



UP Environment

UPEC: THE UP'S OLDEST GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

January 2019

Save the date! Celebrate the U.P. in Marquette - March 29-30

In 2018, UPEC staged two annual 'Celebrate the U.P.' events: one in Houghton and the other in Sault Ste Marie. For 2019 the event is returning to Marquette, to be held again at the Three Corners on Ridge and Front streets. Venues include the Peter White Public Library (PWPL), Landmark Inn (LI), Federated Women's Clubhouse (FWC) and the Ore Dock Brewery (ODB). Highlights include:

Friday, March 29

- Quarterly meeting of the UPEC Board. 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M., FWC
- UPEC Annual Meeting, with review of the year and the Board and Officers election. 4:30 P.M., FWC
- Short Video Contest Award Winners. 6:30-7:30 P.M., ODB
- Yooper Music Kickoff event. Conga Se Menne. 8:00 P.M., ODB

Saturday, March 30

- Keynote Address, "The Sixth Great Lake". David Dempsey, author and environmental policy specialist. 9:00 A.M., FWC
- Individual sessions. 10:15 A.M. - 3:30 P.M., PWPL, LI, FWC
 - Mark Doremus, filmmaker, the Back Forty Project (mine on Menominee River)
 - Michael Loukinen, filmmaker, Burbot fishing in the Copper Country
 - Rolf and Candy Peterson, canoeing around Isle Royale
 - Joe Kaplan, ornithologist
 - Phil Watts, rock climber
 - Karena Schmidt, lichens
 - Michelle Tuccini, En Plein Air painters
 - Tara Gluski and Dave Kalishek, becoming an outdoors woman
- Two "Activate the U.P." Panels, FWC
 - Industrial wind power plant in L'Anse Township
 - UPX mineral lease proposal
- Plenary Panel. "Capturing a Moment in Time". 3:30 P.M., PWPL.
 - A dozen people, one iconic U.P. image each, three minutes per person to elucidate choice and meaning.
- Reception. "Winding down with three wilderness poets". 5:00 P.M., FWC



All events free and open to the public!

Watch our website for updates! upenvironment.org

David vs. Goliath or Don Quixote? A GRASS-ROOTS CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT THE U.P. WILDERNESS FROM INDUSTRIAL WIND DEVELOPMENT by Wayne Abba & Burt Mason



The proposed Summit Lake Wind Farm project emerged into public view in the Fall of 2017, after United Kingdom-based Renewable Energy Systems (RES) erected meteorological towers to test the wind resource on Weyerhaeuser Company commercial forest land in L'Anse Township. The project would place about fifty 500-foot industrial wind turbines on the Huron Mountains and Michigamme Highlands, including Michigan's highest scenic points.

Township officials endorsed the project enthusiastically, motivated by the estimated \$300,000,000 valuation and promises of \$34,000,000 in tax revenues spread over two decades. The Baraga County Board of Commissioners and L'Anse Area Schools Board of Education approved resolutions of support (these bodies have several members in common). For RES, the scenario was following a proven path – find a financially needy community, get a foot in the door, and reap the benefits of generous investment and production tax credits.

There was one snag, however – the township zoning ordinance prohibited large wind energy conversion systems on commercial forest land. Unlike the typical wind farm that involves many individual leases, the Summit Lake project would be sited exclusively on Weyerhaeuser's 27,000 acres in Baraga County, with a few property owners being compensated for transmission lines crossing their land. RES and Weyerhaeuser undertook a public campaign to gain support and lobbied officials to amend the zoning.

Industrial wind turbines are promoted as sources of renewable “clean green energy,” a primary way to reduce our carbon footprint and protect the environment. It's a rapidly growing industry. According to the American Wind Energy Association, 54,000 turbines are operating in 41 states, Guam and Puerto Rico. As turbines proliferate and grow in height – the largest now reach 800 feet – communities increasingly worry about appropriate siting and the health, safety and welfare of human and wildlife populations.

The industry depends heavily on public subsidies. Warren Buffett, the Sage of Omaha, said “on wind energy, we get a tax credit if we build a lot of wind farms. That's the only reason to build them. They don't make sense without the tax credit.”

Wilderness-loving Yoopers were torn – how to reconcile support for green energy with the prospect of losing our ingrained sense of place? Was it worth literally industrializing the Huron Mountains? Red flags went up as people began to appreciate the environmental threats and voiced concerns about wildlife habitat, heavy road construction, polluted watershed, bird and bat mortality, and losses to tourism and property values.

