

The Upper Peninsula Environment

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State NRC and DNR Respond to FOLK Concerns

Otter Lake Watershed Erosion Effects Examined on Recent Field Trip

"The Otter River, once a high quality trout stream in the Keweenaw Peninsula, the last home of the grayling in Michigan...is now an ecological disaster, choked with sediment that is creating a huge delta threatening to cut Otter Lake in half...." Thus began the plea for a change in management practices presented by UPEC member FOLK (Friends of the Land of Keweenaw) to both the NRC (Natural Resources Commission) and DNR (Department of Natural Resources) in the fall of 1997. By the time of a December '97 compartment review meeting held in Baraga, it was evident that a critical component of the FOLK suggestions, the re-drawing of timber sale lines, had not been instituted.

A few weeks ago, on September 22, FOLK members were cautiously encouraged after they accompanied representatives from Michigan's NRC and DNR on a field trip to Otter Lake and the Otter River watershed to view their present state of deterioration due to erosion.

The group viewed the rapidly developing delta of the Otter River in the lake itself (see map next page).

Though FOLK member Rosemary Grier was cautiously encouraged with the visit as a whole, another member, Greg Kudray, was concerned that poor forestry management practices remain unaddressed, and that the DNR's budget problems simply

amount to an excuse for doing things as they have "always been done."

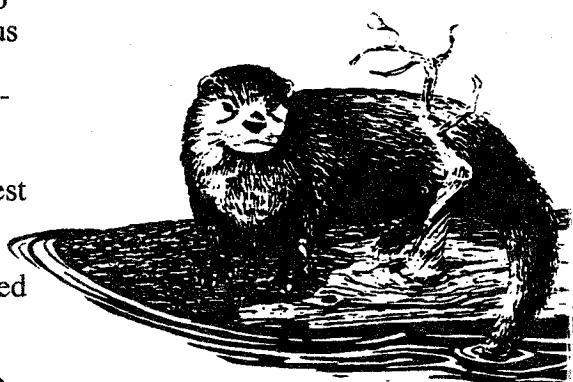
Some of the reasons the erosion-caused silting in of the lake has accelerated over recent years were acknowledged by DNR forester Byron Sailor at the time of the field trip: "We knew we had these problems...we already knew we needed to address them." However, the DNR's stance is that natural erosion and the condition of old logging roads are more serious causes of the current erosion problems than are present timbering practices, particularly with respect to width of buffer strips adjacent to streams within the watershed, and clear-cutting versus selective harvesting practices.

FOLK's involvement with the area dates from 1992, when its members provided input to the USDA-NRCS Otter River Watershed Project. In the succeeding years, FOLK's activities have included field trips into the watershed, as well as presentations to the NRC and the DNR at various public meetings. As recently as July of this year NRC, at a meeting held in Calumet, heard FOLK's concerns over the continuing problems with DNR forest management in the water shed area.

At that time FOLK pointed out that, though they had presented suggestions for improvement of management practices to the DNR in the fall of 1997, in-

cluding specific points with regard to timber sale planning, timber sale supervision and compliance, and road maintenance, a check later in the year found practices in a "business as usual" mode.

John Robertson, chief of the DNR forest management division in Lansing, took part in the recent field trip, and acknowledged that broad based education is key to needed solutions to these problems—and, of course, more money. "The science of managing resources is changing. We've always managed by species; now we realize it's the relationship between species that's important. It's not how many of a species that is important," but how the species relate to each other: man—plants—animals. In other words, the need for institutionalizing an ecological perspective in forest management was indirectly acknowledged.



And of course, within the era of budget cutting, rather than budget enhancement, it takes time (which is money), and money itself, to train foresters and loggers, not to mention DNR officials and employees, in the principles and practices of ecological forest and logging management—something that is not a quick-fix situation.

