



The Upper Peninsula *Environment*

Newsletter of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition • November—December 1992

Michigan's gray wolf recovery program gets off the ground

During the summer of 1992, the DNR appointed a Gray Wolf Recovery Team to oversee the recovery and management of the species on the mainland Upper Peninsula. The gray wolf—also known as the eastern timber wolf—is an endangered species in Michigan. The state has a responsibility to preserve the species under the Michigan Endangered Species Act, while federal agencies must adhere to the federal ESA. According to a letter UPEC has received from the Team Leader, Thomas F. Weise, the DNR is “committed to an open process that involves the public” in the development of the recovery strategy.

There are currently about 20-25 wolves in the U.P.; this number does not include those on Isle Royale. The mainland U.P. population is increasing through natural immigration from Wisconsin and Ontario. Packs are beginning to form, and pups are being produced. In 1991, biologists documented the first successful breeding of wolves on Michigan's mainland in many years. There is enough suitable habitat to support a viable population.

Wolves are known to exist in four “patches” in the U.P.: (1) running along the Superior shoreline in Gogebic and northwestern Ontonagon counties; (2) an area in central Gogebic County running north into south-central Ontonagon County; (3) an elongated arc running from the northern half of Iron and Dickinson counties through the extreme southern tip of Marquette County and on to the Escanaba area along the Menominee-Delta County line; and (4) a round patch covering much of Schoolcraft County and the extreme western edge of Luce County.

Beyond biological concerns, wolves need public support to survive. In fact, most U.P. residents support the wolf's recovery (64% in favor vs. 15% opposed). Nonetheless, wolves need to be protected if they are to survive in the U.P. The DNR is trying to allay traditional fears with a fact sheet that points out there is no evidence that healthy wolves have ever attacked humans in North America. The DNR also vows that wolf recovery will mean no changes in current timber management practices; in its words, “Timber cutting, wildlife habitat management, and other practices that promote a diverse and productive forest are good management practices for the wolf.” Finally, the DNR responds

to concerns that wolves might kill too many deer by pointing out that, in 1990 in the U.P., 4,963 deer were killed by cars, over 72,000 by hunters, and almost 38,000 by starvation—the implication being that a few dozen wolves will not make much of a dent in the deer population.

The DNR has no plans to release wolves here. Any rise in current numbers will come through natural increase of the existing population.

The goal of the Recovery Team is to provide the conditions that will allow a self-sustaining population of wolves to exist in the U.P. (there are no plans for wolf reintroductions downstate). The federal government's Wolf Recovery Plan (signed in January 1992) suggests that 80-90 wolves must live in Michigan before the species will be removed from the federal endangered species list. This plan will be adapted as needed to address issues and concerns specific to Michigan.

Public meetings will be scheduled during the winter and spring of 1993 to identify which issues and concerns the public thinks should be addressed in the plan. A draft plan will then be developed by the Team, which will be subject to further public comment. Final approval of the plan rests with the Natural Resources Commission. Once approved, the plan will be carried out by the DNR and the federal land managing agencies that are represented on the team: the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and National Park Service. For more information on the recovery strategy, write to DNR District 2 Headquarters, Box 300, Crystal Falls 49920.

Upcoming UPEC meetings

January 24: UPEC Board meeting—all members & friends welcome! Marquette (location TBA) 1 pm ET.
January 11: UPEC Houghton Group meeting, Portage Lake United Church, Houghton, 7 pm ET. **February 8:** UPEC Houghton Group meeting, Portage Lake United Church, Houghton, 7 pm ET.

News & Notes

NWF gets U.P. grant The National Wildlife Federation has received a substantial grant to investigate sustainable development in the forest products industry in the western U.P. The grant manager is Gayle Coyer, formerly UPEC's president. The goal of the grant is to develop a consensus within the environmental community on what is acceptable forest-products development. In the long run, the goal of the project is negotiate a sustainable development agreement with the forest products industry. If you have any ideas for Gayle, you can call her at her home in Skandia at 942-7332.

