



FOLK Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

Grassroots Stewards of the Western Upper Peninsula

SPRING 2022 FOLK NEWSLETTER

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

Industrial Wind and Biomass Energy Development: Why Not?

“We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” Aldo Leopold

Green, renewable energy has been at the forefront of environmental activism for quite some time. In recent years, however, multinational private equity companies, a global banking system, and corporate/government alliances have subverted this concept in the pursuit of big profits.

FOLK has steadfastly supported preservation and conservation values for over 30 years. Deep flaws in “green/renewable” energy claims have become more apparent as we continue to address local environmental challenges. We believe that moral and ethical considerations need to be part of the conversation. Are we willing to destroy the environment to protect the climate? Or are we courageous enough to adopt a true conservation ethic that includes the rights of nature, reciprocity and kinship?

INDUSTRIAL WIND

Rural communities are targeted for Industrial Wind Projects not just because we have the land density required for such development. It is expected that rural folks will be grateful for promises of jobs and increased tax revenues and that we lack the resources to object. Developers often underestimate our connection to the land which they perceive to be a vast wasteland waiting to be monetized. “Good neighbor” and “transparency” are words used to persuade local residents into trusting these interlopers. When “nice” tactics fail, threats of lawsuits become the next step, which has been the case in all three Townships targeted by developers in Baraga and Houghton counties. Embedded costs, infrastructure costs, cultural and environmental costs, and operating costs are never mentioned when promises of “free energy” are touted.



View along the Keweenaw Ridge Line. Courtesy MI Features/MSU

Circle Power Co. wants to construct twelve 575-foot industrial wind turbines along the Keweenaw Ridge in Adams Township located in Houghton County. Guardians of the Keweenaw Ridge (guardiansofthekeweenawridge.org) oppose the project due to concerns over potential impacts on the environment and on the health, safety and welfare of the public.

In July 2021, with input from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) denied Circle Power's environmental permit application for four reasons: 1) the project would have significant adverse effects on fish and wildlife and the natural resources of the state, 2) the project was not in the public interest and any benefits would not balance the reasonably foreseeable detriments, 3) the project would result in unacceptable disruptions to the aquatic resources, 4) a feasible and prudent alternative exists. The American Bird Conservancy has also weighed in with deep concerns regarding migratory and local bird populations on this specific site. Wind turbines are the second largest killers of bats in the U.S. and would have a devastating effect on migratory bats and bats that live in abandoned mine shafts on the proposed site.

Wind energy is intermittent, unreliable, vulnerable to extreme weather events, and is dependent upon a stable back up system like natural gas. Large scale wind development requires nothing less than a new industrial revolution in global mineral extraction which is often connected to labor abuses in impoverished countries. Massive losses of biodiversity occur from mining, transportation, construction, and decommissioning of this so-called "green energy" solution.

Therefore, the FOLK Board, after careful consideration, opposes Industrial Wind development along the Keweenaw Ridge.

BIOMASS ENERGY by Catherine Andrews

The L'Anse Warden Electric Company (LWEC) was promoted to local residents as a producer of "green/renewable" energy in 2008. They received a renewable energy grant for 11million dollars to convert a coal, turned natural gas plant, into a "Biomass" facility. They also received generous local tax incentives. After two unsuccessful attempts, LWEC won an appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal to retroactively reduce their property taxes causing the County, local agencies and schools to pay back hundreds of thousands of dollars to the company.

Regulatory Capture is the term used to describe what happens when regulators who are charged with protecting citizens and the environment shift their allegiance to the companies they regulate. A convenient loophole prevents LWEC to be designated as a Commercial and Industrial Solid Waste Incinerator (CISWI) which would require stricter pollution regulations. Although we were instrumental in forcing LWEC to make some significant modifications, their current Operating Permit allows them to **burn 408 tons** of treated railroad ties, **144 tons** of engineered fuel pellets (containing plastics), **129.6 tons** of wood chips and fines, and **70 tons** of shredded tires **PER DAY**. They **emit 290 pounds** of sulfur dioxide, **145 pounds** of nitrous oxides, **97.2 pounds** of carbon monoxide, **34.6 pounds** of particulate matter (soot), **9.1 pounds** of volatile organic compounds, **2.17 pounds** of hydrogen chloride, and **.02 pounds** of lead **PER HOUR**. EGLE and EPA require the Warden plant to conduct an independent stack test only once every 5 years.

