



FOLK Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

Grassroots Stewards of the Western Upper Peninsula

SUMMER 2019 FOLK NEWSLETTER



Remember?

Remember Bob Davis?
Remember that paper mill?
Were you there?

Come and celebrate
**FOLK's 30 year
anniversary!**

Join us for pizza and music
by ***Cheap Therapy!***

Friday, September 27th
7 TO 11 P.M.
at the **Orpheum**
Hancock MI

Eagle Mine Interests Spreading Westward by Catherine Andrews

Eagle Mine managers conducted two Open House presentations in Baraga County on May 30, 2019. Clearly, the meetings in L'Anse and Covington were held to gauge community support and/or opposition.

A PowerPoint presentation included color-coded illustrations of test drilling operations planned near Sidnaw. **No maps were shown of the drill site locations "for the safety of the workers"**. All mineral rights at the test sites are owned by the State of Michigan. It appears that drilling began around the end of May as rigs were observed in the Sidnaw area before the meetings were held.

Many attendees were concerned about the impact of drilling on local wells. Matt Johnson, External Affairs Manager for Eagle Mine, explained that metal pipes would be driven into the earth, to prevent contamination of aquifers, before core samples are extracted.

When asked about noise, **Johnson stated that the noise generated by a drill rig is like a generator running 24/7**, but did not provide a specific decibel range. Residents near a core drilling site are confirming loud, 24/7 generator noise.

During the L'Anse meeting, Johnson stated that the Humboldt Mill will process any ore that is delivered from a new mine. At the Covington meeting, he said any ore from a new mine

will be processed at a new facility in the same area as the Humboldt Mill. The current Humboldt facility is approaching capacity and **there is concern over long-term impacts on the Escanaba River.**

When asked if all the requirements of the original National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the Humboldt Mill have been met, Johnson replied, "Yes". **In fact, Humboldt Mill has experienced problems with exceedances, and acute toxicity.** The NPDES permit was modified to allow direct discharges into the Middle Branch of the Escanaba River, and a lowering of water quality. All requirements of a NPDES permit must be met; any unlawful discharge should result in an immediate citation, and violators may incur substantial fines. However, violators don't always get cited and violations don't always mean fines.

When asked if the NPDES permit was ever modified, Johnson stated that "permits are modified all the time". A modification of a permit implies that permits can, and are, modified from time to time in order to circumvent violations. The statement that "permits are modified all the time" was confirmed by Eagle Mine's Managing Director, and former Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Permit Manager, Kristen Mariuzza.

FOLK: here, there, everywhere!

- We're proud to welcome two new members of the FOLK board - Stacey and Mike Kowalczyk, who own and operate Otter River Outfitters, a clothing store in downtown Houghton. They are new to the area and live in rural Elo near Pelkie.



- The FOLK board has sent the US EPA a letter supporting KBIC's request for them to be able to regulate water quality for all surface waters within the L'Anse Reservation. KBIC's request is still under review by EPA. Info on the EPA's ruling on this will be posted on our website as soon as we know the details.
- Michigan DNR has announced that \$50,000 has been awarded to replace the current boardwalk between Canyon Falls Roadside Park and Canyon Falls thanks to the efforts of members of the North Country Trail Peter Wolfe Chapter, including their president, Connie Julien (a FOLK founding member and the photographer of photos above). The old boardwalk has been deteriorating for years and parts of it are unsafe. The old boards will be repurposed and replaced with ground-contact-treated sills and new decking. More details later when we know when the project will take place.

- The local biomass plant, the L'Anse Warden Electric Company, and a short interview with FOLK member Catherine Andrews, were featured in the sold-out Premier of **Planet of the Humans** at the Traverse City Film Festival. See related article for details.
- FOLK members attended the Statewide Public Advisory Council (SPAC) meeting held at the MTU Great Lakes Research Center on July 16th & 17th. See related article for details.
- FOLK's general membership meeting was held on April 3rd at the Carnegie Museum, featuring Friends of the Huron Mountains, FOHM, with a Viewshed Analysis program.
- Last Adopt-A-Highway clean-up is Sept. 21-29th. Contact Rosemary @334-2660

