



# The Upper Peninsula *Environment*

Newsletter of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition • July-August 1990

## At June meeting with NPS

### ***UPEC urges new study of Pictured Rocks road***

At our June meeting, we pressed Park Service officials to reconsider their road-building plan for Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. PRNL superintendent Grant Petersen, park biologist Walt Loope, and other NPS staffers heard our arguments for going back to square one in terms of the environmental analysis of the road.

UPEC's position is that the Congressional mandate to build a "scenic shoreline drive" through Pictured Rocks can best be met by paving County Road H-58 and building spur roads to scenic overlooks on the Beaver Basin rim. NPS wants to build a 12-mile stretch of new road along the rim. Even though a "no action" alternative is part of the current environmental review, Petersen said that NPS's road alignment is the one which will be built unless the upcoming environmental impact statement (EIS) finds a significant impact would result, such as jeopardizing an endangered species or causing a serious degradation of the visitor experience.

Basically, NPS seems to be turning the current environmental review into a rubber stamp for their road-building plan. (The review, which is sort of a prelude to the EIS, began with a round of workshops this winter and will continue with a visitor survey of responses to a "video simulation" of different road alignments.) We told NPS, however, that we don't consider such a course of events to be an adequate playing-out of the EIS legal process. We argue that the environmental assessment included in the 1981 park management plan, (which is used to justify NPS's current road plans) is poorly done and out-of-date to boot.

We told Petersen that we want NPS to go back to the drawing board. We think Pictured Rocks should do a real EIS, one which includes our alternative, theirs, a "no action" option, and any other alignments people want to suggest. Petersen said NPS would consider this, but we may well have to press them further. The issue comes down to how to define a "scenic shoreline drive." NPS leans heavily on its interpretation of Congress' intent in writing the 1966 law which created the park. Park officials are also fond of comparing their current plans with the original shoreline drive alignment as envisioned in the late 1960s. We counter by pointing out there's more than one way to interpret the will of Congress. And the original road alignment is a red herring, since it could never be built under today's environmental laws. So we await NPS's response. If they turn us down, then we'll have to decide how to proceed.

## July meeting hosts CEQ head

### ***Dempsey: Mead's mill will get "careful review"***

The upcoming environmental impact statement (EIS) on Mead's proposed Ontonagon mill and that project's relationship to zero discharge were among the topics discussed at our July meeting with David Dempsey, director of Michigan's Council on Environmental Quality. As is usually the case in such projects, Mead will prepare the EIS as part of the background preparation for a discharge permit application. The twist is that the EIS will then be evaluated by a state-level environmental review panel under the CEQ's aegis.

Dempsey said the creation of the nine-member citizen's panel "in part had something to do with the Arnheim controversy." The panel will be a forum for the public to ask questions of state agencies, and will advise the governor on whether specific projects should be allowed. The panel's first workout will be the Mead EIS, which was requested by the DNR and Department of Commerce. Ground rules for the panel came out in June, and Dempsey has already met with Mead to explain them. Dempsey emphasized that the panel would give the EIS a "careful review." He said the controversy over the mill proposals means that Mead's plans will receive intense scrutiny. However, he noted that the CEQ, environmental review panel, and even the EIS are all advisory in nature—only the actual permit application is statutory.

We then discussed how this project relates to the IJC recommendation, which Blanchard endorsed, to make Lake Superior a zero discharge demonstration zone. Dempsey was asked how Blanchard can say (as he has in letters to local Ontonagon officials) that he is in favor of the mill as long as it meets standards, and yet also touts zero discharge. Dempsey replied that the standards are in a state of change, and that Blanchard was referring to *future* standards which may prevail at the time of Mead's permit application. These standards, Dempsey said, might be "defined in terms of zero discharge." Otherwise, Dempsey expressed strong personal and CEQ support for achieving a lakewide zero discharge agreement within a couple of years.

