



FOLK

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw
March, 2011

Newsletter

Editors: Doug Welker and Scott Rutherford
Website: www.folkup.org

Upcoming Events

Celebrate the UP!

The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition will hold its 3rd Annual **Celebrate the U.P.!** event Friday evening and Saturday, March 18-19, for the first time, in Houghton and Hancock. On Friday, White Water will perform from 7:00 to 9:00 PM in the atrium of the U.J. Noblet Forestry Building at MTU. On Saturday there will be presentations and panel discussions at Finlandia University's Jutila Center in Hancock. The event is held to celebrate what's special about the U.P. For more information go to:

<http://www.upenvironment.org/2011CelebrateTheUP.htm>

Folk Activities

Highway Trash Pick Up

Come join us for the Spring highway trash pick up on Tuesday, April 26th. We will gather at 4:30 at the corner of US 41 and Arnheim Road. A potluck will follow. For more information contact **Rosemary Grier** at 334-2660.

Trail Clearing

Every spring it's time to spend a fun day in the woods south of Alston helping clean up winter's contribution of branches and blowdown on our section of the *North Country National Scenic Trail*. We try to do our annual maintenance in the first half of May, ideally while there are loads of spring wildflowers blooming but before the black flies are out.

There are tasks for folks of all abilities, and if you just want to tag along for a hike, that's fine too. We like to show off our trail! Check out: www.northcountrytrail.org/pw/segment_34.doc for a map of our 5.55 miles of trail, and a link to detailed info, including photos.

If you think you might be interested, contact **Doug Welker** at dwelker@up.net or 338-2680

May We Have your Email Address?

Please provide us your email address. It will enable to keep you up-to-date about developments that are impacting our ecology and environment like the Kennecott sulfide mine project in the Yellow Dog Plains. *We assure you that we will never make your address public nor share it with another organization.*

Please email it to us at:

fupemail389@folkup.org

A Message from Linda Rulison, FOLK President

In thinking about FOLK's mission and goals, as I begin my term as president, I am challenged by how to accomplish these goals that "are to educate the public and support activities that recognize the inherent worth of our forest, our land, our watershed, and our community." To accomplish these things so much depends on communication with local, state, and federal officials, with other regional environmental groups, and with our members through our newsletters and website.

So communication seems be a key element in supporting our mission, and building relationships. FOLK's newsletter has been the primary source of communication with our members over the past 20 plus years, and we realize any interruption in the newsletter could be harmful in maintaining support. When communication breaks down, the results are not merely annoying—we falter. So when FOLK's long time newsletter editor, Ted Soldan, stepped down, FOLK was very fortunate and pleased to have two members, Doug Welker and Scott Rutherford, volunteer to be co-editors.

In the coming months, communication building will be key to any successful actions we may have. In order to achieve faster communication with our members we are hoping to compile a *protected* email list of members who would like to be informed in a timely matter on key events, letter-writing campaigns and whatever local issues may need immediate attention.

Every FOLK member is needed to make things happen. We certainly appreciate everyone's continued support through membership renewals and donations. Just as important is having more of you involved in the month-to-month business. We have room for a few more board members. We also need people to work on committees and to participate in the activities listed on our website. Much of the committee work could be done from home with one's computer. Please check out our website which we will be working on to keep current. Thank you everyone for helping to keep FOLK vital. Contact FOLK by email: fupemail389@folkup.org.

Kennecott's Ore Hauling Route Now Uncertain

by Doug Welker

The U.S. EPA rejected Kennecott's proposed "Woodland Road" to haul its ore from its mine site at Eagle Rock south through remote country to a mill site in Humboldt because of wetlands issues. So Kennecott abandoned that proposed route in January and suggested, instead, a route heading southeast to the north side of the city of Marquette. From there the ore would be taken to a mill site in Humboldt either by rail or through the Marquette streets and on U.S. 41.

A lot of Marquette-area folks, who previously supported the mine when its negative impacts were not apparent, are now having second thoughts. They have spoken out strongly against the new proposal. Then, last month, Kennecott indicated it was once again pursuing the Woodland Road alternative, also known as proposed Marquette County Road 595.

Where this will all come down is anyone's guess. Regardless, what was originally anger at the EPA for rejecting the Woodland Road proposal has turned, significantly, to anger at Kennecott. For a more detailed analysis of this issue, check out the latest UPEC Newsletter at http://www.upenvironment.org/newsletters/UPEC_2011_SpringNewsletter.pdf.



FOLK

FOLK was established in 1989 to oppose the siting of a paper/pulp mill in Keweenaw Bay. FOLK continues to promote a healthy environment in the Keweenaw Peninsula and the Lake Superior Watershed.

