

President's Message (cont. from front)

Progress on these projects is a positive sign that citizens, and local, state and regional governmental units, recognize the need to address these issues together.


The FOLK Board and YOU, the individual citizens, hold governmental agencies to their word to address human health, air and water issues. YOU make things happen when you participate in local and regional government; bring a voice to these issues through public testimony, letters to the editor and phone calls to public officials; attend village, township and county meetings; and talk to your neighbors. Your continued efforts are very important to ensure that focus remains on these critical issues.

Sometimes we wonder if anyone with authority listens or even cares. Well, in a number of areas, we have been heard. Please read with pride what you have helped accomplish this year! ❖

Our Appeal to YOU

FOLK has been around for more than a quarter century. In 1989, a group of local citizens organized to fight the James River paper mill proposed for Baraga County. Since then, FOLK has become an integral part of the western U.P. community as a watchdog group working with local citizens to address environmental concerns. The latest pursuit takes us back to Baraga County, where citizens have been very vocal about toxic pollution from the L'Anse Warden Electric Company power plant.

For these reasons we seek your help. Ideally, everyone could rise to the challenges facing our community by contributing time and talent in these ongoing battles. Some of you have, and we thank you! *What else can you do?* Please encourage friends and neighbors to join us. Give more than the \$10 membership dues. Consider larger gifts. We were fortunate to receive a generous sum from the estate of a longtime member, which helped support our vital work. If you can provide a substantial gift now or bequeath to FOLK at a later date, please consider doing so. We all want to leave this earth a better place for our children and grandchildren.

 **Find our group on Facebook:** We post 5 to 10 news articles of local, state, national and international interest each day. Read and share this information. Knowledge is power! [facebook.com/folkorg](https://www.facebook.com/folkorg) ❖

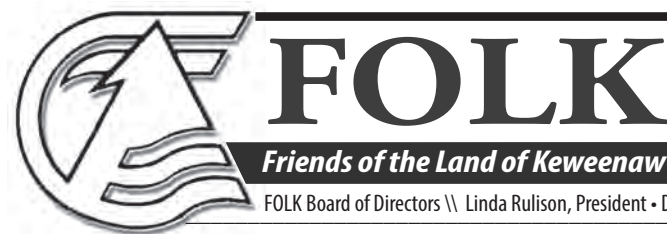
Attend FOLK's General Membership Meeting in late January. Look for a new year invitation with details and a date.



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info@folkup.org

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Editor: Horst Schmidt • Design: Betsy O'Leary
info@folkup.org • [facebook.com/folkorg](https://www.facebook.com/folkorg)
 PO Box 473 • Houghton MI 49931

WINTER 2016 NEWSLETTER

FOLK Board of Directors \ Linda Rulison, President • Doug Welker, Vice President • Rosemary Grier • Dave Rulison • Catherine Andrews • Horst Schmidt • Chris Alquist

L'Anse Warden Incinerator is Up and Running with Blessings from MDEQ

Plant Quickly Sold to Convergen Energy of Green Bay

By Catherine Andrews

“Decisions are made before public hearings are held,” stated a DEQ regulator at an April 2016 quarterly meeting with environmental groups in Marquette. As if to drive home that point, MDEQ announced on October 31 their decision to support the consent agreement and the Permit to Install (PTI) with L'Anse Warden's owner, TRAXYS. The announcement came just 33 days after a public hearing confirming unanimous opposition to both documents, and one year after the postponement of the first public hearing on a Renewable Operating Permit (ROP).

Actions taken as a result of the consent agreement and PTI include:

- A paltry \$108,000 fine for two Clean Air Act violations.
- TRAXYS claims that pentachlorophenol (PCP)-treated railroad ties have been eliminated from the fuel mix and disposed of in a landfill.
- On October 31, construction began of an enclosure around part of the fuel handling system, designed to reduce toxic fugitive dust. See photos, page 2.
- A huge hole in the smokestack must be repaired within one year.

(continued on page 2)



President's Message

By Linda Rulison

As I watch light snow blanket the trees outside my window, I think back on FOLK activities in 2016, many of which are ongoing. With your help, FOLK:

- Participated in a public effort to expose L'Anse Warden Electric Company's violations and bring them into compliance. *See articles.*
- Participated in a renewed effort to clean up Torch Lake and on refocusing the PAC. *See article.*
- Participated in educational events titled *What is Climate Change?* and reported on possible local impacts.
- Maintained working relationships with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency–Region 5, and with other non-profit groups.
- Maintained two miles of highway clean-up along U.S. Hwy 41. *See article.*
- Maintained two-and-a-half miles of North Country National Scenic Trail. *See article*
- Coordinated with community entities such as Portage Lake District Library to provide educational events.