Dempsey also filled us in on the CEQ's statewide sustainable development roundtable, which is now forming. The panel will issue a report next June on how Michigan can reorient itself toward economic planning in which the environment comes first. Since perceptions of the concept of sustainable development vary greatly, one subcommittee of the roundtable will work on getting a common definition. Another will look at specific industry areas (including forest



products) while a third will recommend pilot sustainable development projects. Both UPEC (Dave Harmon) and FOLK (Dorothy Heikkila) will sit on the panel. Dempsey had high praise for FOLK's sustainable development report (see p. 3). It will be used as a model for part of the panel's work.

### Meeting locations set through October

The August meeting will be Tuesday the 14th at Ely Township Hall. The hall is located west of Ishpeming, one block off US-41 at Diorite Road.

In September we meet in downtown L'Anse at the Township Hall. The date is Tuesday the 11th.

October's meeting will be back at Ely Township Hall on Tuesday the 9th. All meetings begin at 7 pm, and all UPEC members are welcome!

### Completion nears for Sturgeon River Gorge, McCormick wilderness plans

The Kenton District of Ottawa National Forest administers two of Michigan's federally designated wildernesses, McCormick and Sturgeon River Gorge. A core team consisting of U.S. Forest Service personnel and several volunteers (primarily Doug Welker and Gene Elzinga of UPEC, and Don Elzinga) have been meeting regularly since January to develop 10-year management plans for these two areas.

Team leader Bill Reynolds, assistant district ranger at Kenton, led the team through the limits of acceptable change (LAC) planning process. We began with a combination of brainstorming and solicitation of public input to come up with a comprehensive list of issues, concerns, and opportunities to consider in the plans. Just a few examples are the North Country Trail, DNR concerns about fish management, interpretive opportunities, horse use, and safety at Sturgeon Falls. Next, opportunity classes (OCs) were defined and described. This was necessary because it was recognized that usage patterns will not be uniform within each wilderness, so some areas might be more pristine and others less so. We ended up with three OCs for each wilderness, each with a different management prescription.

In the next several steps, which are really the meat of the LAC process, the desired future condition, in terms of resource and social conditions, was determined for each OC—not an easy or non-controversial task! We set standards for these conditions which, if not met, will usually trigger some management action to ensure that they would be met. For instance, human contact is more likely in a less-pristine area (Sturgeon Falls, White Deer Lake) than in a more-pristine area. Meeting five other groups per day at Sturgeon Falls would not be cause for new management actions, but if hikers regularly met five groups per day in the most remote areas of McCormick, something would have to be done. Likewise, active fish management and well-maintained trails might be appropriate in heavily used areas, but inappropriate elsewhere.

Finally, six alternative plans were developed for each wilderness, with orientations ranging from intensive recreation to resource preservation. One alternative's objective was to spread visitor use fairly uniformly throughout the area, so few areas are overused. Another concentrated use in a small part of the area, so that the rest would be as undisturbed as possible. The sixth alternative, which drew upon parts of the others, was the one preferred by the core team.

Terry Read, chief district ranger at Kenton, is expected to give his stamp of approval to the plans in mid-summer, though he may require a few changes.

A few parting thoughts. First, the core team worked very harmoniously (no ego trips, lots of good listeners). Second, the Forest Service was extremely appreciative of volunteer involvement, and we as volunteers learned a lot. We also had a tremendous impact on the final product. With recent budget cuts, this seems to be an excellent time for active public participation in USFS planning. If you've got the time, you can have a lot of influence right now. Third, the LAC process appears to be an excellent management tool for wilderness and elsewhere. It is likely to be used for some wilderness planning at Hiawatha National Forest. It is unfortunate that it wasn't used at Sylvania. There's still time to comment on the Sturgeon River Gorge and McCormick plans. Write or call: USFS, Kenton, MI 49943 (852-3500).

—Doug Welker

### DNR dissenting report doubts timber supply figures for western U.P.

A new report by a Baraga Office DNR forester calls into serious question the timber supply estimates that have been used to justify the building of "virgin supermills"—gigantic pulp and papermaking complexes—in the western U.P. In a carefully researched and well-documented report, Greg Kudray concludes "there is certainly much less timberland available to support a new mill" than is assumed in a report done by DNR Forest Management Chief Henry Webster. Kudray makes this assertion based on the methods the government uses to estimate timber supply, which assume almost 100% of the timberland is available for cutting. To be realistic, says Kudray, you have to make deductions for wildlife habitat, buffer zones, the reluctance of many small woodlot owners to allow cutting, and many other factors.

