

Upper Peninsula
Environmental Coalition
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*Protecting & maintaining the
unique environmental qualities
of Michigan's Upper Peninsula by
educating the public & acting as a
watchdog to industry & government.*

UPEC Environmental Education Grant applications due Dec. 15

K-12 educators in Upper Peninsula schools and other UP groups and institutions (Scouts, 4-H clubs, museums, etc.) that want to create or enhance environmental programs or activities for children are eligible for up to \$1,000 from UPEC's Environmental Education Fund. Grants cannot be used for staff salaries, but all other expenses such as transportation, meals, supplies and honoraria are acceptable.

Detailed information on the grant and application process are available at www.upenvironment.org at the UP Mini-grant link. Grant proposals must be postmarked or emailed by Dec. 15, 2010 for the 2011 year. Mail the applications to UPEC, P.O. Box 673, Houghton, MI 49931 or email to upec@upenvironment.org.

Celebrate the UP! March 17-18

The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition will hold its third annual Celebrate the UP! event on Friday evening and all day Saturday, March 18-19, 2011, in the Houghton-Hancock area. The event celebrates what's special about our region in terms of its natural setting, recreational opportunities, and unique culture.

The first two celebrations were in Marquette, so the 2011 event will be in the Keweenaw on the Michigan Tech and Finlandia campuses. Mark your calendars, watch UPEC's website for more details, and join us for some great speakers, music, activities, and good food and conversation!

Different ways to support UPEC

The holidays are a great time to support UPEC with a gift that gives for the entire year. Consider contributing to UPEC in honor of a special friend or loved one, or on behalf of yourself.

When you make a gift on behalf of another person, we will send an acknowledgement of the gift to that person, so enclose mailing information. When you contribute on behalf of someone else, encourage them to become a UPEC member through your gift.

Do you or someone you know have a wedding in the future? Consider making it a "green wedding" by designating UPEC as a recipient of honor gifts. UPEC has a donation link at upenvironment.org to facilitate this.

UP Environment



Fall 2010 *The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition's quarterly newsletter.
UPEC is the UP's oldest grassroots environmental organization.*

Citizens must act politically to protect environment and resist sulfide mining

by Bill Malmsten

Construction of surface facilities continues at the Kennecott Eagle Minerals nickel and copper mine site on the Yellow Dog Plains in the wilds of northern Marquette County. A large berm constructed just inside Kennecott's perimeter fence effectively obstructs the public's view of construction activity. Eagle Rock, an Ojibwe sacred site, is also obscured by this berm.

The lawsuit filed by the National Wildlife Federation, the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, and the Huron Mountain Club, remains stalled in the court system. Without a stay on the mining permit, the lawsuit may be irrelevant if irreversible environmental damage has already occurred by the time a ruling is reached.

Citizens and environmental groups concerned about the destruction of the land and pollution of the water have been diligent about attending public hearings and making written comments at every step of the mining permit process. We have attended so many public hearing related to Kennecott's proposed operations, that I have lost count of the number.

All of this seems to have had absolutely no impact on slowing the relentless movement toward mine development. Government officials sit blank-faced at public hearings while citizens plead with them to protect their beloved Upper Peninsula. If officials were listening at all, one can not tell by their actions, as they have ruled in favor of the mining company on every decision thus far. Nationally known environmental activist Lois Gibbs



Eagle Rock, Ojibwe sacred site, is now obscured by Kennecott's berm that blocks the view of the mine construction area from the public. Kennecott's security guard appeared in the orange vehicle moments after we arrived at the site.

(Photo by Bill Malmsten)

'Citizens must work politically, not within the bureaucratic system.'

spoke in Marquette on Oct. 17. Gibbs directs the Center For Health, Environment, and Justice and has fought to protect Niagara Falls, NY residents from chemical contamination at the Love Canal site. Gibbs advised her audience that to succeed against large corporate polluters, citizens must work politically, not within the bureaucratic system.

Our experience with Kennecott seems to bear this out. While citizens and environmentalists have been working within the bureaucratic system, it seems that Kennecott has been courting every branch and level of government in our community and state. Their efforts have gotten them the support of nearly every branch of government, including the townships, cities, county, and state.

The support of our government representatives was ob-
Kennecott Mine. See Page 7

Generational differences in attitudes about wolves

By Nancy Warren

I recently talked with a group of eighth graders about wolves. My first question to them was, "What would you do if you saw a wolf in the woods?" I was pleasantly taken aback when a student responded that he would take a picture. But, I was even more surprised when I began talking about the myths and fears that still persist today while displaying a picture of "Little Red Riding Hood" and

realized not one of the students knew the story! During their lifetime wolves have always been on the landscape. They watched nature shows on cable TV, have seen wolf tracks and heard wolves howl. These students do not see a big bad wolf; to them the wolf was just another wild animal trying to survive in the Northwoods.