Led by Nancy Haun of Skanee, a true grass roots movement emerged. Catherine Andrews, a local environmental advocate, provided invaluable research and Nancy's Yooper Adventures Facebook page helped to spread the word. By early 2018, their efforts had created a loose coalition of local residents and visitors. In April we published a white paper and organized formally as Friends of the Huron Mountains, now a Michigan non-profit corporation.

We describe ourselves as “a volunteer group consisting of Baraga County residents, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community members, vacationers, non-resident property owners, RV enthusiasts, boaters, hunters, berry pickers, leaf-peepers, fishermen (and women) and other assorted lovers of the relatively unspoiled Huron Mountains.” Our resumes include environmental advocate, naturalist, Peace Corps volunteer, business manager, management consultant, educator, government employee, logger, factory worker, IT professional, academic, armed forces veteran, librarian, healthcare worker and more.

The synergy resulting from this broad collection of talent and experience produced a large body of research, which

David/Goliath continued on page 3



Eastern mountaintop wind development

we share through Facebook and a website. We participate actively in every meeting of every local governmental body. From day one, we challenged the basis for the estimated tax revenue. After factoring in state offsets for schools, the \$34,000,000 was reduced to \$25,000,000 (which is still not assured) and we repeatedly question the claimed project attributes.

Our efforts were largely rebuffed or ignored by the officials, who disparaged us as a small vocal minority. We found it puzzling that they would trust profit-motivated outsiders more than a growing group of people having broad and deep local interests. Fueled by individual donations, we retained an attorney.

With our attorney speaking at meetings, the balance began to shift. We filed a complaint against illegally approved meteorological towers. Still, the township board persisted in its push for permissive zoning. It became evident that anything requested by the developer would be approved. To that end, the board filled planning commission and township board vacancies with people known to be pro-wind.

It came to a head on October 11, 2018, when the board approved zoning amendments that would make all Conservation/Recreation or Forest Resource land in the township eligible for industrial wind development, increase permissible turbine blade length by lowering ground clearance height, and reduce setback distances. That opened the door.

People welcomed our volunteers warmly and were well-informed thanks to our information campaign and comprehensive press coverage. Nearly all agreed to sign the petition. Although we didn't ask if they are for or against the

Summit Lake project, they freely offered their opinion. Of those contacted, more than 90% are against industrial wind development in our area.

On November 9, Friends of the Huron Mountains member and township resident Bob Kissel submitted to the township clerk a petition with 411 signatures – hundreds more than needed – seeking a referendum. With 410 signatures now certified, a vote will be scheduled not earlier than May 2019.

Coincidentally, one pro-wind incumbent and one pro-wind challenger were defeated for township board positions by large margins in the November election. Thus encouraged, we are pressing for a commitment to halt all activities related to the Summit Lake project until the referendum results are known and the township master plan is updated accordingly. With hundreds of millions of dollars at stake, we can't relax our guard. Readers interested in staying informed and supporting us can follow us at savethehuron-mountains.org.

So is this a David vs. Goliath situation, or Don Quixote fighting perceived giants? Actually, both – we are David to the industrial Goliath, but also can relate to Don Quixote as he came in sight of the windmills: *“Do you see over yonder, friend Sancho, thirty or forty hulking giants? I intend to do battle with them and slay them.”*

The wind farms in Michigan's windy Thumb area began with 30-40 hulking giants that now number in the hundreds. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory rates wind resource as marginal in the Huron Mountains. Apparently having confirmed that, the applicant pushed through a zoning amendment to increase blade length by 34 feet to be “more energetic.” We also doubt whether winter conditions have been considered adequately.

We are happy to share our experience with other communities, and encourage them to research the pros and cons of industrial wind development before deciding if it's right for them. We have three goals: First, to reject conclusively permissive zoning that would allow environmentally destructive industrialization. Second, to update the township master plan and zoning ordinance accordingly. And third, to work with all area citizens to resolve the underlying issues that prompted the local government to uncritically embrace such a harmful project.

Members Note: There will be an election of Board and Officers at the annual meeting on Friday at 4:30 during Celebrate the UP! Please join us at that meeting...

FROM THE PRESIDENT - THE YEAR PAST, THE YEAR FORWARD

by Horst Schmidt

We sent out a fund-raising letter in November. Your response has been overwhelming.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

As a UP organization we are able to continue our mission of education and advocacy with your help. We received over \$8,000 in donations from our holiday fundraising letter. With our independent contractor to help with bookkeeping and communications, our board members are free to focus their time and energy on protecting the wild UP.