The DNR's official response to the report was a cavalier dismissal. But three U.P. DNR foresters sent Kudray memos of congratulation, calling his report "much-needed." Kudray has displayed considerable professional courage in making this report. Despite being ostracized by the DNR higher-ups, Kudray is sticking to his guns. The pressure that the DNR and pro-mill interests can put on dissenters is formidable. For example, newspapers in Houghton and L'Anse refused to run a news story on the report by freelance journalist Park Teter. Both papers had excuses for not running the piece, but to date neither has published any account of this undeniably newsworthy document. In future issues we'll have much more on the Kudray report, which is likely to become a touchstone in the debate over forest development in the U.P.

### Q: How do you find the nearest U.P. gold mine?

### A: Just look around.

The fact is, an awful lot of people are making big money off the U.P.'s environment. They host tourists, they log trees, they mine minerals. But somebody, somewhere, has to give first priority to the resource base which makes it all possible. That's where UPEC comes in. *We fight for the environment for the sake of the environment.* With no apologies. So tell your friends about UPEC. Recycle this newsletter by sharing it, and urge them to join (a form is on the back page). Because there's more to the environment than just cashing in.



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## News & Notes

**Commerce Drops Out of Arnheim** Michigan's Department of Commerce announced in early July that it will no longer actively promote a mill at the so-called Arnheim industrial site on Keweenaw Bay. MDOC was disappointed with the results of a June 20 opinion poll conducted by the pro-mill group PULP in Baraga County. PULP leaders admitted in May that they undertook the poll at MDOC's urging, since MDOC was looking for a concrete show of local support after the James River pull-out. Yet despite a massive publicity blitz for two months prior to the vote, PULP could muster only a 53% majority—and a dubious majority at that, since PULP refused to respond to rumors of voting irregularities. FOLK, in contrast, did not contest the poll with an all-out effort, and still got 47% of the voters to say they don't want a mill *under any conditions*. And FOLK won the vote in Baraga Township, which is where Arnheim is located. So perhaps the wishes of the local community will prevail, and they just might, since the Township is in the process of taking over zoning power from the pro-mill Baraga County Commission.

**Sustainable Development Report Out** In July FOLK released its long-awaited alternative economic report. *Sustainable Development for the Keweenaw: Economic Renewal Options for Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon Counties* is a 42-page exploration of environmentally sensitive means of achieving community prosperity in this region of the U.P. It analyzes the economic and social conditions that make the Keweenaw special, and outlines sustainable economic options in forestry, tourism, energy, agriculture, and education. The report has received excellent reviews from the International Joint Commission, National Wildlife Federation, Great Lakes United, and others. Though written for the Keweenaw, much of the report's conclusions could be extended to the whole U.P. UPEC's board will vote on whether to endorse the report at our August meeting. Copies are available to UPEC and FOLK members for \$4.00 each (+\$1.75 postage) from FOLK, P.O. Box 168, L'Anse, MI 49946.

**UPEC Gets Mini-Grant** UPEC won the \$700 mini-grant it applied for in June to help educate the public about the Wild & Scenic Rivers bill. The grant was given by REI, the outdoor equipment mail-order giant. UPEC used some of the money to organize our showing at the July 14 Congressional hearing in Marquette. At the hearing, UPEC president Gayle Coyer expressed our basic support of the Sierra Club's recommendations on the bill. And we vehemently objected to one particular part of H.R. 4019. There is a special clause that prohibits the Forest Service from studying a specific stretch of the Ontonagon River for designation—in other words, specifically excluding it from the bill. What's so special about this part of the river? It just happens to be adjacent to the site of Mead's proposed paper mill! A remarkable coincidence? Maybe. But if not, it's disquieting to know that this legislation was written back in January, which would mean that some mover-and-shaker knew about Mead's proposal and kept it hush-hush for several months while working with the company behind the scenes.

