



Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

Grassroots Stewards of the Western U.P.

FOLK is a regional grassroots organization that advocates greater awareness of the interrelationships of environmental, economic and social concerns to protect and preserve the ecological integrity of the Lake Superior watershed.

Spring 2025 Final Newsletter

Celebrating FOLK

On behalf of our current FOLK Board, I want to thank the loyal FOLK members who have supported our environmental work since FOLK's inception in 1989. As you read this final newsletter, please know that all of these accomplishments happened because of your support over the span of 36 years. It has been both a pleasure and a challenge. It required a huge learning curve as we had to gain an understanding of how to work effectively with other environmental groups, community groups, governmental agencies and legal entities. FOLK persevered and made a difference which we should all be proud of.

The board is sad to say goodbye to FOLK but we accomplished our goals; to educate the public and support activities that recognize the inherent worth of our forest, our land, our watershed and our community. We know there are others who will pick up the mantle when the time comes. - *Linda Rulison*

FOLK: THE ORIGIN STORY *by Catherine Andrews*



View of Keweenaw Bay near the point of entry for the effluent pipe from the proposed mill. Courtesy of Catherine Andrews.

FOLK will always be remembered as the scrappy grass roots group that spontaneously sprang up in 1989 to protect Keweenaw Bay from the ravages of an Industrial Bleached Kraft Pulp Mill. Proposed by the [James River Corporation](#), the Mill would have discharged dioxin and other chlorinated organic compounds into Keweenaw Bay near Puuri road in Baraga County. Toxic emissions from the smoke stack would have drifted over Baraga Township and surrounding lands and waters

A Few Highlights

It took only one meeting at the Baraga High School to inspire a groundswell of about 200 people to coalesce into what was to become a successful grassroots resistance of 450 members. Forty-plus people consistently showed up at FOLK board meetings which were held every two weeks for six months. Members included

teachers, healthcare workers, tribal members, construction workers, Department of Natural Resources and Soil Conservation Service workers, mothers with babes in arms, fishermen, woodsmen, miners, professors, attorneys, musicians, and farmers and other residents. We were all united in our love for and connection to Keweenaw Bay. A major early breakthrough occurred when the KBIC Tribal Council passed a resolution opposing the Mill due to its impact on tribal fishing rights. It's notable that this was a time before computers and cell phones, so our main source of communication was through a skillfully organized *phone tree* and *snail*

mail. Letter writing campaigns, a monthly newsletter and written FOIA requests were also integral tools of our work.

FOLK's first protest was held at a Town Hall meeting for US Representative, Bob Davis, at the Superior View Restaurant in Freda, a small town 15 miles west of Houghton on Lake Superior. He was unexpectedly greeted by a huge group of people chanting "NO MILL" and carrying homemade signs that said, "THE THOUGHT OF A MILL GIVES ME A CHILL." Best of all, a couple of guys skillfully carrying a coffin on their shoulders were also there to greet him. A banner on the coffin said, "MILL WORKER." This was especially significant as Rep. Davis was a mortician. Channel TV6 was there to capture the moment and there were so many of us that we had to take turns going into the tiny restaurant to speak to him.

To his credit, Representative Davis later accepted FOLK's invitation to attend a public meeting at the Baraga High School gym. It was there that "The Pulp Mill Song," written and sung by local musicians was introduced. Mr. Davis sat patiently for nearly three hours while his constituents expressed sound reasons for opposing the proposed Mill. FOLK members also regularly attended Baraga County Board of Commissioner meetings, forums at MTU and other venues and were regularly interviewed by the media.



Bob Davis in Freda at a townhall meeting addressing "NO MILL" protesters

State Representative Dominic Jacobetti (aka, the Godfather of the UP) was too shrewd to risk a public meeting that might put him in an unfavorable light, so he granted an "audience" with FOLK President and Vice President. A few pulp mill advocates were on hand to back him up. The "meeting" consisted of Rep. Jacobetti chastising ordinary people for having the audacity to oppose such a "great economic opportunity." All this while banging his fist, adorned with a huge ruby ring on his finger, on the table as he yelled. Needless to say, his attitude served only to solidify our resolve.

