



Late Winter / Early Spring 2024

# UPEnvironment

Our 15th annual celebration of  
Earth's freshwater heartland!

## "CRITICAL LANDS/ CRITICAL MINERALS"

Saturday, April 13  
The Orpheum Theater,  
Quincy St., downtown Hancock

12:30-7:30pm EST

Free & Open to All!



### UPEC ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (open to all) • 12:30-1 pm

Hear reports from Board members about our activities, including updates from UPEC's Mining Action Group. We'll unveil the winners of our 2024 Photo Contest, and announce the recipients of the 2024 Environmental Education and Community Conservation Grants.

### CELEBRATE THE UP! 2024 KEYNOTE TALK • 1-2:30 pm

"Lake Superior Agates: Their Geologic History & How to Find Them"

Karen Brzys, Owner of the Agatelady Rock Shop, Grand Marais, Michigan



After moving to her family's home town, Grand Marais, in 1994, Karen purchased the Gitche Gumee Agate Museum. She operated the museum for 25 years, wrote 7 books, taught classes, gave lectures, and more. She closed the museum in 2022 and carries on now with the Agatelady Rock Shop.

### "Proforestation: Secrets of the Carbon Capture Forest" • 2:30-4 pm

Steve Waller, Environmental Educator



This program examines the forest in ways you've probably never experienced before. Every U.P. forest landowner, even owners of very small patches of forest, or even a single tree, can help reduce the impacts of climate change if they understand and follow a carbon capture forest strategy. We need to think differently about our forests and how they are used.

## "The Wolf's Trail, An Ojibwe Story, Told By Wolves" • 4-5 pm Thomas D. Peacock, Tribal member, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe



Thomas Peacock is a member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe and co-publisher of Black Bears and Blueberries Publishing. He is the author of over 14 books on Native education, racism, Ojibwe history and culture, and a number of books of fiction. He has his master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard University.

## "Paddling the Wild Rivers and Streams of the Western Upper Peninsula" • 5-6 pm Raymond Weglarz



Ray has been paddling UP rivers and streams for nearly 50 years and will share with us some of the many exciting paddling experiences he has had on our local wild waterways you never knew could be paddled! In addition to paddling, Ray enjoys wilderness camping, fly tying and fly fishing, woodworking, and cooking.

## Meet and Greet • 6-6:30 pm

A time to mingle with speakers, UPEC board members, and fellow Yoopers who enjoy the UP! Complimentary light refreshments, and you can purchase food from the Orpheum menu if you like.

## Music with Terri Bocklund • 6:30-7:30 pm



Terri Bocklund has recorded five albums of original music, including "Of Lake and Isle," her suite of music inspired by an Artist in Residency on Isle Royale. The project contains guitar solos, duets, and songs. Terri is married to Curt Kowalski and they perform as the duo Beechgrove & Blacksmith.

## MORE BAD NEWS FOR BLACK ASH: Tiny insects target beleaguered *Baapaagimaak*

*Steve Garske, UPEC Board Secretary*

[Ed. note: This article originally appeared in *Mazina'igan*, a publication of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), and is reprinted here by permission.]

As many *Mazina'igan* readers know, Turtle Island's ash trees are being decimated by the emerald ash borer (EAB), an accidental introduction from eastern Asia. The spread of this highly destructive little beetle has (not surprisingly) consumed the time, attention and effort of a wide variety of people who are concerned about the loss of ash. Meanwhile, another non-local ash-feeding insect has moved into the area, mostly under the radar.

In June of this year, GLIFWC Climate Scientist Hannah Panci noticed that the black ash (*Baapaagimaak* in Ojibwe) at one of the GLIFWC Climate Change Program's long-term phenology study sites in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National

Forest west of Mellen, Wisconsin, were losing most of their leaves. After finding an aphid-like insect on one of the leaves, GLIFWC staff contacted Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Forest Health Specialist Linda Williams, who provided some very helpful information on several insects that specialize on ash. These included two aphid species (one native, one introduced) as well as a related insect called the cottony ash psyllid (*Psyllopsis discrepans*, or CAP for short). After GLIFWC staff collected apparent CAPs from three sites in Vilas and Ashland Counties, Linda asked Patrick (PJ) Liesch of the Insect Diagnostic Lab at UW-Madison to take a look at them. After careful examination he confirmed that they were CAPs.



The cottony ash psyllid is native to Europe. It was first detected in North America in 1921, but was apparently only sporadically reported until the last decade or so. Most recent reports have been from the northern Great Plains, where severe outbreaks have been recorded. These outbreaks have been especially destructive in urban areas, where (for example) the CAP has wiped out nearly all the roughly 1000 black and Manchurian ash planted in the City of Red Deer, Alberta. Until this summer the CAP had only been reported in Wisconsin twice, from Wood and St. Croix Counties. But this year it was apparently widespread and at least locally common in northern Wisconsin and western Upper Michigan.

