



The Upper Peninsula Environment

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Public Hearing on Proposed Bete Grise Development

by Sandra Harting

A crowd of approximately 200 people attended the July 14 DNR hearing in the Mohawk school gym on a proposed development access road planned to be built through a segment of wetland on property owned by Lake Superior Land Company/ Champion International (LSLC). The proposed development, known as Bete Grise South, would consist of approximately 25 single-family homes. The access road would cut through the southern end of a 3,400-acre coastal wetland.

The hearing began with a short description by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) of the regulations that pertain to this project. The hearing continued with a presentation by LSLC describing the site and proposed development, including the type of road fill, number of culverts, direction of surface/groundwater flow, etc.

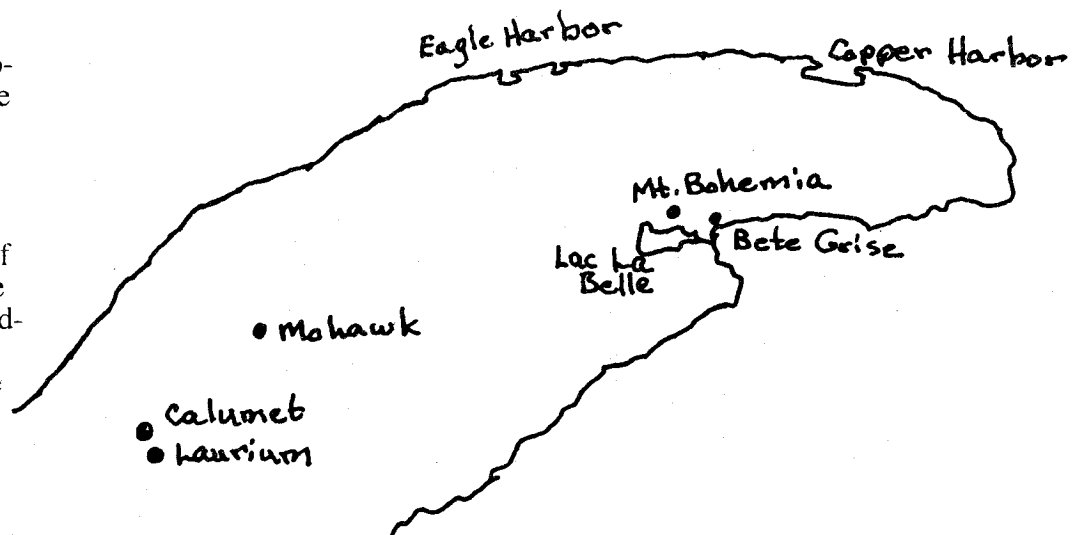
This was followed by commentary by representatives of the Keweenaw Bay Tribe and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) expressing concerns about possible impairment of shoreline fish spawning and rearing areas, should the project be approved.

The second major presentation by was Gary Kohs, owner of the Bete Grise Mendota Lighthouse and Mendota Conservancy. After this, comments were heard from the general public.

In his presentation, Mr. Kohs proceeded to question, point by point, every aspect of the project presented by LSLC as supposedly being positive for the community. He then called upon a series of experts to address various aspects of the proposed construction. The first was Tim Bureau, a development consultant who described 11 separate points regarding the proposed plan, any one of which could result in the denial of the wetlands building permit.

Next was Dr. Bill McCourt, a representative of the Nature Conservancy, who spoke on the uniqueness and rarity of the site, as one of the few remaining Great Lakes coastal wetlands.

The last speaker in that group was Dr. Susan Martin, an archaeologist at Michigan Tech. Dr. Martin revealed that the area has been recognized since 1988 as an area containing prehistoric artifacts. Under current federal regulations, even the possibility of the presence of prehistoric artifacts is sufficient to halt commercial development of a site. At the time of the publication of her research in 1988, Dr. Martin had informed LSLC of her findings.



Each of these speakers was given a standing ovation by the audience.