Then, just last week, I heard an interview on a local *Living with Wolves*. See Page 3

Reflections from the new editor of *UP Environment*:

As UPEC's new business and communications manager, I'm appreciating becoming acquainted with board members and, in some cases, becoming reacquainted. I enjoyed the brief look of puzzlement on Doug Welker's face, for example, when I greeted him in the Canyon Falls parking lot with a, "Good to see you again." After a few moments puzzling over my last name, Doug remembered me as David Mataczynski from my *L'Anse Sentinel* days.

This recovering journalist remembers well UPEC's thoughtful advocacy for wilderness legislation; species protection and reintroduction; healthy air, water, and forests; and sustainable alternatives to a bleach kraft pulp mill. It's an honor now to work with UPEC on contemporary versions of those and other issues -- even though the work seems harder and more challenging than ever. Thanks to my predecessor, Susan Rasch, for helping me to a good start with UPEC!

Enjoy reading this newsletter as much I enjoyed editing the articles and arranging them to maximize their impact. There is great reading here -- even if some of it is disturbing. In the midst of what David Harvey unmasks as the neoliberal counterattack on political, social, and economic democracy, it has become harder for citizens to advocate for the one natural world to which we belong and upon which we depend. As sulfide mining, invasive species, and multiple issues around the globe are showing us, serious assaults are occurring on the democratic process and government as our advocate. Instead, evidence accumulates that high finance, transnational corporations, and political elites (all highly undemocratic) have hijacked governmental bureaucracies. Well-funded special interests masquerading as grassroots populism are supremely dedicated to amassing power and wealth, keeping us vulnerable, fearful, and mystified about what's really going on.

Yet I believe those interests have underestimated groups like UPEC and the multitudes of people around the globe who are dedicated to and hungry for a better way of living that values and nurtures all people and all of the biosphere. By the way, read anything by Harvey if you're interested in a deeper understanding of global political-economic developments.

In my "other life" I am working on a doctorate in the Michigan Tech Humanities Department. I say "other" because my research interests involve discourses about globalization, the environment, poverty, and technology. I feel fortunate to be engaged through UPEC beyond the academy with these very issues -- issues that are hardly just "academic."

-- David Clanaugh

About UPEC...

The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition has more than a 30-year track record of protecting and seeking to maintain the unique environmental qualities of the UP through public education and watchful monitoring of industry and government. UPEC seeks common ground with diverse individuals and organizations in order to promote sound planning and management decisions for all the region's natural resources.

Our newsletter, the *UP Environment*, is published four times a year. Please share it with family & friends.

You can send your comments or contributions to UPEC by standard mail at P.O. Box 673, Houghton, MI 49931, or e-mail us at upec@upenvironment.org. For more information about UPEC, visit us at www.upenvironment.org

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Garlic mustard a common worm indicator

Invasive species have ripple effect on forests

Worms.Continued from Page 10
many developing plants.

Ultimately these worms could cause some plants and animals to go extinct. Big trees survive, but many young seedlings perish, along with many ferns and wildflowers. Some species return after the initial invasion, but others disappear. In areas heavily infested by earthworms, soil erosion and leaching of nutrients may reduce the productivity of forests and ultimately degrade fish habitat in nearby waters.

Another potentially devastating impact of invasive earthworms is that the elimination of the duff layer in forest soils creates a disturbed condition on the soil surface which is ideal for the establishment of certain invasive plant species, such as garlic mustard and glossy buckthorn. Frelich remarked that after heavy infestation of an area by earthworms, it is common to see invasion by garlic mustard occur next. Garlic mustard is already established in several portions of the Upper Peninsula, and it can become so abundant in the understory of hardwood stands that virtually all other native plant species are eliminated.

So what can be done about these unwelcome invaders? After earthworms have become established in an area, there is very little that can be done to eliminate them or reduce their abundance. However, the good news is that many portions of the Upper Peninsula are not yet

affected by invasive earthworms. If people would stop moving earthworms around, for example, by not discarding bait worms near forested areas after fishing, many of these "unwormed" areas could potentially remain free of earthworms for a long time. Without humans moving them around, earthworms move slowly, less than a half mile over 100 years.