(continued on back page)



FOLK
 Friends of the Land of Keweenaw
 PO Box 473
 Houghton MI 49931

Renew your membership for 2017 now!
THANK YOU for your donations and financial support of our environmental work.
Get involved. We need YOU!

(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 cannot afford the annual membership fee but would still like to be listed as a member.
 I am not a member but I would like to receive the newsletter.
 I want to get involved with FOLK! Please contact me by: (circle one) email or phone.
 Other _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

L'Anse Warden Incinerator Up and Running
(continued from front)

The pneumatic fuel delivery system is not being used, for an undetermined amount of time. Chipped creosote-treated railroad ties and other wood-based products are being delivered by trucks to the boiler site. This may be the result of the company's admission that

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

they do not have the ability to accurately measure the ratio of treated railroad ties to wood chips before it is burned.

Quarterly stack tests are required during the next 12 months, followed by two semi-annual tests, rather than one test every five years, per the requirement in the 2010 operating permit. *Will the pneumatic fuel delivery system be reinstated after the stack tests are performed?*

The DEQ admitted that none of these actions would have taken place without citizen involvement. While we are pleased with these changes, much more work needs to be done.

A critical action—the Section 114 request by EPA on February 2, 2016, ordering TRAXYS to install ambient air monitors and a meteorological tower on their property—was NOT implemented. This order, which was viewed favorably by local citizens, disappeared during the nearly seven-month negotiation process that was supposed to last one week between EPA, DEQ and TRAXYS.

The transfer of ownership to Convergen Energy was contingent upon the resolution of two Clean Air Act violations and repair of the steam turbine that failed on September 11 this year. We have many questions:

- **Will the upcoming Renewable Operating Permit for Convergen be adequate enough to protect L'Anse residents and the surrounding environment from toxic pollution?**
- **When will Convergen begin burning the fuel pellets they manufacture from non-recyclable paper and plastics?**
- **Will they continue to burn creosote-treated railroad ties and tires?**
- **Will the DEQ and EPA enforce their own regulations?**

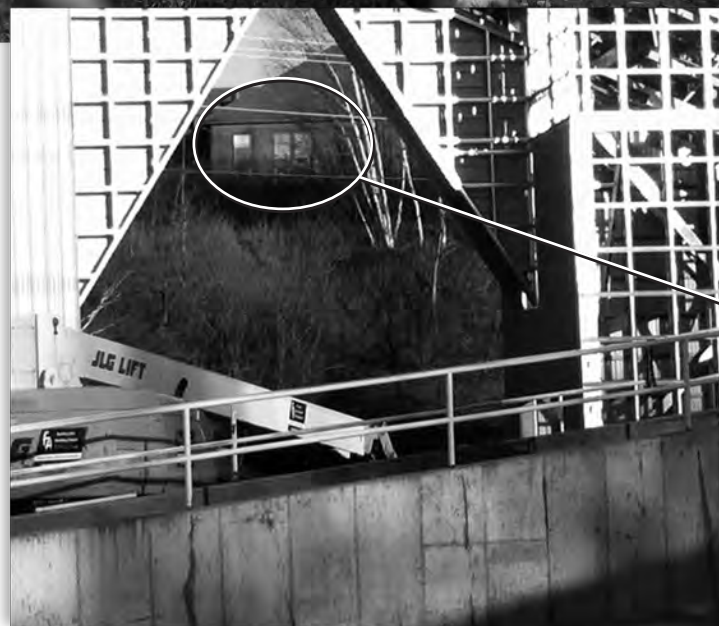
We are about to find out... ❖



Framing the conveyor partial enclosure, which is supposed to reduce toxic fugitive dust.



Framing the enclosure around the conveyor from the hopper to the fuel storage building. This is the opposite side from the top photo.



This is a picture of the new conveyor enclosure system. It shows the close proximity of the BHK Child Development Center (preschool) to the source of toxic fugitive dust. These photos were taken in early December 2016.

Forest Futures Up in Smoke?

By Catherine Andrews

The timber industry in the United States perpetuates the dangerous myth that burning trees and other plants is carbon neutral, thereby implying that “biomass” is a viable renewable energy fuel.

Trees and other plants have the incredible ability to sequester and store carbon from the atmosphere, and in turn, produce life-sustaining oxygen. Burning wood releases more carbon than burning coal. It might be considered “carbon neutral” if a similar-sized tree magically appeared to sequester all the carbon released from burning the cut tree. Additional carbon is also released from burning fossil fuel used to cut down the tree, transport it, and process it into chips or pellets before it is burned. Some carbon may be captured during the combustion process — but proposals to inject that carbon deep into the earth and even into the oceans only add to the complexity of the problem.



