



UPEC **15**th 1976-1991
anniversary

The Upper Peninsula *Environment*

Newsletter of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition • June—July 1991

Mead pulls plug on new paper mill in U.P.

In a surprise announcement June 3, Mead Paper announced it is abandoning its attempt to build a new pulp and paper mill in the Midwest. Mead dropped all three sites it had been considering, one of which was near Rockland in Ontonagon County. The company said it can't wait the 5 years or more it would take to open a new mill because it needs to fill demand for paper sooner. So Mead will instead try to boost its production at existing mills. Mead head Sam Benedict said the company wants to build a new mill eventually, but it won't happen before the late 1990s. It will keep ownership of the Rockland site for that eventuality.

Mead's decision was reminiscent of James River's sudden pull-out from the Arnheim project last year. Mead had said relatively little about its plans in public, but all the scuttlebutt seemed to point to a genuine and immediate seriousness about the Rockland site. Mead's lawyers had gone to the trouble of rewriting the zoning ordinances for the two townships involved, and at least one of the two appeared to be poised to adopt the zoning changes. Indeed, there were acrimonious public hearings on the zoning changes on May 8, at which pro- and anti-mill forces exchanged barbs amid heckling and much tension.

Pro-mill people, many associated with the front group PACE, were in the majority at these hearings, though anti-mill groups (FOCUS, FOLK, Save Our Superior, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, and UPEC) were the only ones to supply documents to back up their testimony. A number of UPECers attended, and we also submitted testimony, including a copy of our 5-page "wish list" of what should be addressed in an environmental impact study of a mill. In letters accompanying our testimony, we asked the township boards to undertake an EIS, since Engler has dismantled the CEQ. We contended that, lacking review by an independent body, Mead's EIS might not be adequate. In any case, we argued, the EIS should be done by an impartial body, not the company supposedly being regulated.

It is disturbing to note that the zoning changes engineered by Mead would have deleted sections of ordinance giving local governments some environmental review over proposed new projects. This would have benefitted Mead, of course, but it would also eliminate the only effective local oversight of a low-level nuclear dump, which Ontonagon County is still very much in the running for. Yet Rockland Township's zoning board, at least, voted to give up this power without batting an eye.

The second collapse of a major mill project within the space of two years has to be counted as a watershed victory for U.P. environmentalists and a real coming-of-age of the movement in our region. Just as FOLK was at the heart of driving James River out of Baraga County, much credit has to be given to the Ontonagon-based group FOCUS. Against long odds—unlike in Baraga, there is no question that the vast majority of people in Ontonagon County favored the mill—FOCUS hung in there and got its message into local

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UPEC to appeal Sylvania plan— we need your written testimony before July 10!!!

David Morton, the Ottawa National Forest supervisor, has exercised his authority to override the recommendations of the USFS team of resource management specialists in the final Forest Plan Amendment which will control motorboat use in the Sylvania Wilderness. In the *Sylvania Wilderness and Perimeter Area Opportunity Area Analysis*, the USFS team had recommended that motorboat speed should be restricted to a no-wake (1-5mph) speed in the entire wilderness portion of Crooked Lake. Morton's plan calls for this restriction only in the southernmost part, with the remainder of the lake open to motorboats at unlimited speeds. Although Morton's plan would eliminate jet skis and water skiing from the wilderness portion of Crooked, and reduce the horsepower of boats launched at the USFS ramp to 25 hp, boats launched at other locations could continue to use almost all the lake with no restriction on horsepower or speed. Motorboats on Big Bateau Lake would be restricted to 10 hp and motors would be prohibited on Devils Head Lake after 1995. Other Sylvania lakes would remain closed to motorboats.

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ENVIRO CALENDAR

UPCOMING UPEC MEETINGS

• July: Tuesday the 16th at 7 pm EDT. First Methodist Church (education wing), corner of Front & Ridge Sts., Marquette. Parking is on the east side of the building. Aside from regular business, we will meet with staffers from Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in our continuing effort to prevent a road from being built through the heart of the park.