The only green product of this facility is the money LWEC receives from a 20-year contract to sell Renewable Energy Credits to DTE. DTE, a Detroit-based energy company and, along with Consumers Power, provides 98% of the electricity sold to Michigan customers.

Update: At the end of April, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community received a \$75,000 EPA Environmental justice grant to conduct a Health Risk Assessment Study of multiple stressors from current industrial facilities, such as a **mixed-fuel power plant** and legacy pollution from past copper mining operations.

Milestone Moment for Line 5 Proposed Tunnel by Rosemary Grier

An historic moment occurred in an already significant legal case on February 18, 2022. For the first time in Michigan history, the potential climate impacts of a proposed industrial installation were allowed to be considered during a permit hearing under the Michigan Environmental Protection Act.

A coalition of Indigenous Tribes, public safety experts, and environmental groups brought together all the pieces of their powerful case before the Michigan Public Service Commission to deny a permit for the Enbridge Line 5 Tunnel Project. In their initial briefs submitted to the Commission, the groups underscored the serious risks the pipeline



tunnel in the Straits of Mackinac would pose to Tribal treaty rights, public safety and efforts to combat the climate crisis.

The tunnel permitting process continues to be reviewed. Line 5 is a major pipeline operated by Enbridge, a multinational Canadian company. It was built in 1953 and is part of the Enbridge Lakehead system and sends oil from western Canada to eastern Canada by way of the Great Lakes states, including the U.P. Line 5 passes under the environmentally sensitive Straits of Mackinac.

Recent article in MI Advance: Why the Enbridge Line 5 tunnel is a pipe bomb at the Straits:

michiganadvance.com/2022/04/08/column-why-the-enbridge-line-5-tunnel-is-a-pipe-bomb-at-the-straits

TORCH LAKE AREA OF CONCERN by Horst Schmidt

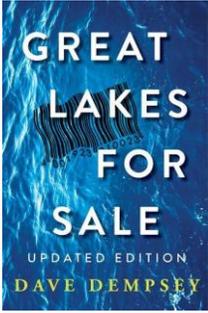
Torch Lake and its western shore were severely polluted by two mining companies when they dumped mining waste into the lake, equivalent to a quarter of its area. Although the processing of ore stopped after 1969, no substantive remediation occurred until the last few years.

As an advisory group, our Public Action Committee (PAC) has been working with the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) to find a solution. An experiment was decided upon by a group of convened experts to find out how to deal with the sand-like waste called

stamp sands. In 2023 we will learn the results of the course or courses of action which may bring back to life the nearly dead bottom of the lake. Our PAC has received a grant to study the sources of methylmercury and PCBs found in the lake. Professor Noel Urban of Michigan Tech's Environmental Engineering Department and the Natural Resources Department of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community are doing the research which is ongoing. Upon completion the results will be part of our recommendations to EGLE in our advisory role to bring the lake back to life.

For more information go to: <https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-aocs/torch-lake-aoc>





New Project by Rosemary Grier

FOLK has partnered with Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative (LSSI) for teachers to receive Dave Dempsey's newest book, "Great Lakes for Sale" (see below). Educators from the Copper Country and Gogebic Intermediate school districts were invited to a virtual live book talk by the well-known Michigan author & policy expert. The talk was sponsored by the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition and was recorded; it can be accessed facebook.com/upenvironment/live for later viewing. Teachers who attended the presentation or recording needed to email a short paragraph describing how they plan to incorporate the book into their curriculum to receive their free book. Teachers could earn a professional credit by responding to some reflective questions.

Membership Form

FOLK Friends of the Land of Keweenaw

PO Box 671 Houghton MI 49931

Please print: Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone (____) _____ Date _____

Individual (Annual Membership/Jan-Dec): \$10

Senior Citizen, Unemployed, Student (Annual): \$5

Contribute to FOLK's mission to protect the integrity of Lake Superior's Watershed \$ _____

I want to get involved with FOLK! Please contact me by: (circle one) email or phone.