As you may be aware, several years ago we received a bequest from the late Tom Church. This gift gave us more flexibility in furthering our mission to "Save the Wild UP". I bring up Tom Church because conservation, wilderness, and environmental organizations are at the very bottom of most estate planning by individuals. For most of us, the thought of our demise is not something we want to consider. However, eventually we will go the way of our parents and grandparents. Tom Church generously donated half of his estate to UPEC. Most of our members can afford much less, but their gifts are appreciated every bit as much. Please consider a gift of whatever size you think appropriate, that reflects the legacy you wish to leave.



Why is this important? There is nothing like financial stability for an organization such as ours. Annual membership dues cover a significant portion of our expenses. Being able to draw upon additional funds removes constraints, and allows us to take on new projects.

Unlike land trusts, environmental activism doesn't always end in tangible assets that can be passed on to future generations. However, there will probably never be enough money to purchase private properties on the scale of the state and national public lands. Our landscape is constantly under pressure from industrial forces with the assistance of the

state. Anti-environmental forces inside and outside government are constantly trying to chip away at our public lands. Even land trust property is not immune. This is where we come in. Environmentalists negotiate the legislative and regulatory framework to keep a balance, from pushing for major protective legislation to advocating on the local level. UPEC is the only UP-wide organization doing this advocacy work. For many citizens we are invisible or seen as threats to economic development. So we value your support because we are visible to you and you are aware there is a danger.

Annus horribilis - 2018 was that kind of year. We experienced the 'horribilis' part as our Mining Action Group fought the Michigan DEQ and the DNR in their drive to allow mines and mining exploration without regard for the long-term costs and even the law. The former DEQ director went so far as to issue a permit even though the mining company couldn't meet the regulatory conditions. Not only was the legislature active in reducing environmental protections during its regular session, they went into overdrive during the lame duck session in approving the Line 5 tunnel under the Straits and reducing the amount of wetland acreage under regulatory protection, among many other bills with the potential to do significant harm to our environment.

UPEC's Mining Action Group continues to be hugely active. Mining permits were being sought by three companies--Highland Copper, Lundin Mining and Aquila Resources. We challenged the state as the permit applications came through month after month. We analyzed the data. We wrote extensive comments. We went to hearings and meetings. We collaborated whenever possible. Our Group was recognized by other environmental organizations for our extraordinary efforts.

UPEC'S grant program continues to support environmental education for our young people. It is one of the few ways we have access to young minds in this age of electronic overload. Our Community Conservation Grants have varied from helping local land trusts purchase significant parcels of land to promoting cultural activities, such as a county watershed campaign and a historical fly fishing exhibit.

Our board members do not necessarily limit themselves to UPEC. We often support the activities of other groups that send letters to agencies and legislators in support of a new law or against a bad one, or ask agencies to take actions to support the environment. We continue to develop position papers on particular issues, and make them available on our [website](#).

UPEC COMMENTS ON DNR'S PROPOSED LINE 5 TUNNEL AGREEMENT by Jeff Towner

UPEC recently submitted comments (upenvironment.org/hot-issues) to the MDNR on a proposed agreement between the newly-formed Mackinac Straits Corridor Authority and Enbridge Energy. We have many concerns about this agreement, the rushed comment period, and the manner in which the outgoing administration is pushing the proposed tunnel, its ownership, and oversight.

A public comment period was opened for just over five days on a proposed agreement between the Authority and Enbridge Energy to build a tunnel underneath the Mackinac Straits to house a relocated Line 5 hydrocarbon pipeline, a tunnel that was originally designed by several Michigan Tech undergraduate students as a class project. mininggazette.com/news/2018/12/designed-by-tech-big-mac-tunnel-done-as-student-project/

