



FOLK

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

www.folkup.org

Ted Soldan - Editor

Newsletter

January 2009

Upcoming Events

January 22 - Steering Committee meets at 6:00 pm at the Rulison's. Call 334-2553

FOLK ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY HISTORY

by Rosemary Grier

The efforts of FOLK and hundreds of other groups in Michigan help keep our roadside environment clean, while increasing the beauty of our community. We help save the Michigan Dept. of Transportation (MDOT) approximately 5 million dollars annually by removing litter from MI roadsides. Much of this money is redirected into repairing our roads.

Interesting facts about FOLK's involvement:

- * Maintained our highway clean up site since 1990. It is a 2 mile section on US Highway 41, south of the Houghton-Baraga County Line.
- * Was one of the first volunteer groups in the Copper Country to adopt a section of the highway for the state's clean up program.

Originally FOLK had a 4 mile stretch, but donated 2 miles to Keweenaw Veterinary Clinic (formerly Dr. Pepper) in the late 90's. Volunteers pick up litter three times a year: April, July, and September. We clean both sides of our 2 mile section.

Check out FOLK's Highway Clean Up Certificate hanging on the wall at the Frostie Freeze in L'Anse. Please consider volunteering to assist FOLK with our Adopt-A-Highway program. Contact: Rosemary Grier 334-2660.

Huron River Watershed Partnership Update

by Catherine Andrews

Life and water are inseparable and it is good for the soul to immerse oneself in both. Three teams of FOLK members had the opportunity to do just that last summer as we headed out to the Huron River in Baraga and Marquette counties to participate in the Huron River Watershed Partnership data collection process. Connie Horvath and Fran Whitman, Marjory Johnston and Doug Welker, and Dave Bach and I were the fortunate volunteers. Each team was stationed at one site out of a total of 24 that were designated along the meandering 87 mile-long river system.

Each team recorded bank measurements, documented water types (% of pool, riffle or run), stream observations (water color, level, flow, turbidity and temperature), aquatic and riparian vegetation and collected samples of aquatic invertebrates. Four to six hours were spent at each site as data were collected every 50 feet on a 300 foot section of the river. The reward was in the experience and the contribution being made to a greater understanding of the nature of this awe-inspiring river. (Continued)

Economic Downturn Affects Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto, the parent company of Kennecott Minerals, is facing financial difficulties. Kennecott is the company that has proposed a nickel sulfide mine on the environmentally sensitive Yellowdog Plains west of Marquette.

Nickel prices have plummeted from a high of \$24/pound in the middle of last year to current prices of just over \$4/pound. Due to low prices, the Vale Inco Copper Cliff South mine in Sudbury, Ontario will close at the end of this year, removing 8,000 metric tons of finished nickel per year from the market.

These low commodity prices are only part of Rio Tinto's problems. The company purchased Canadian aluminum producer Alcan about a year ago, and has two large payments looming in 2009 and 2010. Investors have become skittish about Rio's ability to make its payments on time, causing its stock to fall from a high of 558 last spring to its current 82. Rio recently fought off a takeover bid by rival BHP Billiton.

Rio Tinto recently announced it will be cutting 14,000 jobs worldwide, and will slash its capital spending from \$9 billion to \$4 billion. The company plans to announce which projects will be curtailed or cut on February 12. They have also decided to expand the list of company assets targeted for divestment.

The question on everyone's mind is how these tough economic times will affect the plans for the proposed mine on the Yellowdog. Rio Tinto officials have commented that the proposed mine on the Yellowdog could be on the list of those affected by the decreased capital spending. Experts have speculated on both sides of the issue. We'll be watching the news on February 12 for more information.

Steering Committee Officers for 2009

At the FOLK Annual Meeting in October, the following slate of officers for the 2009 calendar year was approved unanimously by the membership:

Connie Sherry – President
Fran Whitman – Vice President
Dave Rulison – Secretary
Ted Soldan – Treasurer

USFWS Extends Deadline for Decision on Coaster Brook Trout

by Connie Sherry

On December 9, 2008 the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced that their decision whether or not to list the Coaster Brook Trout as an endangered species will be (Continued)



FOLK

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

(Please Print) Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Date _____

- | | |
|---|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (Annual Membership) - \$10 | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen, Unemployed, Student (Annual) - \$5 | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization (Annual) - \$35 | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if you do NOT want a FOLK tote bag | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contribution to FOLK's Educational Fund. | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contributions: | \$ _____ |

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Send to: FOLK · PO Box 213 · L'Anse, Michigan 49946

(**Huron River** continued from front page)

The Superior Watershed Partnership of Marquette has been selected to re-submit the 319 Federal Watershed Partnership grant application which is believed to have a better chance of being funded on 2009. A solid momentum has been achieved in this project and over 20 road crossings have already been successfully remediated. What began as a concern of one fisherman has evolved into a successful process and, if all goes well, greater long term protection of this magnificent river that sustains so much life.