Adult CAPs are only about 2 mm long, and resemble miniature cicadas or leafhoppers. They're yellow with black markings, and often jump when disturbed. Like other members of this large group of insects (members of the order Hemiptera), CAPs have sucking mouth parts that resemble tiny straws.

The CAP overwinters as eggs, deposited between the buds and the twigs. The eggs hatch about the time the buds begin to open in spring. The juvenile CAPs, called nymphs, feed on the sap of the expanding leaves, causing them to become curled and distorted. (There is some evidence that this leaf damage is caused not by the insects themselves, but by bacteria they carry.) The nymphs cover themselves in cottony deposits of waxy material, which they excrete

on the lower surfaces of the leaves. The nymphs turn into adults in July, and lay another batch of eggs. The second generation of CAPs feed on the remaining leaves into the fall. Heavily damaged leaves drop off, causing the canopy to thin and weakening the trees. Unlike EAB-infested trees, where the canopy seems to fade more or less evenly from the top down, CAP-infested trees may have some branches which are nearly bare, while other branches still support nearly a full complement of mostly healthy-looking leaves. Damage to black ash consistent with cottony ash psyllid feeding seemed to be widespread in northern Wisconsin this summer.

▲ CAPs have nearly defoliated these black ash in this June 2023 photo, taken at GLIFWC's long-term climate study site in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. STEVE GARSKE



◀ Black ash leaf damaged by feeding CAPs. Heavily damaged leaves fall off prematurely, limiting photosynthesis and depriving the tree of food. STEVE GARSKE



(Left) This cottony ash psyllid nymph will soon molt and become an adult. (Right) Adult cottony ash psyllids are about 2 mm (less than a tenth of an inch) long. STEVE GARSKE

Unlike the EAB, which attacks all ash (*Fraxinus*) species, the CAP only attacks one subgroup of closely related ash, which includes European ash (*F. excelsior*), Manchurian ash (*F. mandshurica*), and the native black ash (*F. nigra*, Ojibwe *Baapaagimaak*). European ash is the natural host of the CAP and is presumably resistant to it, but the other two species unfortunately are not. CAPs can kill black and Manchurian ash trees, especially when the trees are already under stress from heat, drought, or disease. Heavily infested trees may be killed within a year or two. Perhaps the only bright spot in all this is that the CAP isn't known

to feed or reproduce on green or white ash, though you can sometimes find the adults on the leaves of these trees too.

At this point little can be done to lessen the damage to black ash stands caused by this insect. How much additional pressure the CAP will exert on any black ash populations that manage to withstand the EAB (so-called lingering ash) remains to be seen. But there can be little doubt that the battle for survival has become even more difficult for this beleaguered, iconic tree.

## DEAD RIVER COMMUNITY FOREST ACCESS FOR ALL: Phase 1 of project sets stage for expanded, safer use

*Clare Fastiggi, Interim Director, Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy*

With the support of a UPEC Community Conservation Grant, during 2023 the Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy (UPLC) was able to make immense progress toward our public accessibility improvement goals at the Vielmetti-Peters Reserve (VPR) and Dead River Community Forest (DRCF). With this grant, we were able to leverage more support via local donors and ultimately, we were able to complete Phase 1 of the project. This was an essential first step in creating the sustainable infrastructure necessary to protect the lands and waters while offering the public an expanded trail network from VPR into DRCF and down to the banks of the Dead River. Our goal was to build a parking area that provides easier access for all to the trailhead and minimizes disturbances to the surrounding area.

► Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy staff host an information booth in the new parking area and explain the road improvement project to participants at a UPLC hiking event. UPPER PENINSULA LAND CONSERVANCY





UPLC volunteers work to install a fence that will direct traffic to the new parking area at the Vielmetti-Peters Reserve. UPPER PENINSULA LAND CONSERVANCY

As we began to navigate necessary permits and road improvement needs, we soon realized that the project would be best completed with the expertise of local contractors. To ensure the project was done in a timely and sustainable manner, UPLC worked with local contractor Huber Resources Group (formally Compass Land Consultants) to apply for permits, locate road contractors, and ensure that we were meeting all necessary standards of installing culverts and fence lines to guide access. Due to unforeseen conditions on the road and bridge at Midway Creek, our overall budget for the project increased. The road required additional gravel and the bridge over Midway Creek required immediate removal due to deterioration, causing safety concerns.

While we had estimated the project to cost \$16,000, the total the total budget ended up being approximately \$25,000. Without the support of UPEC, we would not have been able to take on this project this year.