"Dr. Lee Frelich, University of Minnesota (at far right), explains to members of Friends of Sylvania (www.friendsofsylvania.org) how invasive earthworms have impacted a portion of Sylvania Wilderness, near Watersmeet. (Photo by Waltraud Brinkman)

For more information on invasive earthworms and their impacts on northern forests, see the website of the University of Minnesota's Great Lakes Wormwatch: www.nrri.umn.edu/worms/.

There is a link on the website to numerous published papers on invasive earthworms in the Great Lakes area, for those that desire further reading on this important topic.

Don't forget those Econo Foods slips -- a slow & steady way to support UPEC!

Thanks to you and Econo Foods, UPEC has earned several hundred dollars over the past few years by submitting grocery receipts collected by UPEC members. That amount represents 1% of total gross receipts from all the slips.

That may not seem like a lot, but when you're a non-profit organization every little bit helps. Of course, that amount could be even higher this year if more of us were to save our slips and send them in! For a family that spends \$100/week on groceries at Econo, this would translate into \$50 of annual support for UPEC.

Either save receipts throughout the year and mail them to us, or give them to a UPEC board member -- whichever is more convenient. It's one of the easier low-cost ways you can offer your support.

Earthworm invasion impacts forest ecosystems; Simple steps can arrest spread of worm species

by Robert A. Evans

“Humans like to think that they control the world – but really, earthworms control the world.” That quote comes from University of Minnesota forest ecologist and researcher Dr. Lee Frelich, who was in the Upper Peninsula this past July. Frelich and his graduate students have been conducting research on earthworms and other forest ecology topics in and around the Ottawa National Forest’s Sylvania Wilderness since the early 1980’s. While in the UP, Frelich graciously offered to give a presentation on invasive earthworms at the Ottawa National Forest Visitor Center in Watersmeet, and to lead a hike near Sylvania the next day to observe the effects of earthworms on hardwood forests.

It may come as a surprise to many people that virtually all of the earthworm species we see in our gardens and yards are not native to this area. There is no evidence that earthworms ever inhabited a large portion of northern North America (including the Upper Peninsula) before European settlement. Even if they did, the glaciers killed any native North American earthworms in our region. For the last 11,000 years since the glaciers receded, ecosystems in our area developed without earthworms. The map be-

low shows the portion of North America that has not had any earthworm species since at least the glaciers receded.

The first earthworms probably arrived as invasive species in North America with soils and plants brought from Europe. Ships traveling to North America used rocks and soil as ballast which they dumped on shore as they

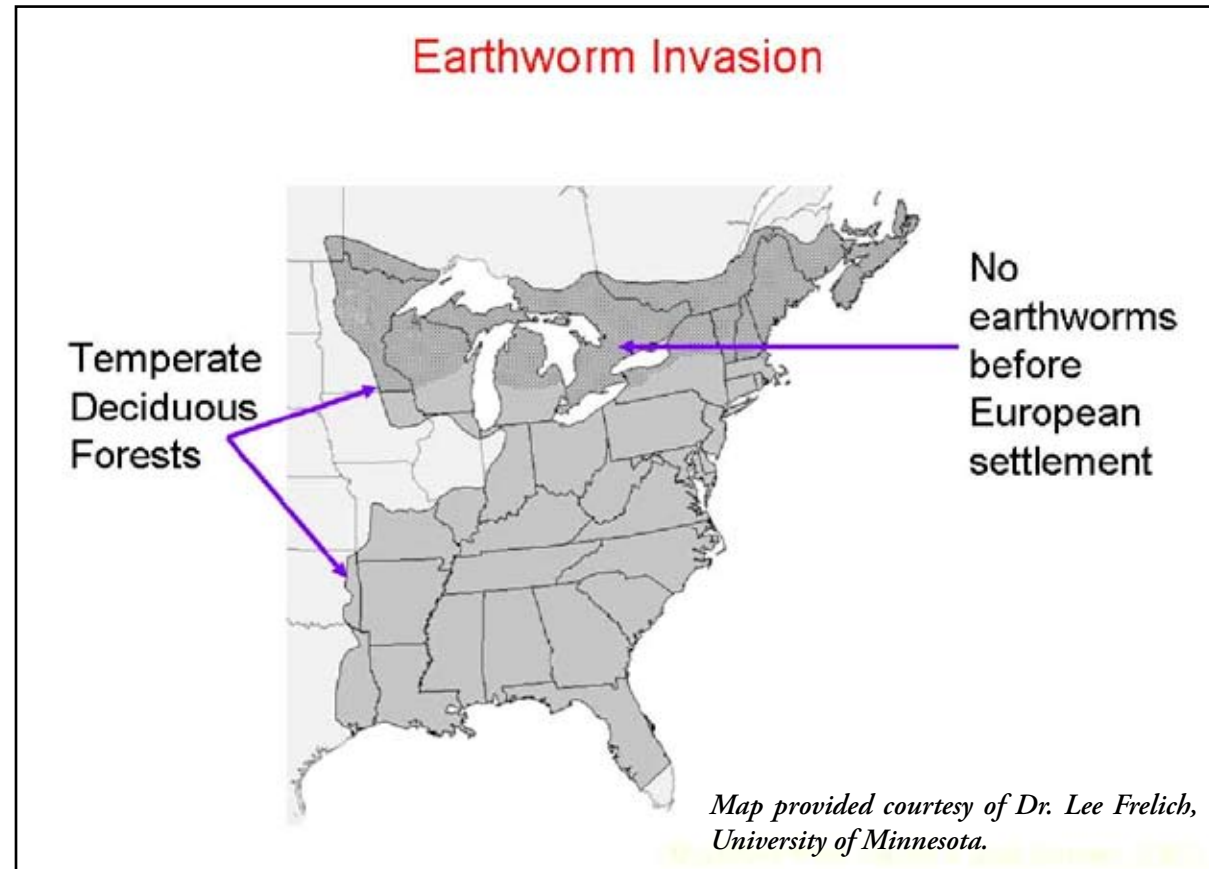
‘Humans. . .think. . .they control the world -- but really, earthworms control the world.’