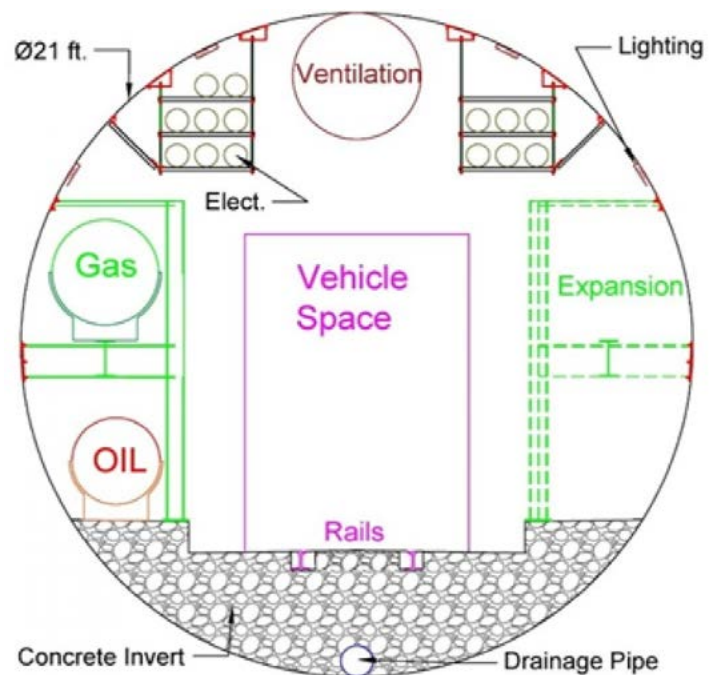
<https://www.mtu.edu/news/stories/2018/may/new-grads-present-straits-tunnel-project-to-lawmakers.html>

Less than 24 hours after the close of that comment period the Authority approved several agreements with Enbridge, including the tunnel agreement.

The formation of the new Authority and these agreements have been rushed through in the waning days of the current administration, in a process without adequate opportunities for public review and input, and that ignores the concerns that have been expressed by the newly-elected governor and attorney general.

In addition, during the multi-year construction period for the tunnel and new pipeline, the existing, outdated Line 5 pipeline would be allowed to continue to operate, risking a catastrophic spill of petroleum into the Great Lakes.

Along with other environmental groups and many citizens, UPEC believes that the existing Line 5 should be decommissioned, and no new hydrocarbon pipelines should be constructed across the Straits. The Mackinaw Straits and the Great Lakes ecosystem is too great a treasure to put at risk simply to allow petroleum to be transported from one part of Canada to another. Any discussion of a replacement line and tunnel should be conducted in a careful, deliberative way that looks at all the potential impacts and provides for proper state and federal agency reviews as well as meaningful public dialogue and input.



About UPEC...

The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition has a four-decade track record of protecting and enhancing the unique environmental qualities of the U.P. through public education and monitoring of industry and government. UPEC and the more recently formed Mining Action Group seek common ground with diverse individuals and organizations to promote sound planning and management decisions for all the region's natural resources. U.P. Environment is published quarterly and available online to share with family & friends. Send your comments or contributions to:

UPEC - P.O. Box 673, Houghton, MI 49931
906-201-1949 - upec@upenvironment.org
upenvironment.org - Facebook



To Our Helpful Supporters

Thanks to you saving food receipts, we receive regular checks from Econofood. This is great way to support us...small donations add up! Do you shop at Econofood? If so, keep an envelope handy at home where you can deposit the receipts after shopping. When its full, send them to UPEC, PO Box 673, Houghton MI 49931. It's that simple! Thank you!

Landowners, Environmentalist Call for Common-Sense Mineral Lease Reforms, by Kathleen Heideman

Michigan landowners and environmental groups are calling for common-sense reforms of mineral leasing and severed mineral rights following a public meeting with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Office of Minerals Management. Approximately 120 people attended the December 4th meeting, where growing frustrations were expressed over UPX Minerals' requested lease of 2,500 acres of state-owned metallic minerals in Marquette County. The controversial UPX leases target "severed minerals" located underneath private surface lands — including private homes, camps and managed forest lands.

"We applaud Mark Sweatman, director of the DNR's Office of Minerals Management, for responding directly to public questions in a public forum. Unfortunately, that meeting raised more questions than it answered," said Kathleen Heideman of the Mining Action Group. "Obviously, Michigan needs to change its management of state-owned metallic minerals. Landowners are getting trampled by the current system, and the widespread leasing of severed minerals threatens Michigan's natural resources. It's a public trust issue. The DNR's primary duty is to ensure clean water and healthy ecosystems for all citizens, so environmental impacts need to be assessed before any decision can be made regarding the private, corporate use of public resources," said Heideman.

UPX is seeking metallic minerals under lands that contain recreational trails, endangered species habitat, sensitive wetlands, and the remote Rocking Chair Lakes Natural Area, home to old-growth forest, two outstanding trout lakes, four Ecological Reference Areas, and one of Michigan's tallest cliffs. Rocking Chair Lakes is a biological stronghold for "tree species that do not reliably recruit across the ecoregion" according to the DNR, and contains Michigan's finest example of a "dry mesic northern forest." The Rocking Chair Lakes provide some of the best habitat in the Great Lakes for "sensitive wildlife requiring large tracts of mature forest, mesic conifer or corridors between such areas." Habitat fragmentation is a priority wildlife management issue, as the rugged preserve lies in the heart of Michigan's moose range. The DNR's own management plan lists mineral extraction as a "threat."