#### OUTCOME AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

- The parking area at VPR/DRCF will now allow for visitor vehicle access closer to the trailhead during dry-season months.

- This will mitigate the risk of trespass on private property, as the prior walk-in access crossed a private road along the ingress/egress easement.
- Having the parking area under UPLC jurisdiction will help us ensure that parking is carried out in a sustainable manner that minimizes damage to the surrounding area.
- Parking pressure on the surrounding neighborhood will be alleviated by this new parking area.
- New culverts will help protect waterways into the future.
- The parking area will be able to accommodate larger groups and school buses for events such as educational programming or university research partnerships.

#### CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

In order to address the unexpected challenge of the Midway Creek Bridge replacement project, we have included the bridge's replacement as part of Phase 2 of the project, and have already begun fundraising efforts. For our Giving Tuesday campaign in 2023, we were able to showcase some of the progress on the road and describe the need for us to "bridge the gap" before we are able to proceed. We were able



UPLC staff guide event participants along the improved roadway and fence that lead to the new parking area on Vielmetti-Peters Reserve/Dead River Community Forest. UPPER PENINSULA LAND CONSERVANCY

to raise \$4,500 toward this project with community support, and we have begun discussions with Northern Michigan University's Construction Management Department to see if there is an opportunity to collaborate on this project moving forward. Once we are able to reconnect the trail via

the bridge, we can look at other aspects of Phase 2, including trail mapping, trail building, and boardwalk building over sensitive water resources. As part of the recreational trail network, the community will be able to explore the area of the DRCF in a sustainable and engaging manner, with interpretive signage and opportunities for resting areas and water access. In Phase 3, we hope to conduct an accessibility assessment and determine what steps are needed to include a universally accessible portion of trail at the preserves.

### CONCLUSION

UPEC's support for this project was critical in allowing us to complete Phase 1 of the project in a timely manner. Without this funding, we likely would not have been able to complete this project by the Fall of 2023, and therefore would be another season away from expanding trails into the new community forest.

Additionally, had we not "broken ground" this season and sought the advice of experts, we might not have realized the severity of the bridge damage, and Midway Creek bridge would have been at risk of falling into and blocking the waterway on the preserve. We are so grateful to UPEC for supporting community access to this incredible tract of land and water. It was a busy year, and we are pleased that we could get this far with the project because of your support—*thank you*. We have included recognition of UPEC's support on our website pages that discuss DRCF trails, in our newsletter, and on our partners page on our website.

I am looking forward to keeping UPEC members informed on the continued progress on the "Access for All" project. I hope that we can walk out there together next year!