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- Additional Contributions: \$ _____

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Pay on line @ <http://www.folkup.org/donate.php> or

Send to: FOLK, P.O. Box 213, L'Anse, MI 49946

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

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Quarry Trial Leaves Issue Unsettled by Constance Sherry

On Monday February 14 Portage Township residents gathered in Houghton County Circuit Court to hear the outcome of a lawsuit between several Portage Township residents and the Portage Township Board VS Thomas Moyle Jr., Inc. Moyle has been operating Valley View Quarry in an area zoned rural residential. Residents have been concerned about the noise, dust and heavy truck traffic in this formerly peaceful rural area.

Although Circuit Court Judge Roy Gotham (Gogebic County) ruled in favor of the residents on several issues, many people who wanted the quarry shut down left disappointed because the Judge did not rule on that specific issue. According to Moyle's Attorney the kind of rock being extracted from this quarry cannot be found anywhere else in Portage Township in such large quantities. The judge asked the attorneys to file briefs on the matter of the type and availability of the rock in 30 days. The attorneys will have ten days from that date to file responses to each others' briefs.

The judge did rule against Moyle in several other matters of contention:

- The quarry is not "grand fathered in" because the property had already been zoned rural residential when Moyle bought it.
- Moyle's statement that the land was not suitable for rural residential use anyway was deemed irrelevant and not true. As the judge pointed out, people build homes on rocky ground with little top soil all the time. Some local residents have installed raised septic systems if they find themselves in an area where that kind of a system is the only option.
- Having a verbal OK from former Portage Township supervisor, Bill Bingham, does not exempt Moyle from needing a permit or enable them to have an industrial operation in a rural residential zone.

As a result of a recent ruling by the State Supreme Court, the township has the authority to regulate some aspects of the quarry operations, but little has been done in this respect so far.

For those of us who live in close proximity to the quarry forty more days – at least – seems like a long time as we await word on the judge's decision.

More Activities

Nature Walks

The North Woods Native Plant Society is a group of professional and amateur botanists interested in learning about and preserving the region's native plants and ecosystems. This summer they will be conducting free trips to view spring flora, aquatics, mushrooms, wild edibles, and more. Trip schedules and information are available at:

www.northwoodsnativeplantsociety.org.

*"When despair for the world
grows in me and I wake in the
night at the least sound in fear
of what my life and my chil-
dren's lives may be, I go and lie
down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds. I
come into the peace of wild
things who do not tax their lives
with forethought of grief. I come
into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-
blind stars waiting with their
light. For a time I rest in the
grace of the world, and am
free."*

Wendell Berry (Sex, Economy,
Freedom & Community: Eight
Essays)

Concern about Proposed Atlantic Mine Solid Waste Transfer Station by Doug Welker

The current Houghton County Solid Waste Transfer Station, the place where local "trash" is collected for transfer to disposal sites, is sinking into a mine on the south edge of Houghton. A new site for the facility needed to be found.

But, how was that site selected? Apparently there was no county-owned land that was suitable, so the County Board decided to buy land from private owners. The process involved was not exactly a competitive bidding situation. A former County Commissioner simply asked around until he found an apparently good site that someone was willing to sell to the county. The new county land on Erickson Road off M-26 in Atlantic Mine is now proposed as the site for the future Transfer Station.

In some respects it is a good site. It is not on a major highway but on a well-used secondary road. The facility is planned to be screened from view to some extent by an existing barrier of woods, perhaps 100 feet deep. It will be quite visible in winter, but probably not much in summer.

Now, the bad news. On the Houghton County Future Land Use Map, at <http://www.houghtoncounty.net/docs/01%20Houghton%20County%20Map.pdf>, the site is listed as Rural Residential, and normally a Solid Waste Transfer Station would not be permitted there. However, the County Board can apparently change the designation of land it owns to whatever it wants.

Increased traffic on Erickson is potentially dangerous, and slow-moving trucks may irritate drivers on both Erickson and on M-26 between Erickson and Festival Foods. The corner of Erickson and M-26 has apparently been the site

(Transfer Station continued)

of two fatal accidents already.

In addition, even if well designed, such a facility would detract from the basically residential character of the area. Such facilities can be noisy, but their main impact is odor. Reducing odor requires taking special actions such as daily washing of all surfaces in contact with waste, and daily shipping of all waste to disposal sites. It is not clear that those actions would be taken.

The County Board will potentially approve the new Transfer Station site and design at its next regular board meeting, on March 15th at 5 PM in the Conference Room on the fifth floor of the Houghton County Courthouse. Concerned citizens are encouraged to attend.