Burning wood pellets

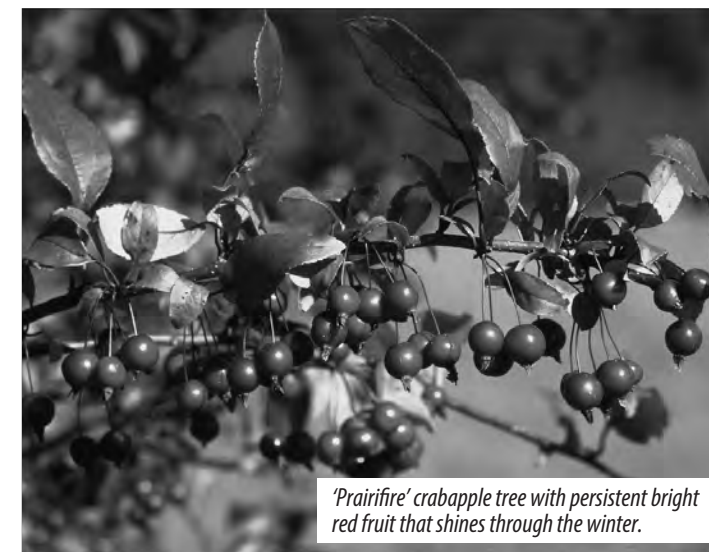
The timber industry cannot promote this far-fetched plan without the support of Congress. Susan Collins (R-ME) was enlisted by

Maine's timber industry to slip an amendment into the Clean Power Plan that defines burning wood as carbon neutral. Unfortunately, that amendment is also supported by Michigan Senators Stabenow and Peters.

In addition, the timber industry has also influenced University Forestry and Agriculture Departments, including MTU and MSU, to embrace the myth of carbon neutrality of wood and crop combustion.

Burning trees and crops is not a legitimate component of our energy future. Climate scientists and others continue to advocate for planting more trees and stopping deforestation in order to reduce carbon in the atmosphere.

There is a trade-off in everything we humans do. We must be more creative in approaching the energy challenges and opportunities facing us today. Our focus should be on preserving and safeguarding the forests that protect us, reducing our consumption addictions, investing in smart grid technologies and seeking innovations perhaps yet undiscovered. ❖



'Prairifire' crabapple tree with persistent bright red fruit that shines through the winter.

Decolonizing Diet Project

For some of us, daily meal planning and preparation makes up a large portion of our daily activities. If you've ever wondered what dinner in the Upper Peninsula looked like before processed foods, before European colonization, then you'll find Dr. Martin Reinhardt's research for his “Decolonizing Diet Project” fascinating.

This past October, FOLK and Portage Lake District Library co-sponsored a presentation, the Decolonizing Diet Project by Dr. Reinhardt, Associate

Staples include wild rice, corn and corn products, sunflower products, leeks, berries, beans, and maple products along with turkey, venison and indigenous fish.

Professor of Native American Studies at Northern Michigan University, and his daughter, K. Nim. This research venture explores the relationship between people and indigenous foods of the Great Lakes region. Dr. Reinhardt and K. Nim shared outcomes of the original study and a three-year follow-up study. While they found that meal planning and food preparation were challenges beyond what most could imagine, they also discovered that eating a very basic and natural diet had positive effects on obesity and high blood pressure. Their research reinforces the need for all of us to appreciate what the earth provides, and to protect our air, water and productive soils.

You can purchase a *Decolonizing Diet Project* cookbook by contacting Dr. Reinhardt at mreinhar@nmu.edu. Learn more about Dr. Reinhardt's project here: <http://michiganradio.org/post/year-eating-indigenous-diet> <http://learningfromtheearth.org/decolonizing-diet-project-2> <http://www.foundmichigan.org/wp/2012/05/03/decolonizing-diet-project/> (This link includes an interview.) ❖

Torch Lake Update

By Horst Schmidt



Satellite image of the dredge, sitting in the south end of Torch Lake.

Since my appointment to the Torch Lake Public Advisory Council (PAC), I started taking a more active role. And I see a struggle brewing between the state's Office of Great Lakes (OGL), which manages the Area of Concern program, and Torch Lake council members. Both sides accuse each other of not following through on their mission of working to clean up Torch Lake.

By gaining community support, a PAC plans for the recovery of the lake, stream or harbor. If the plan is approved by OGL and the EPA, it competes for funding from a federally-financed annual program called the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. For example, due to the efforts of citizens on its PAC, Muskegon received \$7.9 million this year to clean up its harbor area.

In the case of our PAC, no effort has been made to seek support from citizens outside of those who have been on the council for many years. Until recently, council members were all local elected officials who represent areas surrounding Torch and Portage lakes, plus a few land owners. Our PAC is responsible for planning the lake clean-up, as in the Muskegon example. To move forward, we need to broaden crucial community support. We need to reach out to people, encourage them to join the PAC to help plan the Torch Lake clean-up. Without necessary community involvement, the legitimacy of the program could be undermined with accusations of government bureaucrats running amuck.