The Western Upper Peninsula Forest Improvement District and Operation Action UP promoted Baraga County as "an ideal location with a willing and able workforce." PULP was the name of the group promoting the mill which we jokingly referred to as, *People United to Lure Polluters*. Their first action was to invite James River Corporation representatives to Baraga County for a public meeting. The corporate executives arrived in plaid shirts and khakis which were seen as an attempt to "fit in" with the locals. After their message failed to weaken the opposition, promoters began offering \$2,000 to landowners within the 1,800-acre proposed site to sign Land Option Agreements. With assistance from the president of the National Wildlife Federation and some savvy law students from U of M, FOLK learned that the Michigan Commerce Department was the source of the funding. FOLK filed a lawsuit against the Department and received a hearing with Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley. Judge Kelley asked Larry Meyer of the Commerce Department, "Is this true, Larry?" Meyer answered, "Yes," and the illegal transfer of money was immediately halted!

Meanwhile, FOLK's Subcommittee on Alternative Economic Development produced a detailed report, "*Investing in the Keweenaw's Future—Moving Towards Sustainable Development*," offering alternative

economic options for Baraga County. Unfortunately, Baraga County officials ignored this noble effort, even though the report was enthusiastically received.

A prescient opportunity presented itself when FOLK learned that a realtor had listed a piece of property critical to the project. A discharge pipe carrying toxic effluent into Keweenaw Bay would have gone through this parcel of property on Puuri Rd. Since “option money” was no longer available, the realtor could hold the property until the project was approved and then sell it to the developers. Unbeknownst to the realtor and the developers, a FOLK member quietly entered into a legal agreement with the property owner and purchased the property! This may have been the final nail in the coffin for the Pulp Mill!

The company announced the withdrawal of their plan in late January 1990 at the Baraga County Courthouse. In spite of having only a same-day notice, the courtroom was packed (*this was the power of the phone-tree system*)! Tom Myers from James River Corporation announced that the company decided to “defer indefinitely” the plan for a pulp mill at the Arnheim site on Keweenaw Bay. At that same moment, a baby in the courtroom began to cry and Myers said, “I know how you feel.” We were jubilant and there has never been a greenfield bleached kraft paper mill built on American soil since!

The Grassroots Bullseye The following articles written by Rosemary Grier

Siting a large industrial bleached kraft paper/pulp mill, such as the proposed James River Mill in the twin communities of Keweenaw Bay and Arnheim, would have had devastating consequences, especially for those living in the immediate area. The pristine rural countryside included, many small farms with dairy and beef cattle, horses, food growers, elders, young growing families, and the DNR Sturgeon River Wildlife Area extension. The



Keweenaw Bay Indian Community was concerned about air quality and dioxin-laced effluent waste that would be dumped into the bay, affecting their livelihood of commercial fishing. If built, plans for the expansive industrial compound would need a huge landfill, major dock facility, new roads, wood yards, equipment yards,



parking, and other needed buildouts. The paper/pulp mill complex would stretch deep into the area of Keweenaw Bay and Arnheim, dramatically changing the communities and natural environment. Residents’ anger and vocal opposition to the proposed mill became an important part of FOLK’s grassroots movement. As one resident said, *“We are a living, breathing, vital community and are united against the demise of our community and the area in general.”*

Air & Water Quality

Bleached kraft paper/pulp mills produce a plethora of toxic chemical effluent. This includes dioxin, linked to cancer and birth defects for people, animals and aquatic life, including other toxic chemicals. These lethal substances get dumped into a water source like Keweenaw Bay and expelled into the air via huge smoke stack plumes, migrating air pollution over the Bay into Lake Superior and over surrounding communities and beyond. At the time, there were at least three known carcinogens discharged by paper-pulp mills. The lack of air emission standards and lack of information about what kinds of compounds were discharged was problematic. The stench from smokestack emissions is a common air quality complaint. James River admitted at a Baraga meeting, “There will be a *lovely* odor.” Angry residents who lived near the Quinniesec Mill in Norway, MI, complained of stinky air and said their community will never be the same.