Total enclosed: \$ _____



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In *Great Lakes for Sale* (Nov. 2021), author Dave Dempsey offers surprising, even controversial, ideas on how to prevent the fulfillment of this nightmare scenario. They include addressing water commercialization, curbing abuse of the Great Lakes Compact, and devising plans for limited sharing of the Great Lakes to forestall humanitarian disasters. If the Great Lakes are to remain great, new thinking and action will be required.

"This is an excellent narrative history of the faltering fight to protect the Great Lakes from the international water bottling industry; the rising failure of the Great Lakes Compact to prevent nonessential water diversions to communities outside the basin; and a provocative consideration of what it means to treat water as a human right."

—Lana Pollack, former U.S. section chair, International Joint Commission

FOLK General Membership Meeting (review of 2021)

The FOLK Board decided in lieu of holding an in-person or virtual annual GMM meeting, the bylaw requirements can be met by providing the specific information to members regarding the activities of the board from the preceding year through our newsletter. Below are previous 2021 GMM minutes, the annual treasurer's report, the transaction of other business, and the election of incoming board members. Our regular newsletters continue to update the membership about activities, accomplishments and other transactions.

A SHORT HISTORY OF FOLK

In 2019 FOLK celebrated its 30-year anniversary in Hancock at the Orpheum theater with music and pizza. It was a great time to share memories and visit with "folks" some from near and some from afar who made the celebration their travel destination. Over the last 30+ years now FOLK has managed to maintain a presence in the Keweenaw due to the continued support of both the old and new members.

FOLK has not seen a threat quite as challenging or perhaps as inspiring as our original environmental concern in the early 1990s: the James River proposed bleach Kraft paper/pulp mill which would have been located in Keweenaw Bay, Baraga Co. Citizens from the four-county area joined together in large numbers to let both local and state officials and developers know that the people of the Keweenaw have a say and they said NO! There were legal battles at both the local and state level, all of which landed FOLK in Ingham County Court. The Citizens prevailed and won the suit. This action made clear that we, the people, do have a right and a duty to protect the greatest of the Great Lakes, Lake Superior and its watershed.



photo by Catherine Andrews

A PLEA FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We all know that there will continue to be challenges in protecting the Lake Superior Watershed. They have been highlighted in our quarterly newsletters where many center around energy projects such as industrial wind farms, Line 5, a Space Port and others. We can all agree that our energy needs have to be met. How we, as citizens, decide to meet these needs will have a tremendous impact on our future, our environment, and our Great Lakes.

One of FOLK's greatest needs, if we are to continue the "good fight," is new/more board members. We have a stable general membership and a viable bank account which is all good. With a board that was already small in number and with the recent loss of a key board member Doug Welker, we have a void to fill. He was our webmaster, our editor and much more. We are currently working with someone locally to pick up some of the website/membership work. However, if we are to continue as a viable organization, we need **you** to volunteer **as a new board member**. The pandemic has made it clear that meetings can be successfully zoomed and that much of the business can be conducted from afar. So, we ask our membership, both near and far, to think about serving on the FOLK board no matter where you live.

If you are interested in learning more about being a board member, please contact Linda at:

linda.rulison4@gmail.com

FOLK Activities and Accomplishments in 2021

FOLK donated funds to Guardians of the Keweenaw Ridge to develop and distribute quality education and interpretative materials that supported community efforts to stop the placement of industrial wind turbines along the Keweenaw Ridge in Adams and Stanton townships.

FOLK donated funds to the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative to support educational activities for local schools, and donated to other environmental efforts.

Keep the UP Wild – FOLK board members and other state and regional organizations teamed up in a wide-ranging coalition to protect four tracts of UP land under federal wilderness designations. They seek the highest level of wilderness protection for the Trap Hills, the Ehlco Area, Norwich Plains, and a 2,000-acre addition to the Sturgeon River Gorge. www.keeptheupwild.com

FOLK signed on to the MI DNR application for funds to create a new state scenic site and for necessary improvements at the Douglass-Houghton Falls in Calumet, Mi.

