and channeled by the river valley, which detracts from the wild and natural experience of river recreation. What is the impact of the increased noise levels on river tourism? Will it reduce river tourism in our area because visitors will choose to visit other parts of the river still largely unaffected by industrial noise? How will the increased truck traffic affect tourist's decisions to use or avoid this area of highway 95, which brings them past our business in Marine? Will it deter them from choosing this road for their fall scenery tours, which provides vital tourism for our business?

The St. Croix Wild and Scenic River is a designated national asset, which attracts tourists from all over the country to businesses in this area. Since our local customer base is so limited – Marine on St Croix is only some 680 citizens – our success, even our survival as a business, is dependent on this tourism. We are very concerned that the increased noise and truck traffic will deter tourism to Marine and this area of the St. Croix River. As business owners, we appreciate the rights and needs of the Tiller Corporation to pursue their own business interests. However, they do not have a right to adversely impact surrounding businesses by degrading environmental features materially important to the significance and vitality of this area as a tourist attraction: the wild and scenic river, the rural character of our small historic towns devoid of big city industry, the peace and quiet of our parks and communities, the absence of traffic congestion, and the designated St Croix Scenic Byway that traverses state highway 95.

Sincerely,

 
Karen and Andrew Kramer
Marine General Store, owners
101 Judd St.
Marine on St. Croix, MN