Western U.P. Wood Resource

In 1989, James River officials held a meeting with residents in Baraga. The officials stated the proposed bleached kraft paper/pulp mill would consume 700,000 cords of wood annually. If piled eight feet wide by four feet high, it would span 530 miles! The preferred species are dense hardwood, such as sugar and red maple, yellow birch and red oak. Typically, these hardwoods are managed to produce high-value lumber and veneer products for cabinets, flooring and furniture. A tree must reach a diameter of a least 12 inches and are often over 100 years old. FOLK's Subcommittee on Forest Products met with local and state foresters at the Baraga Dept. of Natural Resources office to obtain data on all northern hardwood



Courtesy of Michigan Timber Services

timber sales that had occurred by 1984. They found that the wood supply estimates for the proposed mill were based on a 1980 forest inventory, which was outdated and no longer accurate. At the time there were five other paper mills utilizing hardwoods from the region, up to 850,000 cords per year. It was determined that yet another mill, such as the James River proposal that would consume 700,000 cords per year, would place considerable economic pressure on the hardwood resources of the western U.P. The Subcommittee concluded, ***“The days of building a mill and then making the resources match that particular mill must be over. It is time to do the reverse and carefully match sustainable forest industries to all the resources or a region, including air water, minerals and forests.”***

FOLK's Vision



FOLK's vision went well beyond the siting of a bleached kraft paper/pulp mill. Early in FOLK's formation, the steering committee identified a need for Project Research Teams to look into economic renewal options that support business, the environment, and provide jobs. In August of 1990, after nine months of research and writing, FOLK released its 52-page report on the economic alternatives to a pulp papermill entitled, ***“Investing in the Keweenaw's Future—Moving Towards Sustainable Development.”*** Sustainable development visualizes a future where the economy, environment and social equity support each other. FOLK suggested aiming development efforts toward new businesses, stopping the dollar drain out of the local economy, and encouraged local control of business. At the time, FOLK's report was groundbreaking at the time. It was shared widely with other key environmental groups, representatives in the Great Lakes region, and state

government officials. In 2012, ***“Reinventing the Keweenaw and the Western U.P.: New Strategies, Changing Perceptions, and the Emergence of a Quality-of-Life Economy,”*** was prepared for FOLK as part of an action research project to create a future vision for the western U.P. Both reports can be found on our website, www.keweenawfolk.org and go to the *About* tab.



Moby Dick. Courtesy Catherine Paavola

Moby Dick Visits Houghton

On Labor Day in 1991, FOLK sponsored a day of local activities to “Celebrate the Lake.” It began with the *Chippewa Tour Boat* that cruised to the Upper Entry into Lake Superior to meet and guide Greenpeace’s *Moby Dick* to the Houghton Dock area where several hundred people welcomed the ship. Ironically, an eagle flew overhead as if to guide the boat safely from the Lake Superior toward the Portage Canal. At the dock, crowds listened to short talks about Zero Discharge of

persistent toxic chemicals that would require industries to clean the contaminated water first before discharging it back into Lake Superior. Local musicians entertained attendees while boat and bus tours took place. On the Hancock side of the bridge, a banner was hung displaying the message, “Zero Discharge.” In a drawing, eight people from the crowd won an educational trip down the canal on the historic 83-foot *Moby Dick*. After sunset, FOLK presented a Native American-made “Dream Catcher” to the captain and crew of the *Moby Dick*. The next day, the ship sailed to Marquette, then headed back to Bayfield, WI where it originated.



Moby Dick & supporters at the Houghton dock. Courtesy Catherine Paavola.

FOLK has a presence in 2 Documentaries:

Burned: Are Trees the New Coal? (2019) and *Planet of the Humans* (2019)

Michigan Public Broadcasting Network featured **Battle for the UP** (Nov. 1990) on Michigan at Risk program



Music tapes for FOLK fundraiser.

Musicians Create Music to Honor the Keweenaw

Local musicians voluntarily came together to write and record music specific to the Keweenaw. They dedicated their efforts to help preserve the quality of life enjoyed by both residents and of visitors to the region. Our clean air and water are the “**Bond Between Us All.**” Sale proceeds were donated to FOLK.