adjusted the ballast weight of the ship. During the late 1800’s and early 1900’s many European settlers imported European plants that likely had earthworms or earthworm cocoons (egg cases) in their soils. More recently, the widespread use of earthworms as fishing bait has spread them to more remote areas of the Upper Midwest. All common bait worms are non-native species, including those sold as night crawlers, Canadian crawlers, leaf worms, and angleworms.

Frelich, who has extensively studied earthworms and their impacts on northern forests for many years now, explains that these non-native earthworms are changing the structure of the soil and therefore the ecology of

forests. Worms consume the thick layers of leaves called “duff” that cover the ground, turning it into soil. The elimination of this duff layer affects which plants can grow in the soil, which insects can live in the soil, and has impacts throughout the food chain. The elimination of the duff layer causes a drying effect on the soil, as there is no spongy duff layer to retain moisture, which is critical for

Worms. . . Page 11



Keeping fear of wolves in perspective through understanding & appreciation

Living with Wolves.Continued from Page 2
TV program of an adult saying he felt threatened by a wolf and was so scared that he climbed a tree where he waited for hours. I thought of the eighth graders and the generational differences in attitudes about wolves.

Often, the cover of outdoor magazines shows a snarling wolf with its guard hairs raised. This only reinforces the negative image we have already created in our mind and sells magazines by creating a macho image. But, these are signs taken out of context of aggression and dominance shown towards other wolves, not prey or humans. There is even an anti-wolf video distributed in Michigan that advertises proceeds will help build bus shelters of questionable need to keep children safe from wolves. The video instills fear to raise money for building shelters.

It is important to keep that fear in perspective. Any wild animal is capable of attacking humans and pets. A simple internet search will reveal attacks by bear, coyotes, and even deer and squirrels. Although rare, attacks by wolves have occurred and when they do happen, they tend to make front-page headlines. According to the National Canine Research Center, since 1965 there have been 32 human fatalities from dog attacks in Michigan. Statistically, a person in wolf country has a far greater chance of being killed by a domestic dog than being injured by a wild wolf.

There are things we can do to minimize conflicts with wolves. We wouldn’t allow our pets to romp on the highway, yet some think nothing of allowing pets to roam the woods unsupervised. Each year dogs are killed and injured by bears and many more have tangled with porcupines and skunks.

My family’s home is on the southern edge of a wolf pack’s territory. We first found tracks about 15 years ago and since then we have been awakened by howls. We have watched a wolf chase a deer across our field, found kill sites on our property, found tracks, scat and have occasionally seen wolves in our field. We also own two dogs and would be crushed if either was killed by a wolf or any wild animal. So we take simple precautions; for example, we never leave them outside unattended or leave food out.

If you feed deer, it is likely you will attract wolves.

Under the right conditions, a wolf can smell prey a mile away and deer feeding at a bait site or backyard feeder creates an opportunity for wolves. Wolves, like bear, can become habituated to humans when attracted to a food source. To avoid problems, never let a wolf become comfortable in human-inhabited areas. Never feed a wolf or let them get close to you. If a wolf does approach, scare it off by making loud noises.