A Message From Your President: Call To Action!

Greeting to all you members at large and thanks for your support in 2008. Some of the highlights from this past year were the completion of the Otter River Watershed RWA (Rapid Watershed Assessment), attendance at/or participation in the Protect The Earth Summit Aug. 2 and 3, The Bi-National Lake Superior Forum in Houghton, and FOLK participation in the newly formed Huron River Watershed group including FOLK members adopting monitoring stations on the Huron River.

Articles in the newsletter have kept you up to date (and encouraged your input) on our participation in the UPPCO impoundment issue and reporting some of the concerns related to the sale and development of UPPCO's non-project lands.

FOLK members have attended meetings concerning the proposed Kennecott sulfide mine in the yellow dog plains and participated in efforts to stop this mine from being permitted.

Although the members of the steering committee are strongly committed to the goals of FOLK, there have been meetings at which FOLK should have been represented and no one has been able to go. There are projects that we could participate in and actions that we could take with more people on the steering committee. Our bylaws need to be reviewed and changed and voted on by the general membership next fall. No committee has been formed yet to work on this.

If you have been a member of FOLK for at least a year and are committed to our goals of educating the public on issues of social and environmental concern, participating in public debate and administrative and judicial procedures regarding those issues, and promoting a sustainable economy which recognizes the inherent worth of our natural world, please consider attending some FOLK meetings to see which unfilled niche you may feel comfortable becoming more active in. Steering Committee members are notified by email as to the date and location of each monthly meeting. Feel free to contact me (482-2006) or any steering committee member for more information. We welcome your interest and input.

Constance Sherry, President

(**Coaster** continued from front page) delayed until April 15, 2009, postponing their original plan to reach a decision by December 15, 2008.

In March 2006 the Mackinac Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Huron Mountain Club petitioned the USFWS to list the naturally spawning lake-run Coasters in the Salmon Trout River on the Yellow Dog Plains in Marquette County as an endangered species. A first step in this process is to declare the fish as a Distinct Population Segment (DPS) meaning that the Coasters are reproductively isolated from the in-stream resident Brook Trout. To this end, the USFS is conducting genetic studies of the Coasters. The decision to delay the findings while those genetic tests are being considered has been approved by the petitioners.

From USFWS files: The petition asserts that Coaster Brook Trout are "distinguished from stream resident Brook Trout by behavior" and information submitted in association with the petition notes that Coaster Brook Trout "are distinguished from stream resident Brook Trout by behavior, i.e. anadromy – and by physiology (they grow much larger, and may be longer lived)." Information in our files supports this assertion because, unlike resident Brook Trout that remain in streams, Coaster Brook Trout are adfluvial or lacustrine, spending part or all of their life cycle in the Great Lakes (Becker 1983, p. 320; Newman et al. 2003, p. 39). Therefore, we find that the petition presents substantial information that would lead a reasonable person to believe that the U.S. population of Coaster Brook Trout may be discrete from stream resident Brook Trout because of differences in behavior and physiology.

The petitioners concern is to protect these unique fish. Public concern over Kennecott Mineral Company's efforts to mine copper and nickel under the Salmon Trout River has kept a spotlight on this pending decision.

Copper is one of the most toxic heavy metals to fish. Most studies have focused on the early life stages of trout (Salmonid fish) including Rainbow and Brown Trout. Even relatively low levels of copper sulfide in water have been found to interfere with gill structure growth, reduced immune response and stunted growth. No data could be found specifically on Coasters.

Jon Cherry, Eagle Project Manager says these concerns are not warranted because the Coasters do not come up the river as far as the site of the proposed mine. But much public concern remains that contaminated water from the headwaters of the river at the mine site could find its way to the lower reaches of the river.

Historically Coaster Brook Trout were found in lakes Huron and Michigan also. There are native populations on Isle Royale and some in Canada. The Salmon Trout River remains the only place on the South Shore in Michigan where native Coasters remain.