Other fundraiser activities occurred during the earlier years of FOLK. Handmade quilts were raffled, mugs, t-shirts, market bags were sold, and semi-annual garage sales were held. FOLK also sponsored several fundraiser dances.

A few Chorus Stanzas from the Keweenaw Tape Collection

“Oh Keweenaw Bay, jewel of the Northland, the last of a kind, pristine and so rare. What’s this I hear, is it a bad dream. They’re talking about putting a mill on your shore.”

“Oh, how can we trust what they say. We can learn from their history, just look at Green Bay. Their past is one of land degradation. We must learn today, or our future we’ll pay.”

Final Financial Report and Disbursement

Below includes an overview of the financial dissolution of FOLK.

Disbursement of Remaining Funds

The FOLK Board chose the following nonprofit 501c3 tax-exempt organizations to donate remaining funds:

1. Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative/LSSI – www.lakesuperiorstewardship.org
2. Lake Superior Youth Symposium (Biennial) – see LSSI
3. Sustainable Films Series (MTU)
4. International Wolf Center, Ely, MN – www.wolf.org
5. North Country Trail/Peter Wolfe Chapter – www.northcountrytrail.org/trail/michigan/pwc
6. Gratiot Lake Conservancy - www.gratiotlakeconservancy.org
7. Keweenaw Land Trust – www.keweenawlandtrust.org
8. Protect the Porkies – www.protecttheporkies.com
 → Protect the Porkies is a coalition member of Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition, a 501c3 nonprofit, tax exempt org. Donations to Protect the Porkies goes through UPEC (www.upenvironment.org)

Financial Statements by Dave Harmon

The following includes two statements summarizing the basic financial activities of FOLK over the period 2023, 2024, and 2025 (year-to-date). The first statement (below) is an Income vs. Expenses Report for the period showing both our sources of income and how FOLK funds were spent. The expense item for Independent Contractors was for paying for help with administering the organization. The second statement (page 7) is a Statement of Financial Position (aka a Balance Sheet) show FOLK's assets and liabilities at the beginning and end of the year. There are no liabilities because FOLK never incurred any debt or other financial obligations. Note that in 2025 we have made a large number of contributions to kindred non-profit organizations as explained elsewhere in this newsletter. FOLK now retains only a small amount of money in our checking account to cover final shutdown expenses. Slightly different versions of these financial statements will be presented to the State of Michigan as part of our legal dissolution process. We are aiming to complete the dissolution process by September 1, 2025, if not earlier.

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

Income vs. Expense Report, Tax Years 2023–25 (2025 year-to-date)

Date of spreadsheet: 03/25/25

	2023	2024	2025 YTD
4000 INCOME			
4100 Contributions, Gifts & Grants / Dues	\$1,925.00	\$2,180.00	\$1,215.00
4400 Investment income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
4410: Savings Acct interest	\$0.96	\$0.96	\$0.00
4420: CD interest	\$552.00	\$737.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,477.96	\$2,917.96	\$1,215.00
5000 EXPENSES			
5100 Donations to non-profit organizations	\$2,300.00	\$3,105.00	\$32,140.00
5400 Professional fees: Independent Contractors	\$1,900.00	\$1,900.00	\$475.00
5500 Occupancy & utilities: Internet service	\$60.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
5600 Printing, Publications, Postage & Shipping			
5610: Printing & postage — Newsletter	\$286.25	\$309.50	\$0.00
5630: Website	\$0.00	\$204.00	\$0.00
5640: Postage & delivery	\$302.00	\$182.00	\$0.00
Subtotal, Print / Pubs / Postage / Shipping	\$588.25	\$695.50	\$0.00
5700 Other expenses	\$97.31	\$20.00	\$0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,945.56	\$5,720.50	\$32,615.00
NET INCOME (LOSS)	(\$2,467.60)	(\$2,802.54)	(\$31,400.00)

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw (FOLK)
Statement of Financial Position, Tax Years 2023–25