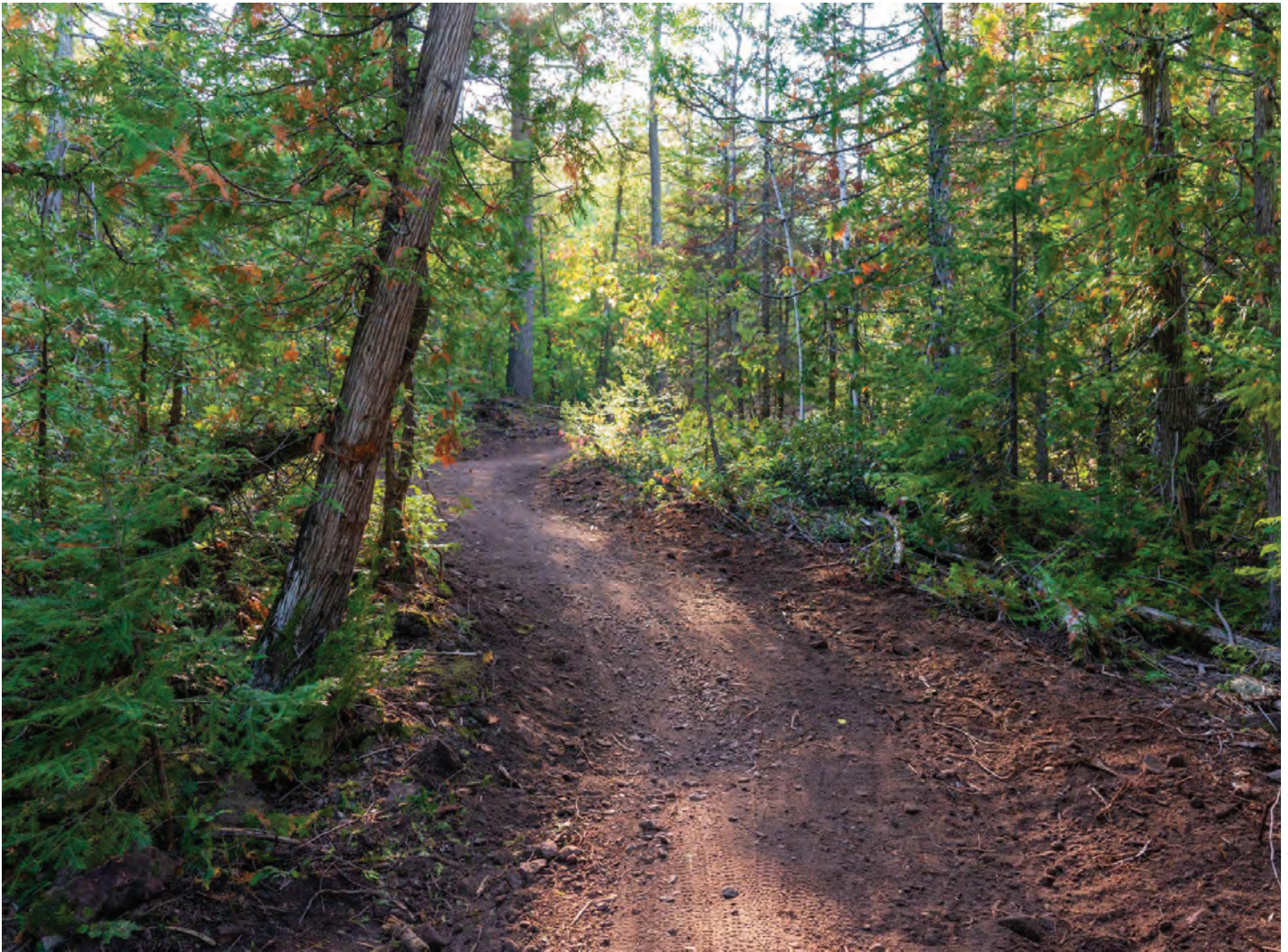
## WITH HELP FROM UPEC, COPPER HARBOR TRAILS CLUB COMPLETES FLOW CONNECTOR

*Nathan Miller, President, Copper Harbor Trails Club*

The Copper Harbor Trails Club is pleased to report that we completed the Flow Connector trail this season for the benefit of our trail users! Construction took place over a few days in September 2023 once Rock Solid Trail Contracting arrived with the equipment and crew necessary to complete the work.

The Flow Connector project is an update of an existing rough trail that connected our popular trail, The Flow, with a crushed gravel path, the Hunters Point Trail. The trail was previously a





rough, rocky, and occasionally wet route that was challenging for both mountain bikers and hikers alike. Most bikers rode back to town on M-26 instead, even if this option was less safe. The project aimed to make the connector a more viable alternative for a greater number of people.

Crews from Rock Solid used a rock crusher mounted on a skid-steer to smooth out the bumps in the trail. Mini-excavators and hand workers then polished up the surface and cleared back any branches that hung too low over the trail. The tread is raised slightly over the surrounding landscape to keep it high and dry during wet weather and spring snowmelt. Signs will be installed on the trail to encourage users to take it instead of the road, and a small

gathering area may be added in the future to further make this route more attractive.

We appreciate UPEC's support for this project and look forward to using this much safer route!

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#### Going shopping? You can help UPEC at the same time!



Do you shop at Tadych's Marketplace (formerly Econofoods)? If so, please save your receipts and donate them to us. Keep an envelope handy at home where you can deposit the receipts after shopping. When it's full, mail them to us. We turn them in and get a donation!



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COPPER HARBOR TRAILS CLUB



**A UPEC Community Conservation Grant is making things safer for mountain bikers in Copper Harbor. See story inside.**

*Support UPEC by becoming a member or renewing your membership today!  
 Just fill out the form below or online. Not sure if your membership is current?  
 Email us at [upec@upenvironment.org](mailto:upec@upenvironment.org).*

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**Becoming a member / Renewing**

- Regular Member \$25
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- Student/Low Income Member \$15
- Lifetime Member \$500

This is a gift membership  
 Please give us the recipient's name and contact information in the space below this form.

- I want to volunteer! Please give details below.
- Please send me a digital (PDF) version of the newsletter from now on instead of paper

**Making an additional contribution**

- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ UPEC General Fund
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Mining Action Group
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Community Conservation Grants
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental Education Grants

My contribution is in honor/memory of

Please give us the honoree's contact information on the space below this form; or, if a memorial, the name and information for a family member.

Please clip and mail along with your check to: UPEC, P.O. Box 673, Houghton, MI 49931

**Thank you for your support!**

You can also join, renew and donate online at [upenvironment.org/join-renew](http://upenvironment.org/join-renew)