Mr. Kohs ended this section of the hearing by relating what occurred when he approached LSLC about purchasing the land himself. LSLC told him that he could purchase that parcel for \$3.2 million—*provided* he obtain letters from both The Keweenaw County Board and the Grant Township Board giving *their approval* of the sale.

Opponents have questioned how many prospective land buyers in this country need permission from their neighbors before they can buy land? Did Champion International get permission from the neighbors in order to buy up thousands of acres in the western U.P.?

Comments by the general public touched upon a number of issues both for and against the project. Many of those supporting the development cited the need for an expanded tax base, which is currently stifled by the passage of Proposal A, limiting property tax increases to the Consumer Price Index. Many felt that this was a property rights issue, and that LSLC/Champion should be allowed to do whatever it desires with the land. Opponents feel that more thinking needs to be directed toward ramifications of such a stance.

Many comments from citizens in opposition to the project mirrored those put forth in the presentation by Mr. Kohs and his group. They pointed out that, although this is but a single development, it is how the destruction of an area begins. They cited instances where this pattern can be seen over and over in formerly rural areas in downstate Michigan, as well as in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Several speakers explained that the tax base argument fails to take into account the true cost of development: the increased costs of infrastructure, emergency services—particularly in this remote

location—in addition to the astronomical increase in property taxes that will affect the next (post Proposal A) generation of Keweenaw County homeowners.

In point of fact, a similar, 37-lot development, Bete Grise North, already exists on the opposite side of the bay. This development, as well as the lots on the LSLC development on Seven-Mile Point, has a less than 50% occupancy rate. If there is a real need for new homes, opponents feel these areas should be filled first, before any more land is “taken” for further development.

I, the author of this article, spoke as a citizen addressing the property rights issue. I stated that when an entity owning most of the private land in the western U.P. decides to exercise their “property rights,” the effect on the environment, the people, and the economy of the region is quite different and disproportionate to what could result from the actions of the rest of us who own or occupy small parcels here and there.

I feel I can safely state that the environmental community and the people who are residents of Grant Township have the same desires: to be able to have a decent place to live, and to be able to leave a decent, affordable place for the next generations to live.

Unfortunately, environmentalists and residents sometimes allow themselves to be divided by those whose best interest lies in keeping them from coming together to openly discuss these issues, and to act upon them as a true community.

Personally, I feel for the people of Grant Township, for they are in the same situation as that of my neighbors in my community of Toivola. Our current economic/environmental problems are symptoms of the same sickness: a post boom-bust economy, and the fact that decisions affecting U.P. resources are being made mainly by corporate entities based many hundreds of miles away, whose interests lie not with the

people of the U.P., but with company stockholders.

It is time that we, as citizens and neighbors, rose above our differences in order to look at our common problems and needs, and then begin to focus on and work together toward long-term, sustainable solutions.

It is not impossible.



A Perspective on the Conservation of Openlands in the Upper Peninsula

by Greg Corace

Constructive environmentalism provides a forum for debate over how best to manage lands that provide both amenities and commodities. Increasingly, environmentalists have relied upon placing the present ecological conditions of the Upper Peninsula (U.P.) into a historical context in order to make arguments for and against certain land management practices. This approach is not without problems, however.

Ecosystems are never static, and large-scale forces such as global climate change may present insurmountable barriers to the success of some management goals. Further, the temptation

exists to oversimplify the conditions which once existed. Although a few dominant cover types (vegetation communities) existed in this region before the first Europeans arrived, the region was not as homogenous as some would like us to believe.

Rather, the U. P. was, and still is, an area with an intricate mix of different vegetation communities, interspersed with and dissected by water bodies. To maintain species richness within the U. P., efforts must be made to first learn more about these rarer native community types, and then to incorporate this knowledge into useful conservation strategies.

In *Michigan's Native Landscape* by P. J. Comer *et al.* (1995), the authors rely heavily upon General Land Office (GLO) notes written by land surveyors and timbermen during the mid-19th century to portray the pre-European influence in the U. P. This work describes a region in which approximately 75 percent of the land area was comprised of either northern hardwood forests or forested wetlands. The remaining land area featured smaller, less dominant community types. The term "openlands" can be used to represent a group of the nonforested patch types.