Date of spreadsheet: 03/22/2025

	Balance as of 01/01/2023	Balance as of 12/31/2023	Increase / (Decrease)
1000 ASSETS			
1100 Breakwater FCU, Checking Acct	\$1,133.67	\$3,090.42	\$1,956.75
1200 Breakwater FCU, Savings Accts	\$20,811.56	\$15,869.66	(\$4,941.90)
1300 Breakwater FCU, Certificate Accts	\$18,866.06	\$19,382.67	\$516.61
TOTAL ASSETS	\$40,811.29	\$38,342.75	(\$2,468.54)
2000 LIABILITIES			
2100 Accounts payable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
2200 Benefits paid to / for members	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
NET WORTH (Assets + Liabilities)	\$40,811.29	\$38,342.75	(\$2,468.54)

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw (FOLK)
Statement of Financial Position, Tax Year 2024

Date of spreadsheet: 03/22/2025

	Balance as of 01/01/2024	Balance as of 12/31/2024	Increase / (Decrease)
1000 ASSETS			
1100 Breakwater FCU, Checking Acct	\$3,090.42	\$1,549.92	(\$1,540.50)
1200 Breakwater FCU, Savings Accts	\$15,869.66	\$13,877.41	(\$1,992.25)
1300 Breakwater FCU, Certificate Accts	\$19,382.67	\$20,111.86	\$729.19
TOTAL ASSETS	\$38,342.75	\$35,539.19	(\$2,803.56)
2000 LIABILITIES			
2100 Accounts payable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
2200 Benefits paid to / for members	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
NET WORTH (Assets + Liabilities)	\$38,342.75	\$35,539.19	(\$2,803.56)

Friends of the Land of Keweenaw (FOLK)
Statement of Financial Position, Tax Year 2025 (year-to-date)

Date of spreadsheet: 03/22/2025

	Balance as of 01/01/2025	Balance as of 03/24/2025	Increase / (Decrease)
1000 ASSETS			
1100 Breakwater FCU, Checking Acct	\$1,549.92	\$3,461.42	\$1,911.50
1200 Breakwater FCU, Savings Accts	\$13,877.41	\$0.00	(\$13,877.41)
1300 Breakwater FCU, Certificate Accts	\$20,111.86	\$0.00	(\$20,111.86)
TOTAL ASSETS	\$35,539.19	\$3,461.42	(\$32,077.77)
2000 LIABILITIES			
2100 Accounts payable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
2200 Benefits paid to / for members	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
NET WORTH (Assets + Liabilities)	\$35,539.19	\$3,461.42	(\$32,077.77)

Special thanks to the Bob Sewell family for their generous bequest and to our devoted members for the generous donations which have sustained us over the years!

FOLK's history, publications and paraphernalia are archived at MTU's library.

FOLK Member Comments

“I want to say thank you for the work you and the rest of the group did all these years. Because of people like you, I felt some hope for our area.”

“FOLK has had an admirable advocacy and education role concerning environmental hazards from mining operations, mills, and other insults for many decades. FOLK began its work at a time that there was no other local NGO paying attention to this... a real grassroots outcry. We will miss FOLK but applaud its important work of environmental activism.”

“Cheers to FOLK for all your work to stop the paper mill and protect land and water for many years.”

“It is so much more exciting to start projects than to put them to bed, but both require wisdom and courage. I commend all the board members for your hard work through the life of the organization!”

“Thanks for the hard work that you and the others involved in Folk have done all these years!”

“With an abundance of appreciation for you and all your thoughtful and effective work with FOLK, thank you so much. Truly, because of you and the FOLK membership, our quality of life in the Keweenaw has been blessed in so many meaningful ways. There is a sadness in seeing such an organization dissolve, yet you have given hope and strength to other dedicated environmental-focused non-profits.”

“Thank you and other Board Members for all you’ve done to protect our beautiful Lake Superior Watershed.”

“Congratulations! You’ve had a great run!”



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FOLK Board

Linda Rulison – President

Catherine Andrews – VP

Horst Schmidt – Treasurer

Rosemary Grier – Secretary & Newsletter

Dave Rulison – Member-at-large