Even though Kildee is on the fast track with the legislation, there will still be time for further debate and refinement of the bill. The Senate side is not likely to move so quickly, and the Sierra Club has decided to make the bill a priority item in Michigan.

**Coastal Act Guttled?** In June, Bob Davis succeeded in having thousands of acres, most of it in the U.P., taken out of the House version of the Coastal Barriers Act. The bill would prohibit spending federal money to promote building in environmentally sensitive coastal areas. UPEC is working with the National Wildlife Federation to restore Davis' cuts to the Senate version of the bill.

**Ontonagon Group to Voice Mill Concerns** In early July citizens in Ontonagon County formed FOCUS, a group which will investigate and voice concerns about Mead's proposed mill near Rockland. UPECers Gayle Coyer and Dave Harmon traveled to Ontonagon in June to help with initial organizing. Several FOCUS members attended our July meeting in Houghton, and the group has applied for UPEC membership. We look forward to working with them. You can reach FOCUS by writing to P.O. Box 142, Mass City, MI 49948.

**ZDA Taking Shape** The Zero Discharge Alliance is beginning to come together. This coalition of citizen groups concerned with Great Lakes ecosystem



quality is going to fight to carry out the International Joint Commission's zero discharge recommendations, including making Lake Superior a zero discharge demonstration area. The ZDA will also watchdog the Blanchard's administration's follow-through on the governor's zero discharge pledge. As it's currently envisioned, the ZDA will work on two levels: the whole Great Lakes basin, and the Lake Superior watershed. Greenpeace is planning a 1-day conference August 25 in Iron Mountain to kick off U.P. ZDA efforts.

**Look Out for Bad Forestry!** The Sierra Club has asked UPEC members to help them compile a dossier on bad forestry practices for use in future legislative and educational programs. If you know of a tract which you believe recently has been or is being mismanaged, send the info to SC. Here's what they need: (1) Photos—a picture's worth a thousand words. (2) Location—**be specific!** Give the township, range, and section number—this is absolutely vital. (3) Type of harvest: Is it a hardwood clearcut? Selective logging too near a watershed? Give some indication of why you think it's bad forestry. Send your information to Sierra Club Mackinac Chapter, 115 W. Allegan Suite 10B, Lansing 48933. Include your name, address, and phone in case there are questions.

**Coyer Testifies Before NRC** Gayle Coyer represented UPEC at the Natural Resources Commission's annual U.P. meeting in Marquette July 11. She requested a responsible analysis of and reply to the Kudray report (see p. 2 of this issue) and expressed our dissatisfaction with the DNR's stifling tactics. She also requested the NRC to recommend a halt to any large forest products project which would affect state forest lands until the Copper Country State Forest management plan has been completed. Finally, she strongly urged the passage of a statewide Forest Practices Act. The case in point: USX (formerly U.S. Steel) is apparently liquidating its forest holdings in the eastern U.P. They are currently offering their fifth all-species clearcut of 700 acres.

### Will Wisconsin ore be smelted at White Pine?

Near Ladysmith in northwestern Wisconsin is a rich deposit of massive sulfide minerals, a deposit which the Flambeau Mining Company hopes to develop for the copper it contains, and to a lesser extent for its gold and silver. The final

EIS for the Flambeau Mine has been released, and if the permitting process goes according to schedule, Wisconsin could grant the mining permit this fall, with excavation to begin in the spring. The mine would be open 8 or 9 years, with open-pit mining taking place for about 6 years. This is potentially a U.P. issue since, according to a Flambeau vice-president, the most likely site for smelting the ore (removing the metals) would be the White Pine smelter in Ontonagon County. Because the life of the mine is so short Flambeau doesn't want to build its own smelter, and White Pine is the smelter nearest to Ladysmith. It's not known whether the concentrations of toxic heavy metals could be handled by White Pine without changes in its smelter's discharge permit. Currently the levels of heavy metals discharged are so far below state limits that analyses of these elements are obtained rather infrequently. UPEC will keep an eye out to see if a permit modification is applied for. We'll also watch for the possibility of changes in the regulations covering air toxics at White Pine. Since the smelter is 40 years old, right now the only limit is on the opacity of the plume coming from the stack.

—Doug Welker

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