Historically, openlands consisted of shrub, or early successional communities, in the U.P., and were relatively rare. For example, of the major openland types which now exist (see below), only approximately 2% of the total area of the region was once dominated by jack pine, and less than 1% of the area was in pine/oak savanna. Both cover types were fire maintained to some degree.

In the areas dominated by jack pine, fires both prepared a seed bed and opened the tight cones which characterize the species. Fire also played a role in regulating the percent of woody cover of both these communities. On the jack pine sites, fire frequency, extent, magnitude and

timing produced conditions in which the percent of woody vegetation varied over time from very low (soon after fires, few trees standing) to very high (in the absence of recent fire, many densely stocked trees).

With the removal of fire and other natural disturbances from these systems, considerable change has occurred. Among other things, succession has caused alterations of the flora and fauna associated with these areas.

In order to address concerns regarding the conservation of openlands specifically within the Eastern U. P., a multiagency coalition has recently been formed to develop an "Openland Conservation Strategy for Large Openlands and Associated Flora and Fauna in the Eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan."

Although a need exists to extend any resulting conservation-minded management recommendations to openland sites throughout the U. P., the strategy focuses on the Eastern U. P., to a large degree because of the existence of the five noted openland types:

1. Open wetlands (*e.g.*, communities similar to Seney),
2. pine barrens and savannas (*e.g.*, Raco Plains),
3. xeric, conifer-dominated ecosystems (*e.g.*, Danaher and Kingston Plains and other, similar human induced systems),
4. alvar (shrub/grassland systems which exist on limestone in the eastern U. P), and
5. agricultural lands (*e.g.*, hay-fields, fallow fields, etc.).

Headed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the coalition consists of representatives from:

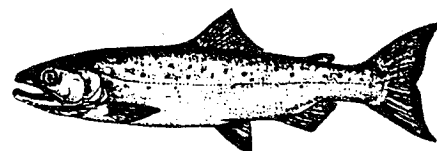
1. United States Forest Service's Hiawatha National Forest (USFSHNF),
2. United States Natural Resource's Conservation District (NRCS),
3. United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Seney National

Wildlife Refuge (USFWS, Seney),

4. Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI),
5. Michigan Technological University (MTU), and
6. the Michigan Sharp-Tailed Grouse Association (MSGA).

The goal of this conservation strategy is "to identify land management guidelines to ensure viable populations of native flora and fauna occupying large, early successional and openland habitats across the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan." These openlands provide habitat for a wide range of native plant and animal species; some of the species associated with these areas are of management concern, and presently have status as either state or federally threatened or endangered.

In future articles of *The Upper Peninsula Environment*, I will introduce you to some of these species, and address the development of both the strategy as well as research projects devoted to providing information on these unique systems we call openlands.



Our reminiscence-rich, newly-retired-from-academia UPEC board member shares some recollections of a treasured friendship.

A DAY WITH THE MASTER

by Bill Robinson

One fine day in September of 1981, I got a phone call from Ted Bodgan, owner of Heritage House Hotel (now The Landmark), inviting my wife and me to supper at the hotel's Crow's Nest restaurant at the top of the building. He said that his friend John Voelker would like to meet me.

"Wow!" I thought. This was a man who had been a Michigan Supreme Court judge and author (under the penname of Robert Traver) of several fishing books such as *Trout Madness* and *Trout Magic*, as well as *Anatomy of a Murder*, an only somewhat fictionalized novel from a real case in which John Voelker was the successful defense attorney for a military officer named Peterson who had killed a man for molesting his wife. In the movie version of the book, Voelker was played by James Stewart, with whom he remained friends thereafter. Charles Kuralt of CBS Sunday Morning, after interviewing Voelker, proclaimed him "The greatest man I ever met!"



It turns out the reason John Voelker had asked to meet me was that he had read a few letters to the editor that I had written, and knew of my activities in UPEC. He apparently felt we shared a common philosophy.