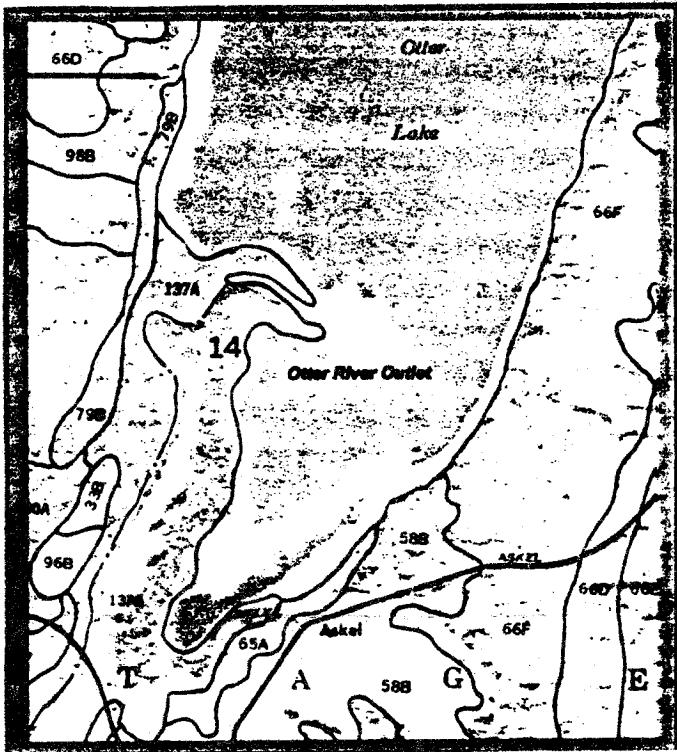
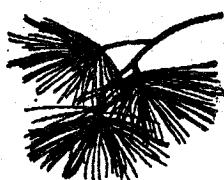
However, in the short-term, extra funds for gravel to fix the roads, and investment in more careful planning, would not be "all that much," and, in the minds of FOLK members, this approach is something that needs to be skidded to the top of the priority list for both the NRC and the DNR.

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SEPTEMBER UPEC BOARD MEETING

A glorious fall day for a productive meeting, at which the following items, among others, were dealt with: the FOLK-NRC-DNR field trip to the Otter Lake/Otter River Watershed; the Perkins- Manistique 138 kv transmission line proposed by Wisconsin Electric; status of the forestry committee's handbook; the Trap Hills moratorium; UPEC's web page; Friends of Hiawatha; and the varieties of approach within the watershed movement in the Upper Peninsula. These will be addressed in the newsletter as developments develop.

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Aerial view of sediment deposition in Otter Lake at the mouth of the Otter River. This delta, which has extended 372 feet into the lake since measurement was begun in 1979, is dramatic evidence of a mistreated watershed.

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

...and international as well! Browsing the UPEC membership mailing list can be a fascinating trip. A member in Terrace Bay, Ontario, Canada, makes us an *international organization*. Although the bulk of the addresses are in Michigan, naturally enough—31 in the Lower Peninsula and 271 in the Upper—we do quite literally stretch to both oceans, from Maine (2), Massachusetts (1), Connecticut (1), New York (1), Pennsylvania (3), Virginia (2), North Carolina (1) and Florida (2), and then on out to Oregon (1) and California (1). Then in between there is Tennessee (1), Ohio (3), Wisconsin (48), Minnesota (5), Illinois (9), Colorado (1) and Arizona (1). Thought you'd like to know.

ISLE ROYALE MANAGEMENT PLAN STATUS

"As we go to press" the news is that the plan has been finalized, but not issued. More when we know.

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

We have received a copy (75 pages, 6"x9" paperback) of the International Joint Commission's *Ninth Biennial Report on Great Lakes Water Quality*. Under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Commission assesses the adequacy and effectiveness of programs and progress to restore and maintain the health of the Great Lakes, and reports its findings and makes recommendations to the governments biennially.

This report is of interest to those concerned with Great Lakes issues and the U.S./Canadian governments' progress to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. Topics discussed and on which the Commission has made recommendations are: contaminated sediment, air pollution, agricultural practices, science and research, communication of scientific information, ecosystem models, surveillance and monitoring, dioxins and furans, mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls, radioactivity, and socioeconomic value.

The report is available to the public free of charge via IJC's website at

<<http://www.ijc.org>>

or in hard copy by contacting the International Joint Commission's Great Lakes Regional Office in Canada at 100 Ouellette Ave., Suite 800, Windsor, ON N9A 6T3, phone (519)257-5734; in the U.S. at P.O. Box 32869, Detroit, MI 48232, phone (313)226-2170; or by email to:

<commission@windsor.ijc.org>

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UPEC ATTENDS FRIENDS OF THE HIAWATHA NATIONAL FOREST MEETING

by Gayle Coyer

UPEC Forestry Committee member Jon Saari and I participated in the Friends of the Hiawatha National Forest meeting, held October 2nd in Munising. UPEC has been Friends member and has participated in these meetings since 1986, when UPEC was a party to a successfully negotiated settlement of various appeals to the Hiawatha National Forest Management Plan. Part of the settlement included creating the Friends group to discuss issues and monitor the implementation of the Management Plan. Other organizational members of the Friends group include the Sierra Club, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Michigan DNR, and various industry groups.