Some ask the question “What good are wolves?” The



This wolf photo was taken with a trail camera on Nancy & Al Warren’s property, just a few hundred yards from their driveway.

answer depends on whether you see the wolf as a villain or a symbol of wildness and a valued part of the ecosystem. Wolves have a cultural, aesthetic and recreational value for many people. I am thrilled every time I see a wolf or hear a pack howl.

Wolves help maintain healthy prey populations. In areas of excess deer, overbrowsing limits the forest understory. Studies show that predators rarely are the sole cause of significant or long-term declines in prey populations. Wolves do alter the foraging patterns of deer -- they stay alert and avoid areas where they cannot see or hear wolves.

We all have experiences, values, attitudes that shape our image of the wolf. Michigan has both the habitat and prey base to support a healthy wolf population. But, for the wolf to survive and thrive there needs to be human tolerance. For that, perhaps it may help if some adults could just repeat the eighth grade.

North County Trail segment by Alberta an intense labor of love and persistence

by Doug Welker

Before the most recent UPEC board meeting, a group of us took a 3.9-mile hike on the North Country National Scenic Trail, from west of Alberta (on Prison Camp Road) to Canyon Falls Roadside Park along US-41 in Baraga County.

How this trail came to be makes an interesting story. The easternmost half-mile has been in place for years. Extending west along Sturgeon River from the park trailhead to Canyon Falls, it's a very popular trail. It's a high-standard trail, complete with gravel and boardwalks, that can be even be navigated by individuals in wheelchairs, typically with assistance.

I can't tell you exactly how much time and money went into the construction of the Canyon Falls Trail, but I can tell you about what it took to build the rest of what we hiked. The process began with a basic scouting of the route, initially in the 1990's. Scouting was eventually followed by discussions with the owners of the two properties involved, Michigan Tech and Scott Holman. In neither case, as you might expect, was the result of the discussions, "OK, just go build your trail." In Tech's case, their Forest Manager Jim Schmierer and I scouted the route and looked at options. He favored the trail, but approval by higher-ups at Tech took some time.

On the Holman property, things were not as simple. Scott favored the trail, but the route was less obvious. The Plumbago Creek Valley, which consists entirely of wetlands, needed to be crossed. After several scouting trips I determined that there were two choices, about 800 feet of boardwalk and a 40-foot bridge over the creek, or a 156-foot multi-span bridge over a wetland and beaver pond. The latter was selected, in part because Scott wanted to use the bridge to access part of his property. The bridge would need to be six feet wide to handle his ATVs and snowmobiles. So far with negotiation and planning, at least a couple hundred volunteer hours spent -- and no new trail on the ground.

The next step was to engineer the bridge. This required a



A view of the Plumbago Creek Valley during the peak of autumn color (upper photo), and a close-up of the six-foot-wide, 156-foot-long span over a wetland and beaver pond area of the creek. Approximately 2000 volunteer hours and a few thousand dollars went into this project -- not including in-kind materials from lumber harvested and milled nearby. (Photos by Doug Welker)

survey of the beaver pond and wetland, to determine water depth and the nature of the bottom. This meant Catherine Andrews operating my transit on shore and Scott and me in his Argo (amphibious ATV) out in the pond. Because the bridge would require placing rock-filled cribs in the pond,

Making of a Trail. See Page 5

Solar action due to rise in 2013. Meanwhile, join the Northern Lights Call List and start losing some sleep!

by Mary Martin

Have you been missing the presence of the aurora borealis or "northern lights" over the past few years? According to NASA, the sun has experienced a real case of the doldrums recently, which has extended the fairly predictable eleven-year cycle of solar activity by over a year.

Here's the good news: solar action is now on the rise and is expected to peak sometime in 2013, which should bring an increase in the frequency and intensity of the northern lights. The problem for many of us early-to-bed, early-to-risers is that we are often fast asleep by the time the aurora begin their dance. Others of us may sometimes forget to glance at the night sky, even if we're night owls.

A solution may be a Northern Lights Call List. Here's how it works: everyone interested in taking part is given a list of names and phone numbers, and when someone observes the aurora, he or she gives a call to the next person on the list, and that person calls the next person, etc., until everyone has been notified.

Obviously, participants must be willing to be awakened at any time during the night -- but for those of us who love to see the northern lights, the reward is always worth a little lost sleep.