Glenda and I arrived at the hotel and found John Voelker at the piano playing "As Time Goes By"—and playing it quite well. Two attractive young women nearby were mesmerized.

After introductions by Ted, Voelker quietly asked me, "Did you see those two pretty girls? Do you think they liked my piano playing?" I assured him that they had, and soon we were on a first-name basis.

John was surprised to learn that I was a long-time resident of Marquette, and when he found that Tom Robinson was my father, he was truly excited. He kept praising my father as "...handsome and unbelievably talented with his trombone--what a musician!" My father had been two years ahead of John in high

school, and he apparently remained in John's mind throughout his life—a shining senior to an admiring sophomore.

Aside from wanting to initiate the beginning of a friendship between two people who viewed the forests and streams of the Upper Peninsula as priceless treasures, it seems John had another motive for our meeting. He wanted to show me something that he had come across in the woods while picking mushrooms.

The "something" was an arrangement of moss-covered rocks in two parallel rows about 7 feet long and 2 feet high, with a trough between them about 18 inches wide, and with what may have been a circular rock "chimney" at the upper end. It was located back off the road east of Sands. An anthropologist from the University had told him it was probably a moonshine still from the 1920s, but he wasn't convinced.

At the hotel that evening, Ted Bogdan had taken me aside and told me, "He's such a romantic! Experts think it only dates back fifty or sixty years, but he wants so badly for it to be an Indian relic. He likes to think it was used for roasting deer, or maybe boiling maple syrup."

When we got there, I looked around the site for other clues to its historic identity, but found nothing, although, in addition to the rows of rocks, etc., there were also a few oblong holes nearby, about 6 x 3 x 2 feet deep, with equivalent mounds, which were now vegetated.

John didn't want the newspapers to know about the site—afraid that "in two days they'd have a popcorn stand set up, and would sell tickets for admission." He trusted me because, as he put it, "I think you give a shit for this land. There are those," he explained, "who care and those who don't. It's as simple as that."

I was both touched and flattered.

As John drove, he shared some of his other ideas with me, such as, "There are three possible ways mankind will do itself in: We'll poison ourselves, we'll blow ourselves up with the Bomb, or we'll fornicate ourselves to death."



He kept his eye out for mushrooms. (He was an ardent mushroom picker—it goes with trout fishing, he said.) "These guys in the Reagan Administration—they're all probably nice guys, not evil—they don't mean any harm—but I probably wouldn't want to have to spend much time with them. If they took this woods and paved it I'd be foolish to argue that this is where I hunt mushrooms. They'd tell me you can buy mushrooms in the store. They wouldn't understand."

We parted shortly after noon that day. He was going home to watch the Green Bay Packers game on television.

I saw him briefly several times after that, mostly at the University Library, where he would read and gather information for a book he was writing. Once, when the jack pines near his beloved Uncle Tom's Pond were being clearcut, he suggested, "We have to open the season on logging trucks."

Almost ten years after our first meeting, on the afternoon of March 19, 1991, I learned that earlier that day John had pulled his little truck over to the roadside about a mile from his house north of Ishpeming, turned off the ignition, and died. I do not know if his death was really as simple as that. I want to think that it was.



SKI DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED FOR MOUNT BOHEMIA IN KEWEENAW COUNTY

by Sandra Harting

A developer from downstate Michigan wants to build a ski resort on Mount Bohemia, in northern Keweenaw County. The development is to feature downhill skiing initially, with cross-country and snowmobile trails, and resort condominiums to follow.

This development raises a number of environmental and socioeconomic concerns. The company's plans are to retain the hill's "wild, scenic" character to create a "wilderness skiing experience." With snowmobiles and condo/resort developments?

Large ski developments are not environmentally benign; one need only to look at similar ski areas downstate and in the southern Upper Peninsula. Although the company has expressed a commitment to keep the hill as "pristine" as possible, large swaths of land will need to be cleared for electrical service lines, chair-lifts, trails, and downhill ski runs, the latter of which must be considerably wider than are cross-country/telemark (see below) ski trails. Some access roads will be necessary.