THE PERSON WHO SAVED LAKE SUPERIOR

Verna Mize Park is to be moved this summer from along M-26 to another location along the lakefront. Mize was a Calumet High School graduate (Class of 1931) who is known as the person who saved Lake Superior. On her own, and at her own expense, she initiated a petition drive directing the Federal Government to stop the Reserve Mining Company from dumping 67,000 tons of tailings a day into Lake Superior along the Minnesota North Shore. The U.S. Supreme Court, in a case that lasted seven years, finally directed Reserve to stop dumping in 1980. After 13 years, Verna Mize had won! The park was dedicated in 1981. (photo and information from clkschools.org)



Pictured at left is the plaque at the current tiny strip of park along a busy highway. The text reads: *"Dedicated by the people of the city of Houghton to Verna Mize 'First Lady of Lake Superior'. She single-handedly led the fight to rescue Lake Superior from the ravages of taconite tailing degradation by the iron mining operation at Silver Bay, Minnesota. She saved the great lake for us and for posterity."*

Statewide Public Advisory Council (SPAC) Comes North

by Horst Schmidt

This is the first time a meeting of state PACs in Michigan was held in Houghton and FOLK was there. It was a great opportunity to hear about the work of this committee throughout the state.

Warren "Chris" Swartz, president of the Tribal Council of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, talked about the need for clean water because their diet is high in fish consumption. This led to a long back and forth with participants.

The Michigan Office of Great Lakes made a commitment to start cleaning up the impaired benthos of Torch Lake with the goal of being delisted as an Area of Concern in six years. Grad student Kelley Christensen talked about her research of the Torch Lake PAC and what it can do to improve its outreach efforts in the communities around the lake. In the end a work group was formed to seek funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

A tour of the industrial side of the lake was led by Professor Carol MacLennan. We saw the remediation work that has been done by the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy over the past five years. The department's Superfund manager as well as his EPA counterpart also provided information about the need to maintain the vegetative cap over the above-water stamp sands in the lake.

It was an informative two-day conference which was well attended and much was learned. And best of all, our downstate colleagues had a chance to see the beauty of the Keweenaw!



Catherine Andrews and Linda Rulison were guests at the sold-out Premier of **Planet of the Humans** at the Traverse City Film Festival on July 31, 2019. Two more showings were added to the schedule due to popular demand.

The film, produced by Michigan film maker Jeff Gibbs, and edited by Ozzie Zehner, author of **Green Illusions**, shows how "we are losing the battle to stop climate change because we are following leaders who have taken us down the wrong road – selling out the green movement to wealthy interests and corporate America."

Planet of the Humans speaks the inconvenient truth of greenwashing for profit and focuses on "the only thing that can save us: getting a grip on our out-of-control human presence and consumption."

This is a courageous must-see film for everyone who cares about our planet and the future of the human race.

Distribution information for **Planet of the Humans** will be shared with FOLK membership as soon as it becomes available.

DEAD BIRDS by Catherine Andrews

When asked if a polluting facility had ever been shut down by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), a DEQ Air Quality Specialist said, "Yes." When asked the reason for the shutdown he replied, "Dead birds were falling from the sky."

On March 29, 2019, DEQ [renamed Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE)] approved the addition of plastic/cellulose pellets to the fuel mix at the L'Anse Warden Electric Company (LWEC) incinerator which is classified as a biomass plant.

In spite of voluminous legal, scientific, and community comments during the Public Comment Period (see FOLK website), one can only assume that the permit for the addition of new fuel pellets and the subsequent increase in acid gases emissions was granted because LWEC remains below the State of Michigan threshold of "dead birds falling from the sky."





FOLK

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Membership Form

FOLK Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

PO Box 671 Houghton MI 49931

Dear FOLKs, Please consider adding a donation to your annual membership. Thanks!

Please print) Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Optional) Email _____ Phone (____) _____ Date _____

- Individual (Annual Membership / Jan-Dec): \$10
- Senior Citizen, Unemployed, Student (Annual): \$5
- Organization (Annual): \$35
- I would like to contribute to FOLK's legal fund. \$ _____
- I would still like to be listed as a member but can't afford the annual membership fee.
- I would like to continue to receive the newsletter although I am not a member.
- I want to get involved with FOLK! Please contact me by: (circle one) email or phone.
- Other _____ Total enclosed: \$ _____