For further details about the call list and how to sign up, please contact Mary Martin at marycharmar@gmail.com or at 906-225-0586 as soon as possible! The goal is to have a solid network of northern lights enthusiasts ready to help each other when the winter viewing season reaches its peak.

Taking an alternative path to Kennecott's proposed 'expressway' though the Michigamme Highlands

Michigamme Highlands.Continued from Page 8

Michigan. From the mine site on AAA Road, it would have run 22.3 miles south through the heart of the Michigamme Highlands to the town of Humboldt, where a rock crushing facility is being built. During the comment period for the road, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which oversees state enforcement of federal wetland laws, cited numerous objections -- including Kennecott's mis-statement of the road's true purpose; failure to seriously consider alternative routes; and the large impact the road would have on wetlands, streams and wildlife. With the strong possibility that the EPA would deny the permit, Kennecott withdrew its application on May 7, 2010, just before the deadline for a decision.

If the proposed haul road were ever built, it would have an even bigger impact on the land than the mine (see Page 6 article for an update). In the end, the public may have a significant say in whether or not such a road is ever built. Perhaps it is time to start thinking on the time scale of Mother Earth, rather than relying on the same old short-sighted thinking that has brought the world to the troubled state it's in today.

**Editor's Note: Guest author Steve Garske is a botanist who studies plants in the UP and Wisconsin. Article reprinted with permission from the author and Keweenaw Now where it first appeared at keweenawnow.blogspot.com.*



Bilberry, a cousin of the blueberry, is a western disjunct plant found in only a few areas east of the Mississippi, including the Michigamme Highlands. (Photos by Sherry Zoars)



The Michigamme Highlands are the southern limit for the Northern Holly Fern, typically found in Canada and the Rocky Mountains.

Michigamme Highlands offer wealth of plant life!

Varied habitats & microclimes harbor rare species

By Steve Garske*

It was hot and windy as about 30 people from across the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin met on the Wolf Lake Road near Humboldt in Marquette County on Saturday, Aug. 28. Our goal was to see part of the gravel road that “Woodland Road LLC” (a limited-liability corporation headed by Kennecott Eagle Minerals) has proposed turning into a mining haul road, and to visit some of the beautiful back country along the North Country Trail.



Lunch overlooking the Dead River Basin on a rocky outcrop. (Photo by Sherry Zoars)

After Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve Executive Director Emily Whittaker updated us on the status of the “Eagle Mine,” we followed the existing road north. The road runs past a smattering of houses, which soon give way to forests, wetlands and streams. Soon the pavement gave way to a two-lane gravel road and then a single-lane gravel road. After traversing several hills and valleys and crossing Voelkers Creek, we reached the Dead River.

A short walk up the hill brought us to the North Country Trail. Heading east along the trail, we were soon treated to a couple of great views of the Dead River basin and beyond. As you can see, the Dead River is actually brimming with life! Everyone enjoyed the gorgeous view.

As we soon discovered, this part of the North Country trail traverses a wide range of habitats. At first the trail led through lush northern hardwood forest, followed by groves of white pine and hemlock, and then a grove of upland cedar. One of the more unusual plants we saw along the way was northern holly fern. This distinctive and beautiful fern occurs across Canada and in the Rockies and reaches the southern edge of its range here. Other botanical gems included compressed oatgrass, bristly sarsaparilla, and Braun’s holly fern.

Eventually we reached a big, steep hill covered with hemlock, white pine and red oak, where we saw a patch of a western disjunct plant called tall bilberry. (Simply put, a western disjunct plant has its main range in the western US, while it also grows in the Great Lakes region, with a gap in between.) This blueberry relative often reaches a height of three feet, with berries about twice the size of common blueberries. Unfortunately, by the look of things this patch didn’t produce a single berry this year! Still, just seeing this plant that had been stranded in the UP after the last ice age reminded us of the time scale that the earth operates on, as compared to the scale that we humans usually do.



Majestic view of the Dead River basin and Michigamme Highlands from the North Country Trail. (Photo by Sherry Zoars)

On the way back the discussion turned to various topics ranging from mushrooms to wetland plants to getting in a swim after the walk! And of course the proposed haul road.

The “Kennecott Expressway” (as some call it) would have cut through some of the most remote, wild country in Michigamme Highlands. See Page 9

Volunteers’ labor & love accompanies you on NCT!

Making of a Trail.Continued from Page 4

a detailed plan would need to be approved by the Michigan DEQ (at a cost of \$500). Months, and a few hundred more volunteer hours later, the plan was written and approved. During that time, a final trail route was scouted, and about a third of a mile of trail built to an overlook of the valley.