Mead settles dispute Mead's Northern Hardwoods Division has agreed to pay a \$10,000 fine and \$139,000 in costs to the state of Michigan for intentionally disabling air pollution monitoring equipment at its plant in South Range. Mead says that the sabotage was done by one employee on his own initiative, without the knowledge of management. As part of its settlement, Mead donated over 700 acres on Brockway Mountain in Keweenaw County to the Michigan Audubon Society for use as a nature reserve.

We propose HoCo task force In December, the Houghton Area Chapter of UPEC proposed the creation of a Citizens Recycling Task Force to deal with Houghton County's chronic recycling problems. The recycling center at the county's transfer station was closed in November by the private company which handled the recycling pick-up. UPEC responded by calling for interim funding for recycling while a Task Force decides on a long-term strategy for the county.

Workshop on tap Preparations are beginning for UPEC's Take Back the Earth Workshop, which will probably be held in April in Marquette. The workshop will showcase successful community-organizing strategies—real solutions for the problems that grassrootsers face. UPEC member Don Snitgen will prepare a casebook based on the workshop that can be used as a primer for new groups that pop up to deal with environmental problems. We'll have more details on how to be a part of the workshop in the coming weeks.

Foreman headlines GMM Dave Foreman will be the keynote speaker at the UPEC General Membership Meeting, which will be held in Houghton (exact location TBA) on May 1. Foreman was a key figure for many years in the Earth First! movement and is now involved with wilderness recovery projects and the publication of *Wild Earth* magazine.

Air permits for burner denied The controversial soil incinerator proposal for Skandia township was killed in December after the state's Air Quality Commission voted to deny the needed permits. This was the culmination of months of hard work by local grassroots groups, representatives of which traveled to Lansing to testify before the Commission.

Nominations for the Board!!! It's time once again for UPEC members to put in nominations for the Board of Directors for a one-year term beginning in May 1993. Nominations should include a one-sentence statement of interests. If you really want to make a difference in UPEC, please consider joining the Board. The Board meetings are now held every other month instead of monthly.

Nominations from outside the Houghton-Marquette corridor are especially welcome. Please send the nominations to the UPEC box before March 1.

Trash Team to go statewide UPEC member John Manty is on the steering committee for the U.P. Trash Team, a regionwide effort to combat trash dumping in rural areas and on public lands. The concept has been such a hit that it will go statewide next spring with a splashy send-off. The Trash Team is developing an Adopt-a-Forest clean-up program modeled after the highly successful Adopt-a-Highway plan.

Your Turn

The newsletter editor passes the torch... and vents his spleen

A little more than three years ago I volunteered myself into becoming editor of this newsletter. I remember that fateful day well. We were sitting in a Board meeting, going around the table trying to decide whose turn it was to churn out the next issue. People were ducking out to go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, check to make sure the car hadn't spontaneously combusted or something. I heard myself saying, "How about if I just do them all from now on?" Dead silence. Then, one by one, the few remaining Board members broke into giddy smiles of disbelief. Instantly I realized the enormity of my error, but pride kept me from withdrawing my offer.

And so here I am, at the end of 1992. I feel like the quality of the newsletter hasn't been what it should be over the past year or so, for my job and homefront demands have expanded and kept me from devoting the time that this publication deserves. So, as of the next issue, I am turning over the reins to Jerry Smith, Joanne Welsh, and Mikel Classen. I'm moving on to another thankless, but more robotic, position within the UPEC hierarchy—treasurer.

But before I say farewell to these pages, I hope you'll indulge me in some rambling observations on where UPEC is now, why our efforts are important, and where I think we ought to go in the years ahead.

I know there is much we need to do to make UPEC a more effective organization. We need more members, more activism, more coverage of the eastern counties and the Lake Michigan shoreline and the west end. Too often UPEC runs on the Houghton-Marquette axis. But I can tell you it's not because we don't care about the rest of the peninsula. We struggle along with little money, volunteer burnout, and all the other usual grassroots problems.

And we face elected officials who, almost universally, are either (1) ignorant of or indifferent to environmental concerns, or (2) just plain hostile to what we stand for. Joe Mack was perhaps the classic example, but give the devil his due: at least he was up-front about hating environmentalism. Today's politicians are usually a bit more savvy, cloaking themselves in greenery while continuing the assault. It's an insidious business, and a lot of what UPEC has to do nowadays involves countering the environmental mis- or disinformation put out by elected officialdom and

even the agencies themselves. I can count on the fingers of my right hand the number of times we've been on the same side of an issue as our elected representatives.