Sylvania (continued from p. 1)

Considering the provision for unlimited speed and horsepower within the wilderness portion of Crooked Lake, which extends into the heart of the entire Sylvania Wilderness, the UPEC board voted unanimously at its June meeting to file a USFS administrative appeal of Morton's plan. UPEC will make the appeal on the basis of a wide variety of considerations, one of the most important of which is the original Congressional intent that motorboat use in Sylvania be continued only "insofar as this use does not conflict with or adversely affect wilderness values." While it is clear to us that any motorboat use adversely affects wilderness values, we will need as much evidence as possible to present in our appeal. One form of evidence is written testimony from Sylvania users that motorboat use would or has harmed their wilderness experience. Please send us statements indicating how motorboat activity in Sylvania will affect you. Descriptions of an actual experience with motorboat contact, on Crooked Lake or elsewhere, would be particularly helpful. We know many of you have already written to Morton on this issue; unfortunately, in our earlier appeals we neglected to ask for copies of your letters. *If you haven't sent us a copy, please do so now!* The deadline for filing our appeal is July 14, so we must have your testimony in hand no later than July 10. The way the appeals rules work, we will be prohibited from presenting any new evidence after July 14, either in the USFS administrative appeal or in a possible Federal Court appeal to follow. Please send your statements directly to the following address as soon as possible:

Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition
c/o William Malmsten
Rte. 1, 23314 County Road CL
Ishpeming, MI 49849

We are also renewing our appeal for donations to the Sylvania Defense Fund. Response has been good, but we will need more money to get legal assistance in preparing our appeal. Your tax-deductible contributions to this fund will be used exclusively for protection of Sylvania. Please send donations to: UPEC, P.O. Box 34, Houghton, MI 49931. Please mark your check "Sylvania Defense Fund." Thanks!

Mead (continued from p. 1)

and regional media. Aside from the usual mammoth sacrifices of personal time on the part of its members, some FOCUS members were also subjected to intense personal criticism because of their unpopular attempt to get at the truth of what Mead was up to. The whole thing is a good example of how national groups—NWF, American Lung Association, Greenpeace, Sierra Club—and local grassroots groups can work together when they are focused on a goal.

Where does this leave us? That's hard to say. For one thing, Mead still owns the Rockland site, is leaving stations up to gather required weather data, and could be back in the picture as early as 1995. On the other hand, it would seem the IJC zero discharge initiative has been given a boost, since Mead's pull-out removes a major political obstacle for supposedly pro-ZD but recalcitrant politicians like Levin and Engler. If ever there were a time to push for ZD, it's now, but certainly the selling job won't be easy. The concept has not taken hold in the popular consciousness of the U.P., nor has its ramifications yet been fully explained to the people of

the region. That is a task that we'll have to tackle in the months ahead. Also still very much unresolved is the whole forestry question. We may not be faced with a new mill, but industrial demand on the U.P.'s forests grows every day. So we will continue with our forestry study as planned.

News & Notes

Zebra mussels hit U.P. Zebra mussels, an invasive, aggressive exotic species, has made its inevitable appearance in the Great Lakes waters of the U.P. They have now appeared in the municipal water intake pipes running from Lake Michigan to Escanaba and Gladstone. The mussels quickly reproduce and actually form a living crust on the inside of the pipes, reducing their flows significantly.

Enviro office opens in Ontonagon Dave Anderson, co-director of FOCUS, has opened a Regional Environmental Network Office in the old courthouse (610 Trap St.) in Ontonagon. The phone number is 884-4680. Or you can write to Dave at FOCUS, P.O. Box 133, Ontonagon 49953 (note: this is a new mailing address for FOCUS). PS: FOCUS is trying hard for 40 new members so they can get bulk mailing rates. If you haven't yet joined this worthy (and winning) group, annual dues are \$10 (\$5 for seniors, students, and low-income people).

We sparkle on the airwaves UPECers Scott Emerson and Joanne Welsh did an excellent job of putting the case for the importance of zero discharge when they appeared on the TV show *Upper Michigan Today* in early May. Emerson, who is a toxicologist, gave a good layperson's explanation of how toxins persist and accumulate in the environment. Welsh, a UPEC board member, clearly explained the concept of zero discharge and what the ZDA's goals are.