Building the bridge was a huge job. The hardware and some treated lumber were purchased, but the bridge decking, stringers, and headers were almost all cut on Scott’s land and made into lumber at his portable sawmill. Chapter members spent a lot of time treating that lumber to make it weather-resistant. The bridge itself was built on a North Country Trail Association Volunteer Adventure (VA) Project, by at least 15 people, in four days. Since last count, add another 1500 to 2000 volunteer hours, and a few thousand dollars spent.

Trail work continued by the chapter, including about 1500 feet of difficult sidehill benching to make a level route. With the thick root mat, each person could only make about 75 feet of trail per day. Other trail work

‘Oh, and add another thousand volunteer hours or so since last count!’

continued, both north and east of the bridge, and some finishing touches, including benches, were added to the bridge. During a subsequent VA we continued our trail work east up the Sturgeon River. This involved steep hillsides and plenty of rock. Oh, and add another thousand volunteer hours or so since last count!

The trail was finally beginning to take shape. This fall we finished the sidehill work north of the bridge, rototilled over a half mile of trail to loosen the ground and roots in preparation for trail leveling, and blazed the trail all the way to Canyon Falls Roadside Park. Another couple hundred hours.

But, even though the trail is walkable, obvious, and mostly decent all the way through, we are still not done. Several areas need upgrading. And, of course, we’ll be able to add another couple hundred volunteer hours or so.

Before I got involved in trail work, I seldom even thought about the enormous amount of work that it can take to build and maintain a trail. Now I know differently, and hopefully as you hike someday on a trail that folks built for your benefit, you’ll have a better appreciation of their efforts.

The map in this article shows the route we hiked, including the gated two-track we used to access the trail. Go to www.northcountrytrail.org/pwf to get more info on the NCT in this part of the western UP.

Consider EarthShare payroll deduction to support UPEC

UPEC is a proud member of EarthShare of Michigan, an organization that allows working people to donate to environmental organizations through workplace giving campaigns. Each year EarthShare provides UPEC with critically needed funding for environmental education and program operation.



If you would like to help us earn more funding for UPEC, consider letting your employer know you want to participate in the EarthShare of Michigan giving option at your workplace through the annual payroll deduction plan. For more information, please call 1 (800) 386-3326 or visit www.earthsharemichigan.org



The topo map contours for the Plumbago Creek and Sturgeon River trail show why so much sidehill tread work was needed to establish an environmentally benign trail. (Photo by Doug Welker)

Another couple hundred hours.

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Kennecott, MCRC appear willing to sacrifice wetlands & wildlife to reduce operating costs

by David E. Allen

The proposed mine on the Yellow Dog Plains by Kennecott Eagle Minerals Corporation (KEMC), a subsidiary of transnational Rio Tinto, will require transporting about five million tons of ore. KEMC continues to explore in the region and has another prospect northeast of Eagle Rock that appears to be rich with potentially even more ore to haul and process. KEMC purchased the Humboldt mill to process ore and now proposes making a shorter haulage route between the mill and the potential mining sites.

it would damage much habitat. The project as currently proposed by KEMC would have immense impacts to virtually untouched wetlands and the wildlife they support. The proposed County 595 contrasts sharply with the existing situation -- a 33 mile trip after Brocky Lake on very rough roads that do not really connect.

Watersheds that will be impacted are the Escanaba, Dead, Michigamme and Yellow Dog River systems. The road will cross over 23 streams and rivers with six new concrete bridges being built along the way.



Marquette County Road Commissioners prepare to approve Kennecott's proposed haulage road -- despite the long list of significant environmental impacts and a lack of consideration of alternative routes. (Photo by Dave Allen)

The bulk of the real impacts will fall north of Wolf Lake in Champion Township in the Dead and Yellow Dog watershed areas. This wild region, known as the Michigamme Highlands (see story on page 8), has only two-track timber haul roads or ATV ruts in its northern reaches. The Michigamme Highlands is the "headwaters" region for the Yellow Dog River, Mulligan Creek, and Dead River. These rivers, along with their many tributaries, flow from the McCormick Wilderness just a little over three miles from the proposed roadway. Narrow 12-foot-wide bridges currently cross the three rivers.

KEMC first proposed building north from US-41 west of the Wolf Lake Road to the AAA Road near Trail 5. This route would have impacted numerous wetlands and thus raised serious questions for the EPA and the DNRE Wildlife Division. As a result, this application was withdrawn.