Having said all this, if you have a tendency (as I admit I sometimes do) to downplay UPEC as a marginal or unimportant organization, think about this. Our little group is the front-line guardian of the world's most important reserve of the world's most important substance: freshwater. Easily polluted, readily squandered, freshwater is the essence of essences, the key to all life and to the tiny part of it that constitutes human civilization. And yet only 2% of all the planet's water is freshwater, and a fifth of that is in the Great Lakes. The U.P. is arguably the most important piece of real estate on the planet, bound as it is by Lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior. And UPEC is the one group which, despite all our shortcomings, has taken it upon itself to stand up for this vital area. When you look at it this way, it's apparent that no other grassroots group has the responsibilities that we do.

Doubting me? Think ahead to a thirsty future, one in which global warming, population growth, and the wanton sucking-dry of aquifers leaves the rest of the country—no, the rest of the world—eyeballing the Great (Lakes) Drinking Fountain. When that day comes—and believe me, it will—UPEC will be at the epicenter of the controversy. Imagine huge pumping stations at Manistique, Gladstone, Menominee, Ontonagon, Grand Marais, the Soo. Pipelines running through downtown Rudyard, cutting through the heart of Gaastra, looming above Greater Metropolitan Wakefield, all of them wending their way to Phoenix and L.A. so the fairways stay green and the BMWs stay clean. Imagine revenue-hungry counties competing to get the H₂O transport facilities, with their pumphouse and pipe-maintenance jobs and water-withdrawal revenues. Imagine local school boards, vying desperately with each other to have the best junior hockey program, hooked on water-tax dollars like junkies. Imagine our Michigan representatives posturing about “the national interest” as the state increasingly finances itself out of wa-wa payola from Arizona and California and Mexico. Just imagine—what Detroit was to cars, the U.P. could be to water!

But why think ahead to a dismal, speculative future when the unremitting reality of today is just as depressing? My sense is that all of us are watching the slow domestication of the U.P. All the different issues that UPEC scurries around trying to cover are symptomatic of the chipping-away-at of the natural world. What we've got here is a thinning veneer of wildness laid lightly over an abused landscape. Tourists come up here and think it's wilderness; I can't walk ten yards through the woods without seeing evidence of human activity.

To get you really outraged, I should, at this point, say something like, “The U.P. is dying.” But of course it is not. The U.P. is just slowly degrading, slowly becoming more and more like everywhere else. That may not be soul-stirring, but it should be, and UPEC should do whatever we can to reverse the trend. Toward that end, I offer three stands UPEC ought to take in the months to come:

1. Oppose the construction of any new roads in the U.P. or the expansion from two to four lanes of existing roads. We don't need to make it easier for more cars to get up here faster; we need to reorient our infrastructure invest-

ment in the U.P. to revive railroads and other forms of mass transport.

2. Support a Forest Practices Act that bans clearcutting on lands enrolled under the Commercial Forest Reserve program, support legal challenges to Forest Service clearcutting on the Hiawatha and Ottawa using the provisions of the 1976 National Forest Management Act, and support similar challenges on state forest lands through the Michigan Environmental Protection Act. I've heard all sorts of foresters make very neat technical arguments for the desirability of clearcutting. Nonetheless, I think conservation biologists, the “new forestry” ecologists, and other scientists will, sooner or later, come to a consensus that clearcutting is a biological disaster. As for me, all I have to do is look at the increasing number of clearcuts around the U.P.

(cynically hidden from roadside view by a thin line of trees) and *I know in my gut that it's wrong*. Nature doesn't do that to land—even a hurricane or a wildfire leaves most of the organic material behind to decompose and thus nourish the soil. Too many so-called professional foresters are very good at farming trees, but don't know anything about growing (or nurturing) forests.