"These are some of the most iconic landscapes found in the midwest. The Mulligan (Cliff) Wall and Mulligan Plains have no equal in local landscape awe, and cliffs near Echo Lake support peregrine propagation and habitat, just two significant examples of areas potentially affected by exploration and mining activity. Lease reclassification remains a subjective process, leading to possible development of lands and unacceptable habitat loss through fragmentation,"

said Chauncey Moran, board chairman of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve.

"Working with impacted landowners and other stakeholders, we've identified serious problems with Michigan's management of minerals and severed mineral rights," said Horst Schmidt, president of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition. "There is a growing consensus that legislative and process reforms are needed. We're gathering feedback now, and look forward to pursuing mineral lease reforms in 2019."

Among the ideas under consideration: that the State of Michigan should create a public database of mineral lease ownership; that all mineral rights ownership should be registered; that cumulative environmental impacts of mineral exploration should be assessed; that mineral owners should pay property tax; and that the DNR should offer surface landowners 'first right of refusal' – the option to purchase state-owned 'severed minerals' beneath their homes, camps and forests, prior to any lease consideration.

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Deb Laurie - Hidden or Overlooked Beauty - 1st Place

Reform continued from page 6

A fair and expedited path to reunify the severed estate would streamline the DNR's management burdens, return stewardship control to private landowners, and better protect Michigan's environment.

TAKE ACTION – SEVERED MINERAL RIGHTS

bit.ly/Reform-Mineral-Rights



Tim Clancey - *Flowing Water* - 1st Place

President's Message from page 4

Despite the daily dose of bad news, we keep moving forward. There is no other choice. Clear wins are unfortunately few and far between. The other side is well organized and very well funded. However, as we have seen after 2016, public outrage and resistance comes back again and again. We saw victories this past November that we hope will bear fruit during the next two years. This is why your ongoing financial support is crucial. The struggle continues against the machinations of those who think natural resources are only for human exploitation, not for sustaining the entire community of life.

* There are other ways you can help UPEC. Check with your accountant, financial planner or attorney. They can offer you ideas that can help you in your planning. For example, the tax code requires annual withdrawals from traditional retirement accounts after age 70 1/2, and the penalty for skipping a required minimum distribution is 50 percent of the amount that should have been withdrawn. However, if you are fortunate enough to not need your entire distribution for living expenses and are charitably inclined, you can avoid income tax on your required withdrawal by making a donation to UPEC.

Photo Contest Winners Announced

Each Fall, UPEC announces the annual photo contest to support photographers engaged with the UP, and to provide beautiful images for UPEC publications and on-line presence. First place winners in four categories are highlighted in this newsletter. To see other winners, visit our website: upenvironment.org.



Adam Manninen - *Nature's Panorama* - 1st Place



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Environmental Coalition**

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Elizabeth Bates - *Humans Engaged with the Natural Environment* - 1st Place

Yes! I Want to Partner with UPEC in Making a Difference!

Please complete, attach a check, and give to a UPEC board member or mail to UPEC: PO Box 673, Houghton, MI 49931

Or you can contribute on-line through UPEC's website: www.upenvironment.org/join-donate/

I'd like to support UPEC's goals by enclosing a contribution for (please check one):

- Regular Membership (\$25)*
- Supporting or Organizational Membership (\$50)*
- Student/Low Income Membership (\$15)*
- Lifetime Membership (\$500)*
- Contact me - I want to volunteer!*
- Gift Membership (please provide person's name and mailing address on reverse side of this form)*
- In Honor or Memory of _____*

- Contributions beyond membership are suggested for these UPEC funds - (please indicate amount of donation)
- Environmental Education fund
 - Community Conservation Grants fund
 - UPEC/SWUP Mining Action Group (MAG) fund
 - UPEC General Fund

* (Please mark correct category, and provide person's or family's name and mailing address on separate sheet of paper)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

To simplify accounting, all UPEC memberships are due Jan/Feb for 2019. Thank You!

Would you like to receive the quarterly UPEC via mail or email? (Circle one.)
Is this address a seasonal address?

Phone and E-mail information is optional - UPEC does not share members' contact information with any other organizations. Thank You for your support!