ANWR threat HONOR has sent out an action alert asking people to protest the proposed drilling of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. Aside from environmental destruction, drilling threatens the way of life of northern Alaskan tribes. If you are concerned about this issue, write your senator at U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510. For more info, call HONOR at 414-963-1324.

EPA digs in at Torch Lake EPA continues to slog away at the preliminaries to cleaning up the Torch Lake Superfund site in Houghton County. In early June the agency began digging test pits along the lake in Tamarack City, Hubbell, and Lake Linden. Workers wearing protective masks and clothing spent 2 weeks looking for buried drums. EPA has a toll-free info line for the clean-up: 800-621-8431.

Superior called outstanding—sort of At a recent meeting, the states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota all endorsed the concept of designating Lake Superior "Outstanding Natural Resource Waters"—the highest classification under the Clean Water Act. Sound good? Well, they immediately began talking about putting in loopholes. UPEC has written to the states to endorse an undiluted ONRW designation.

Little Presque Isle threatened On May 29, some 20 citizens met with the DNR and unanimously opposed the building of a campground at Little Presque Isle, Wetmore Landing, or anywhere else east of Marquette County Road 550 along Lake Superior. The DNR, under the guise of 10-year-old plans and a belief that locals are mostly in favor, could begin building as early as this summer. If you are concerned about this stretch of shoreline, please contact Doug Cornett, Deertrack Village, Marquette 49855 (226-8711).

The Upper Peninsula
Environmental Coalition
P. O. Box 34
Houghton, Michigan 49931

*dedicated to the preservation
and maintenance of the
unique environmental
quality
of the Upper Peninsula*

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- Copper Country Audubon Society,
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- Copper Country Citizens for
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- Copper Country Peace Alliance,
Houghton
- Dickinson Citizens
for Clean Air, *Norway*
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- MTU Student Pugwash, *Houghton*
- Ottawa National Forest, *Kenton*
- Recycle!Marquette, *Marquette*

*UPEC is a member of Great Lakes
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UPEC, DCCA testify against DNR shuffle

by Kraig Klungness

On May 10, Catherine Andrews and I attended the DNR reorganization in Escanaba on behalf of UPEC. State Rep. Dave Anthony of Escanaba and Rep. Thomas Alley of West Branch listened to testimony both for and against DNR restructuring as proposed under new legislation introduced by Alley. (He is the same legislator who introduced the outrageously weak ORV legislation that exempts the U.P. from regulation.) Contrary to a May 11 headline in the *Marquette Mining Journal* ("Few opposed to DNR realignment"), it was the opinion of Catherine, me, and several others who attended that support and opposition were about equal.

You could hear the wheels of industry turning as Operation Action U.P. executive director Dick Dunnebacke testified. He criticized the current DNR for its slow permitting process and for policies that keep industrial development from proceeding at a rapid, unhindered pace. He advocated a DNR that would actually promote resource extraction, maintaining that the future of the U.P. belongs to mining. Last year it was pulp mills.

My intended testimony was to emphasize opposing abolishment of the Water Resource Commission and the Air Pollution Control Commission, as stated in the original version of Alley's legislation. However, minutes before being summoned to the microphone, a mysterious woman of unknown identity handed me an information sheet stating that these two commissions would be retained. Reading further, as my name was called, I discovered the catch: they would be retained, but without any regulatory authority. Caught offguard about what to say, I ad-libbed by clarifying with Alley this new proposal, stating that I would take it up with UPEC's board, but personally advised against removing regulatory authority from these commissions. Recalling my own experiences with the Water Resources Commission, I emphasized the importance of its technical expertise and the ability of citizens to participate in the decision-making process.

Then Alley brought up a series of leading questions designed to get answers biased toward his legislation. In a tone of voice suggesting that it would be foolish to do so, Alley asked if I thought a separate citizen's commission should be set up for each division of the DNR. I answered yes, further explaining that such commissions provide an important safeguard against the possibility of inadequately considered or politically biased decisions.