But this was not the end of the concept, and a new proposal has come forth. KEMC has proposed to pay for construction and maintenance of a road by the Marquette County Road Commission (MCRC). MCRC first held a hearing a public hearing in the Ishpeming Township Hall and then approved the concept at its Oct. 18 meeting. The proposed route goes north 25 miles in a four-mile-wide corridor in generally the same area as the original proposal. And it will face similar problems. First, it will be a haulage road for KEMC; there is little public necessity for County Road 595. Second, it will be a major road (likely paved - similar to County 550) through a currently rather wild area.

The proposed haulage road would save on fuel, but

Wildlife in the Michigamme Highlands include a widely diverse range of mammals including the protected moose herds introduced in the region in the 1980's. This herd has done well, mostly due to the Highlands' diverse habitat, extensive wetlands and remote nature. There are also many wolf packs in this area.

And the proposed habitat degradation and fragmentation through the Michigamme Highlands will likely have a negative impact to the breeding bird species that can be found in this area. The northern Marquette watersheds provide some of the greatest diversity and richness of bird species present in the Upper Peninsula.

Vegetation along the proposed roadway also demonstrates the diverse and unspoiled wetlands necessary to support more rare species including the narrow-leaved gentian, which is a state protected flowering plant found in the thousands in the Michigamme Highlands. High density narrow-leaved gentian growth is found in the area, especially in the Wildcat Canyon, Mulligan Creek and Yellow

Dog River areas.

DNRE Wildlife and Fisheries staff recommend against the proposal because new roads lead to increased habitat fragmentation and promote development of a network of secondary roads across the landscape. New roads introduce invasive species which have negative impacts to species diversity and serve as barriers to the movement of some species like turtles. Increased noise also affects animal life, and traffic increases wildlife mortality. New roads also disrupts landscape natural processes such as ground and surface water flow and absorption.

'A haulage road in this area is not needed. Prudent alternatives exist.'

A haulage road in this area is not needed. Prudent

Mine process underscores value of local political efforts as counterweight to limited finances of environmentalists

Kennecott Mine.Continued from Page 1

tained despite overwhelming public opposition to the sulfide mining proposals at initial public hearings. To our knowledge, none of the townships, cities, nor Marquette County subsequently held public hearings to receive input from their constituents before deciding to back Kennecott. Marquette County citizens have had no opportunity to vote on the sulfide mining issue, and government officials have had no opportunity to learn where the public stands.

Perhaps the biggest oversight on the part of environmentalists may have involved placing insufficient importance on gaining the support of the township governments. Once the township boards sided with Kennecott, it made it much easier for city governments and the County Board of Commissioners to also side with Kennecott. With the local governments backing Kennecott, it made it much easier for our state representatives and governor to join them in backing Kennecott.

Of course, efforts to convince the township boards that the dangers of sulfide mining are not worth the risk may not have been effective. There are nineteen townships in Marquette County with perhaps ten of them close enough to the proposed mining area to be directly impacted. Attending all those township meetings would spread the environmentalists pretty thin. Environmentalists are not in a financial position to compete with the incen-

alternatives exist that Kennecott has not pursued. Examples include: **1.** AAA to 510 to 550 to Wright to US-41 to Humboldt (on existing roads); **2.** AAA to 510 to US-41 to Humboldt (on existing roads); and **3.** KEMC did not pursue the Huron Bay/Peshekee Grade alternative with fewer wetlands disruptions and no populated areas other than Champion - which would welcome a thoroughfare.

To conclude, the Woodland Haulage Road would have a dire impact on a rather large and wild area. The wildness is valuable in its own right and is also valuable for our commercial activity. People do not visit the central UP for the opportunity to shop at big boxes or view industrial activity. The wild is a recruiting draw for employers like NMU, the hospitals, and other organizations. We need good jobs, but we do not need the haulage road to provide these jobs.

tives that can be offered by financially powerful British Rio Tinto, Kennecott's parent company. Nonetheless spending more time working with the township and county governments and less time working within the bureaucratic mining permit process might have been worthwhile.

We will continue to work on the mine transportation issue (see article on KEMC's proposed Woodland Haulage Road on preceding page), and will do what we can to moni-



This berm obscures the view of Eagle Rock from the AAA Road where Kennecott is developing a metallic sulfide mine. The Ojibwe consider the rock sacred, yet their rights of religious expression have taken a back seat to developing the ore body. (Photo by Bill Malmsten)

tor Kennecott's activities on the Yellow Dog Plains. If any of you know of a pilot with a small plane who would be interested in donating some air time to fly over the mine site, please put him or her in touch with us.