On a brighter note, local DEQ contact, Amy Keranen, has worked for several years surveying the hazards both on shore and in the lake, resulting in clean-up of toxic hot spots, primarily on the old Calumet and Hecla properties in Lake Linden and Hubbell. The state has funded these activities and will continue into the foreseeable future.

But much work still remains.

We are committed to cleaning up past industrial activity that has severely degraded the Torch Lake area. We also realize that this work can be the catalyst to revitalizing the economies of our local communities.

Please consider attending our meetings on the third Tuesday of each month in Lakeview Manor Community Room, 1401 W Quincy Street in Hancock. Contact Horst for details at 906.369.3797 or Horsthear@yahoo.com. ❖

The L'Anse Irony: Do as We Say, NOT as We Do

In FOLK's campaign to stop the L'Anse Warden plant from burning dangerous materials and to encourage the DEQ enforcement of clean air regulations, we found the following recommendations on the DEQ website detailing proper use of wood stoves:

Know when to burn.

Be courteous when visitors come to your home.

Wood smoke can cause serious health problems for people with developing or sensitive lungs (young children and the elderly) and people with lung disease.

Know what to burn. Season your wood properly, and never burn chemically treated wood or non-wood materials.

Know how to burn. Visually check your chimney or stack 10 to 15 minutes after you light a fire to ensure it is not emitting excess amounts of smoke.

So, if it's not healthy or neighborly for homeowners, according to the DEQ, why is it approved for the L'Anse Warden Electric "biomass" plant to burn tons of toxic materials daily? *Does this not increase health risks exponentially for an entire community?* ❖



Longtime FOLK member John Evans displayed this sign on his porch on Broad St. across from the Frostie Freeze in L'Anse. He put it up before and during the last public hearing in L'Anse with the DEQ bigshots from Lansing. It really slowed down traffic!

Take a Hike!

New Boardwalk Will Greatly Improve FOLK's Adopted Section of the NCT

FOLK adopted a 2.5-mile section of the North Country Trail (NCT) in the Ottawa National Forest, south of Alston. One section of the trail crosses a very wet



area below a beaver dam, making hiking through that tract difficult and unsafe. A better crossing structure is needed.

The current "structure" that crosses the wetland is not safe to use. In 2017, we will build a 116-foot boardwalk to span the wetland. This fall we purchased materials, cut them to length, and hauled them two miles on some very tenuous "roads" – even for most 4WD vehicles! – to a staging area one-half mile from the wetland. The lumber pile weighs more than 2½ tons!

Next spring, the construction materials need to be transported another half mile in multiple trips, using the Peter Wolfe NCTA Chapter's PowerWagon, and hopefully with assistance from Ottawa National Foresters with an ATV and trailer.

Here's where you can help! We need a crew of about 10 volunteers to help build the boardwalk, perhaps late next May. Consider this a great chance to spend a day or two at a lovely spot out in the wild – and you'll feel good that you worked on a project to benefit hikers as well as the image of FOLK. We'll have tasks for folks of all abilities who can walk an easy half mile to the site.



Doug and Happy at the lumber pile, which is wrapped and ready for next spring.

With your help, this spot could become a popular hiker destination!

Contact Doug at **906.338.2680** or **dwelker@up.net** for information and to volunteer. We will also announce work days on Facebook: www.facebook.com/folkorg. ❖



Cleaning Up the Byways of the Keweenaw

By Rosemary Grier, Adopt-A-Highway Coordinator

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw is proud to help our community and state as part of the Adopt-A-Highway (AAH) program. Since 1990, we've picked up trash along our two-mile section of US Hwy 41 at the

Houghton and Baraga County lines. This August our volunteers collected more than twenty bags of litter.



Adopt-A-Highway is a Michigan Department of Transportation

(MDOT) program designed to help keep the state's highway roadsides clean and attractive. Every year, dedicated Adopt-A-Highway volunteers collect about 70,000 bags of trash, generating an approximate \$5 million value annually for state taxpayers. The popular program began in 1990 and has grown to involve nearly 3,000 groups cleaning 6,400 miles of highway in Michigan.

"We thank our thousands of Adopt-A-Highway crews for their dedication and hard work to help keep Michigan roadsides clean," said state transportation director Kirk T. Steudle. "Every year, these volunteers provide a financial boost for MDOT and our entire state. Their community service is greatly appreciated."

YOU are invited to participate in this rewarding, constructive civic action. **Please volunteer for the Adopt-A-Highway clean-up in 2017.** You may even get to watch eagles fishing on the lake!

Contact Rosemary at **906.334.2660** and look for info on Facebook. ❖