This kind of clearing on steep slopes leads to severe erosion and stream sedimentation problems. Ski trails and cleared slopes that are accessible from roads frequently become targeted by ORV and off-road truck enthusiasts in the offseason, leading to greater damage.

The bulk of Mt. Bohemia is a south-facing slope, and therefore subject to the formation of icy conditions and early snowmelt, particularly on packed, groomed surfaces. In order to operate in the early season, which the company has expressed as being one of the positive aspects of having a ski area in this region, snow-

making may be necessary (remember the past two winters?).

Snow-making uses large amounts of water, sometimes affecting local water tables, requires large amounts of electricity and the related infrastructure, and chemicals are added to the water to retard melting. These chemicals inevitably enter local waterways, especially if the ski hill lies next to a lake.

The company that plans to construct this facility, Crosswinds, is a subdivision, mall, and condominium building company. The fact is that the ski hill land is to be leased, not bought outright. Although the cross-country skiing and snowmobiling communities were wooed by the company with the promise of new trails, Crosswinds is starting with a few downhill ski runs only, and states that condo building must be a part of this development with other trail systems to be added only when profitable.

This writer must ask: Is this whole venture nothing but a way to build and sell condominiums in the Keweenaw while retaining local support? What would prevent Crosswinds from giving up their lease on the ski hill after they are through building condominiums, pocketing the money, and leaving town?

Large developments such as this one cost the community in a number of ways that are not immediately obvious. (**See lead article on Bete Grise.**) Rising land prices, taxes for area residents, and increased infrastructure costs (electrical service, road building, and maintenance, sewerage, and the need for additional emergency and law enforcement services).

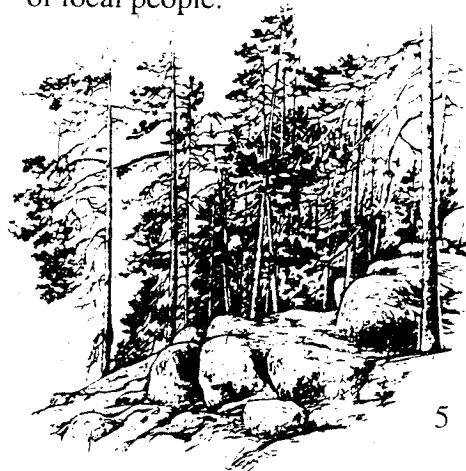
With the increased influx of higher-income residents from outside the area, many area residents who can barely afford to remain in their homes as it is will be severely affected. Although Proposal A freezes tax increases for the current homeowners in the area, the next generation of area

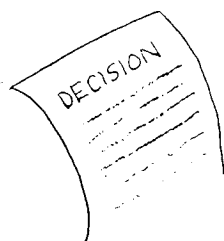
home-buyers will have to be, of necessity, of a much higher income bracket. The end result of this type of development featuring condos, etc., will simultaneously attract higher-income residents, and make the area inaccessible to local, relatively lower-income people.

Although the projected ski pass prices are competitive compared with prices at similar developments, they are not affordable for most area residents, particularly families who desire to ski with their children. Season pass prices are to be \$295 for adults (\$34 daily), \$195 for students (\$28 daily), and \$25 evening fees for everyone. Most local residents, and local students could not afford to ski here except on rare occasions.

This area is currently the only telemark ski area in the northern UP. Telemarking is a very low-impact form of skiing, where the skier usually hikes into the area, skis in deep, ungroomed snow gradually uphill, and then goes down the slope. No lifts, no groomers, little noise, little impact, and affordable to all. Keep it that way.

If a new ski area is what the people of the area desire, cross-country skiing should be stressed, and not downhill skiing, for there are plenty of places to downhill ski now. It should be constructed with minimal infrastructure and, above all, be non-motorized (snowmobilers have thousands of miles of trails already), and it should be owned by, operated by, and for the profit of local people.





"DECISION"

"After careful consideration of environmental impacts, costs, comments from the public, agencies, and tribes, and engineering evaluations, the National Park Service recommends for implementation the proposed action evaluated in the final general management plan/environmental impact statement....