3. Support a real Zero Discharge initiative by calling on the American Paper Institute (the main paper industry lobby) to put up the requisite R&D money aimed at “closing the waste loop” in mills: that is, paying for the development of new technologies that will permit 100% recycling of current wastes. This would, in effect, put permanent lids on the smokestacks and discharge pipes. It's time to disestablish the principle that it's OK to dump pollutants into the air and water so we can have more elaborate deodorant packaging.

Let me give it to you in a nutshell. My dream for the U.P. is for about 80% of the forest land, all of the remaining undeveloped shoreline, and all of the waters of the Great Lakes to be administered as a national protected area, with no resource extraction allowed, and with as much of it as possible restored to wilderness conditions and legally administered as such. The remainder of the forest should be devoted to commodity production, and almost all of that should be geared toward saw timber and durable, value-added wood products. The “economic development” emphasis would be on locally controlled small business, with the tourist industry weaned from near-total fossil-fuel dependency. The culture would celebrate diversity and rebuff consumerism. The population would be stable or slightly declining, with people taught to love the U.P. for the advantages it has, not regretting the big-city amenities it doesn't.

Sound radical? Think again.

Radical is turning the Soo Locks into a series of public swimming pools so no more oceangoing, zebra-muskel-toting freighters can get into Superior. Blowing up the Mackinac Bridge and forcing tourists to canoe over. Reintroducing wolves to downtown Marquette. An immediate ban on all snowmobiles and ORVs as noise-belching, turf-ripping, soul-rending affronts to all that is decent and pure. Nationalizing the paper industry and mandating no more than 5% virgin content in all paper sold. Outlawing all fast-food franchises from the U.P. so our homegrown outfits stand a chance. Seceding the U.P. from the Union so we can reconstitute ourselves into a Small-Is-Beautiful Biore-

Yes! I want to protect the U.P.!

Name _____ Street/P.O. Box _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
 City/Town _____
☐ I would like to support the goals of UPEC by becoming a member. My annual dues are enclosed (check one):
☐ Supporting \$50 ☐ Individual \$15 ☐ Low-income, student, senior citizen \$10 ☐ Lifetime \$500 (payable in two installments of \$250/year) ☐ Here's an additional contribution of \$ _____
☐ Please send my nonprofit group information about organizational membership. Annual dues for organizations are \$35.
☐ I would like to help ensure the long-term protection of the Upper Michigan environment by contributing to the UPEC Endowment. Enclosed is a donation of \$ _____

Dues and contributions are tax-deductible. Please fill out the form above and mail to: Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition, P.O. Box 34, Houghton, MI 49931-0034.

gional Loosely Organized Self-Determined Committee of Correspondence.

Radical is setting a goal of zero population growth for the U.P. No, wait—*radical* is a forced depopulation of the U.P. so that those remaining are compelled to regroup within a hunter-gatherer society. No, no, no—**RADICAL** is a massive push for voluntary self-extinction so we can let the U.P. revert to a human-free paradise.

All right, all right. Maybe that's a little much. I *do* want people to be around in a thousand years, and I want them to be thankful and appreciative of our efforts to lay the groundwork for a more environmentally sane world. But all the same, we shouldn't be afraid of being thought "radical." What's really, truly radical is the status quo: the idea that we can forever continue to lumber down our current path of ever-increasing consumption, of rampant anthropocentric arrogance. As far as I'm concerned, if you're working to change the status quo, you're part of the solution—whether you consider yourself conservative or liberal, timid or bold, fearless or frightened, radical or oh-so-mainstream. We need people in UPEC working on every level of environmental consciousness. Within our environmentalist community, we need to advance our own particular points of view vigorously, but at bottom we need to respect our fellow environmentalists' views whenever we differ. We need to recognize that the environmental movement has room for all varieties of meaningful (as opposed to cosmetic or frivolous) change. In short, the U.P.'s environment is depending on us to keep our *coalition* together. We may be moving at different speeds toward ecotopia, but I'd like to see as many of us as possible (both humans and non-humans) finally get there.

Well, there. Thanks to all of you who contributed stories over the past three years, or who gave encouragement. I hope you've found the newsletter informative, provocative, and worthwhile reading.

—Dave Harmon, Atlantic Mine

(If you haven't already guessed, the views in *Your Turn* do not necessarily reflect, nor do they imply, any official position of UPEC.)

Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition

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