I presented the rest of UPEC's position as being opposed to establishing an independent Fish, Game, and Recreation agency, stating the need for an integrated ecosystem approach to conservation issues. The proposed restructuring would further bias DNR policy in favor of game species to the detriment of non-game species, biodiversity, and overall ecosystem health. I testified that UPEC also opposes moving the Forestry Division into the Department of Agriculture.

Three Dickinson Citizens for Clean Air (DCCA) members were at the hearing as well. Miriam Belding gave their testimony, which also opposed elimination of the Air Pollution Control and Water Resources commissions. DCCA has worked extensively with the Air Pollution Control Commission over the last five years regarding the seemingly incessant air pollution problems from Champion International's pulp mill in Quinnesec. Over the last several years they have also become involved in water quality issues for the Menominee River where Champion discharges its effluent.

The DNR as it now exists is much better than it would be under the proposed reforms. Reform needs to focus on realizing the comprehensive and strict enforcement of the laws we already have, not on creating greater obstacles to citizen involvement.

Great Lakes Initiative due soon

In June 1989, EPA launched the "Great Lakes Water Quality Initiative." It is a cooperative effort with the eight Great Lakes states to adopt consistent water quality standards to protect the Great Lakes. Now, pollution limits vary greatly from state to state.

The Initiative will address seven key areas: 1) Numeric water quality standards to protect aquatic life; 2) The same to protect wildlife; 3) The same to protect human health; 4) Accounting for bioaccumulation of toxics up the food chain; 5) Anti-degradation, which means no degrading of existing clean water; 6) Implementation, which is how the standards will be applied to things like mixing zones and dilution;

and 7) Pollution prevention—not using or producing toxics in the first place. Within the antidegradation component, there will be language specifically to protect Lake Superior, though it has yet to be written.

By law, the draft package for public review is supposed to be out by June, though it will more likely be out in September. It will be important for environmentalists, including grassroots groups like UPEC, to work hard to keep the Initiative from being trashed by industry. There will be more info coming regarding public comment periods, hearings, etc., and the Lake Superior language. Stay tuned!

IJC confab held

by Gayle Coyer

The International Joint Commission (IJC) held a roundtable discussion in Thunder Bay from May 21-24. They discussed how to stop discharges of persistent toxics from point sources (e.g., mills, manufacturing plants) in the Lake Superior basin. Environmentalists, government officials, and representatives from industry—including pulp and paper, mining, and wastewater treatment plants—took part. NWF, Save Lake Superior, Greenpeace, and Environment North were there. Five of the six IJC commissioners were present to listen and to discuss the topic.

For the purposes of our discussion, "zero discharge" meant the complete cessation of any use or creation of any persistent toxic substance and of its discharge into Lake Superior. The whole context of the discussion was to evaluate the barriers, both technological and economic, to achieving zero discharge on Lake Superior.

Much of the focus was on the pulp and paper industry, since this is the largest point source discharger on the lake. The question: What are the technological and market barriers to eliminating the use of chlorine in the pulping process? The only technological barrier identified was the kraft pulping process itself, in which there is currently no chlorine-free alternative for producing bright white paper. However, many participants felt there are only a limited number of uses where bright white paper is even necessary.

Market barriers to chlorine-free pulp are more significant. Obviously there is a large cost involved in

installing chlorine-free bleaching equipment. It was recommended by the environmentalists that no new mills using chlorine be allowed on Lake Superior.

Strategies for converting existing mills included government subsidies, guaranteeing markets for chlorine-free paper from Lake Superior mills, and forming a marketing consortium for the lake's mills which would sell such paper with a "Superior" label. One suggestion was that the IJC establish a committee that would contact and work with each of the lake's mills to discuss their individual situations.

The roundtable was considered very productive and worthwhile by most of the participants and the commissioners. The real test, however, will be what kind of recommendations the IJC makes to Canada and the USA in its next biennial report, which will be written after its meeting in Traverse City September 27–October 1. *PS: We'll have more on this very important IJC meeting next issue. There will be workshops, an encampment, rallies—plan to be there!*

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