"Most conditions and facilities at the park not specifically mentioned [in the full text] will remain the same. If funding can be found, research and the inventory and monitoring monitoring program will be increased. The complex of historic buildings on Barnum Island will be preserved and utilized as an educational or interpretive facility. Facilities will continue to be made handicapped accessible.

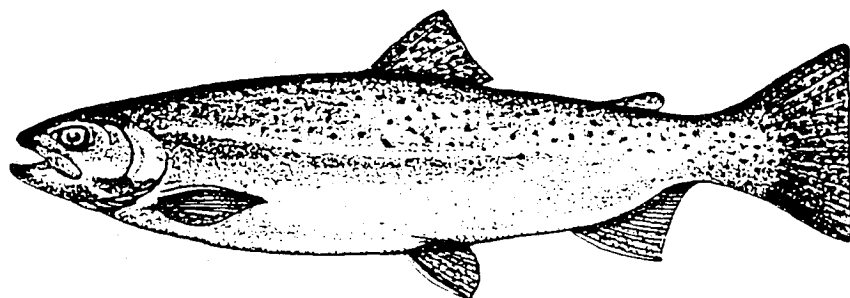
"Above all, Isle Royale National Park will continue to be available to a wide variety of uses and visitors, and will continue to be used and enjoyed as it has been since it was established."

More complete information on the decision, or copies of the decision, are available from the Park Service, 800 East Lake Shore Drive, Houghton, MI 49931; phone 906/482-0984.

ISLE ROYALE NATIONAL PARK

The Record of Decision is in. The notes that follow are taken from the statement by Douglas A. Barnard, Superintendent, Isle Royale National Park:

"The National Park Service has prepared the Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/FEIS) for Isle Royale National Park, Michigan. The GMP/FEIS proposes management direction for the park for the next 15-20 years, and documents the anticipated effects of the proposed action and other alternatives on the human environment, including natural and cultural resources. This Record of Decision is a concise statement of the decisions made, other alternatives considered, the basis for the decision, the environmentally preferable alternative, and the mitigating measures developed to avoid or minimize environmental harm."

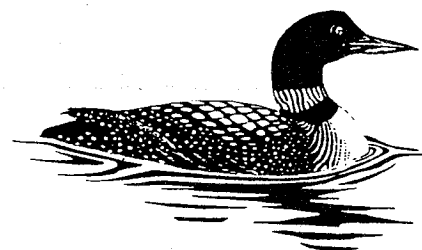


White Pine Meeting Reset

The August public meeting for the White Pine Copper Range Co. to update the public on their progress in filling the mine with lake water, revegetation, etc., has been changed to August 24, 1999, at 6:30 p.m. at the Best Western Porcupine Mountain Lodge in Silver City.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality senior geologist, Bob Delaney, has said that he expects a dwindling number of people to attend the meeting.

Wouldn't it be nice, now, if he were wrong??



UPEC June Board Meeting

June 26, at the Ford Forestry Center, Alberta, MI

Items discussed included:

- Motorized use plan being developed re ORV use in Marquette County
- Proposed boat launch at Deer Lake
- Involvement in Invasive Weed Workshop
- Borrowed time Harvest Project, Hiawatha National Forest
- Sylvania update
- Mount Bohemia (Keweenaw)
- Bete Grise development hearing

Membership in UPEC is open to all individuals and groups who wish to support the goals of the Coalition. Applications for membership should be sent to P.O. Box 847, Marquette, MI 49855. UPEC is a nonprofit organization [IRS 501(c)(3)] and dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The Upper Peninsula Environment is published four times per year. Articles, press releases, or correspondence intended for the newsletter should be sent to UPEC c/o Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 673, Houghton, MI 49931.

Write Your Reps!

Here are the addresses and phone numbers for state and federal lawmakers that represent the U.P. Let them know what you think about the issues!