The Forest Service has always given a high priority for their staff to attend these meetings, and they usually include the Forest Supervisor, the District Rangers, and various professional staff. This year the new Supervisor, Clyde Thompson, was not able to

attend the meeting due to a family commitment.

The Hiawatha National Forest has seen a 30 percent decrease in funding from Congress over the past five years, and this has impacted all programs. Particularly hard hit has been the budget for threatened and endangered species. The amount of wood harvested on the forest has also been affected by the budget and other issues; the forest is currently harvesting about 50 million board feet a year, well below its allowable sale quantity of 70 million board feet.

UPEC and the Sierra Club worked together at the meeting to raise issues with the Forest Service. One of our biggest concerns is that the current Forest Management Plan expires in 2001, and yet the Forest Service is not willing to begin the forest planning process. They are prohibited by Congress from actually revising their plan, but they are able to start their "need for change analysis," as well as get public input on critical issues that need to be addressed in the next Plan. We think the process needs to start now in order for the Forest Service to make well-researched, scientifically-documented decisions for the next Plan.

Other noteworthy items: the Forest Service is gathering public comment on a recreation fee demonstration project. This would include a new \$2.00 fee for Grand Island and a \$15.00 fee for reserving some primitive campsites. The process for establishing Research Natural Areas is going very slowly, with only three areas designated and twenty candidate areas waiting. The annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report was not done this year -- the Forest Service claimed a lack of resources to complete the required report, and said they will do a two-year report next year.

We also took a field trip out to some harvest units off of Forest Highway 13 south of Wetmore. We had received

alarming reports of loggers being able to mark and then log the timber they had marked. After our field trip, we were much reassured about what this practice actually is. It is true that the loggers decide which trees to cut, but this is done only on low quality stands having little sawtimber in the stand. Also, the contract is very specific about which species to cut or to leave, and the spacing and density of the stand to remain after it is cut. Thus the Forest Service saves money by not having to mark the stands by hand at a pace of about ten acres a day.

We also saw some hardwood shelterwood cuts (trees are left standing to shelter new trees from the sun and wind), where white pine is being planted on low-quality hardwood sites, which are good quality white pine sites, with the goal of returning the stands to white pine.

It was a great day to be out in the woods after a day of sitting on chairs, eating doughnuts, and talk, talk, talk. The fall colors were gorgeous!

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KEWEENAW LAND TRUST NEWS

Landowner Aided in Establishing Secure Forest Management

In keeping with its mission of working to preserve the character of the Keweenaw, the KLT recently began preparing a conservation easement to ensure that a Houghton County landowner will realize his goals for a several hundred acre parcel. The rolling, mostly forested, land is very special to this landowner--the place where he grew up on the family farm, to which he applied his stewardship as he matured, and of which he finally became the sole owner. These forests have been carefully managed over the years to produce hardwood sawtimber.

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!

The owner wants to ensure that clear-cutting, development or subdivision will not occur in the future. The KLT, with the assistance of a professional forester and ecologist, is writing an easement that will guarantee that the his legacy of forest stewardship will continue permanently. The easement will allow the present owner, as well as any future owners of the properties, to conduct timber harvesting operations only within strict guidelines. Partial or selective cutting, done according to accepted forest management guidelines for this hardwood timber type, are the only harvesting methods that will be permitted.

In addition, a density limit is set in the easement that establishes the number of trees that must remain after harvesting. This protection will guarantee that this beautiful, productive land will not suffer the same fate that much local timberland has experienced in recent years. At the present time, stumpage values have become so high that it has become profitable for mechanized harvesting operations to simply buy and completely remove the wood fiber

through clear-cutting. The hardwood lands in this project have been managed over time to produce quality hardwood sawtimber, a procedure that takes much patience, wherein short-term economic gains are sacrificed for the long-term goal of a harvest of quality, large-diameter trees.

The development of this easement is another example of the variety of land protection options that are available in the process of conservation—one which can specify very detailed goals for land/timber use.

Calendar

- Nov. 6 – Dave Foreman speaks at Northland College, Ashland, WI
Nov. 8 - UPEC Forestry Comm. Mtg., Ford Forestry Center, Alberta, 3-5 p.m.
Nov. 9 – Lani Guinier speaks at MTU, Fisher Hall 8 p.m.
Jan. 17 – UPEC Bd. Mtg., FFC, Alberta, 2-5 p.m.

The Upper Peninsula ENVIRONMENT

Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition

c/o Newsletter Editor

P.O. Box 673

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