Senator Spencer Abraham
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-4822
Fax: (202) 224-8834
E-mail:

michigan@abraham.senate.gov

Senator Carl Levin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6221
Fax: (202) 224-1388
E-mail: senator@levin.senate.gov

Representative Bart Stupak
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-4735
Fax: (202) 225-4744
E-mail: stupak@hr.house.gov

Both State Senators at:
State Capitol, P.O. Box 30036,
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

State Senator Don Koivisto
(517) 373-7840

State Senator Walter North
(517) 373-2413

All State Reps at:
State Capitol, P.O. Box 30014,
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

State Representative Pat Gagliardi
(517) 373-2629

State Representative David
Anthony
(517) 373-0156

State Representative Michael Prusi
(517) 373-0498

State Rep. Paul Tesanovich
(517) 373-0850 or 800-PAUL110

About UPEC

The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition was organized on December 6, 1975. The goals of UPEC are to protect and maintain the unique environmental quality of the U.P. of Michigan; to evaluate and promote planning and sound management decisions for all the resources of the U.P.; and to work toward these goals through coordination of member groups, individual members, and public information.

UPEC Board Members:

Bill Malmsten, Ishpeming (President)
485-5909

Jon Saari, Marquette (Vice-President)
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Sandra Harting, Toivola (Treasurer)
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Patti Clancy, Marquette 225-1890

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Doug Weiker, Pelkie
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Newsletter Editor: Holley Linn



Remember Membership Dues...

...for they are important for the support of what UPEC stands for and works toward on your behalf.

Those of you who haven't yet responded to your dues notification, this is the time.

To dust off last year's refrain:
Do do your due dues!

New members are always welcome! Simply use the form on the last page of this newsletter.

Yes!

I want to protect the U.P.!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

☐ I would like to support the goals of UPEC by becoming a member. My annual dues are enclosed (check one):

_____ Regular Member (\$15)

_____ Supporting Member (\$50)

_____ Student/Senior/Low Income (\$10)

☐ Here's an additional contribution of \$_____.

☐ I'd like to ensure the long-term viability of UPEC by contributing \$_____ to the UPEC Endowment Fund.

NOTE: If you make the endowment check out to the Marquette Community Foundation (MCF) and put "UPEC Fund" on the memo line, you can take a 50% tax credit on your MI state income tax (up to \$200 for individuals, \$400 for couples). Mail Endowment Fund contributions to MCF, Attn: UPEC Fund, P.O. Box 185, Marquette, MI 49855. Or you can send your contribution directly to UPEC and take a regular tax break. Please send membership dues to UPEC at P.O. Box 847, Marquette, MI 49855.

Thanks for helping to support UPEC!

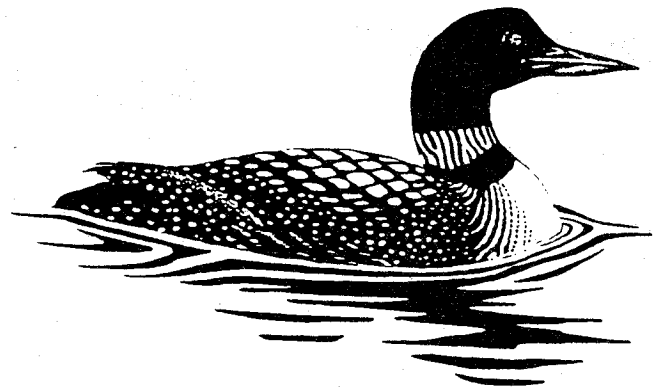
CALENDAR

August 11, Wednesday, UPEC Forestry Committee meeting at Chris Burnett's (906-249-1296).

August 24, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. White Pine Public Meeting, at Best Western Porcupine Mountain Lodge in Silver City, MI. Suggest calling to confirm.

September 25, Saturday, 3-6 p.m., UPEC Board Meeting at Ford Forestry Center, Alberta, MI.

**FYI: UPEC website:
http://members.xoom.com/NCT_hiker/upechome.htm**



The Upper Peninsula ENVIRONMENT

Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition

c/o Newsletter Editor

P.O. Box 673

Houghton, MI 49931

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