FOLK signed onto a letter urging President Joe Biden to immediately withdraw the recently issued Final Environmental Impact Statement on the Resolution Copper Project that would facilitate a land exchange and construction of the Resolution Copper mine, resulting in the destruction of Oak Flat, located on the Tonto National Forest in Arizona and is a sacred recreational and ecological haven. (Arizona Mining Reform Coalition/Earthworks)

FOLK signed on to a Resolution in Opposition to a Michigan Wolf Hunting/Trapping Season from Nancy Warren to the MI DNR & Natural Resources Commission. The gray wolf has been removed from the Federal Endangered Species List as of January 4, 2021 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. BE IT RESOLVED, that we oppose any attempts to establish a Michigan Wolf hunting/trapping season.

Board members attended: Final meetings of the U.P. Energy Task Force Jan. through March and UP Clean Energy Conference – Feb. 12, 2021

FOLK held annual GMM via Zoom on April 14th - Wolf program, "How to Live with Wolves" presented by Abby Keller from the International Wolf Center in Ely, MN.

Ongoing Projects:

- Adopt-A-Highway – FOLK has continued to pick up trash along US 41 at the Houghton/Baraga County line for 32 years!
- North Country Trail – FOLK continues to maintain segment 35, a 1.5-mile section
- Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative (LSSI) – FOLK donates to support bringing together schools and community partners to prepare K-12 students to become knowledgeable citizens concerned about the Lake Superior watershed and actively engaged in stewardship projects in their community.

FOLK General Membership Meeting Minutes April 2021 Zoom @ 7 pm April 15, 2021

Reports:

*Secretary: Rosemary Grier, report posted on website. *Treasurer: Horst Schmidt, report posted on website

* V.P: Doug Welker *President: Linda Rulison - overview of FOLK activities - see below

*Members at large: Catherine Andrews and Dave Rulison

Committees:

- *Highway pick-up: Rosemary, pick-up dates will be posted the website (May 1-9)
- *North Country Trail: Doug. Check website for activities. *Website: Doug *Face book: Horst
- *Newsletter: Doug editor, layout design Sue Ellen Kingsley
- *U.P. Energy issues: Rosemary Grier, Catherine Andrews & Horst Schmidt

Old Business/ Projects/events:

1. Current "Alternative Green fuels" such as biomass and the existing push for carbon-neutral energy sources such as industrial wind turbines, industrial solar farms, and electric vehicles. FOLK recognizes that while there are advantages to some of these alternatives, there are also concerns. The need to educate ourselves on these issues is important.

2. FOLK has been following Governor Whitmer’s appointed UP Energy Task Force Committee (UPETF). Two of FOLK’s board members, Rosemary and Horst, are part of the UP Propane Research Team of UP residents concerned about local and state energy needs and issues.

3. FOLK supports educational projects for area students through helping to fund *The Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative (LSSI)* and other grants to local teachers and or students.

4. Michigan's Adopt-A-Highway – FOLK became a charter member in1990, has participated in the program every year since then and is located along a 2-mile stretch on US 41 bordering the Houghton/Baraga County line.

New Business: The current Board Members have agreed to continue for another term: Doug Welker, Horst Schmidt, Rosemary Grier, Linda Rulison, Dave Rulison and Catherine Andrews. We have room for more board members and would welcome anyone to apply if interested in being a board member or working on any of the committees. Please contact us at facebook.com/folk.org and leave your name and contact info in the chat.

FOLK 2021 GMM Annual Financial Report

2021 Income/Expense/Savings/Checking

Savings:	\$20,576.21
CDs	\$18,815.22
Checking Balance	\$1,434.52
Total	\$40,825.95
Donations Received	\$3,730.00

Expenses:

Admin	\$688.45
Grants	\$4,563.00
Total	\$5,251.45

- *Major grants to the following to assist them in protecting the environment of the Keweenaw:
 Guardians of the Keweenaw Ridge \$2,388 Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative \$1,500
 MTU Center for Science and Environmental Research \$350
 Donations and Grants—Various Entities \$325



MDHHS Continues Precautionary Consumption Guidelines for Lake Superior Smelt Due to PFAS

LANSING, Mich. - The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) continues to recommend that people eat no more than one serving per month of smelt from Lake Superior due to elevated levels of perfluoro octane sulfonate (PFOS), a perfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS).

For MDHHS Eat Safe Fish guidelines, a serving size is eight ounces

At the time, MDHHS did not have data on PFOS levels in Lake Superior smelt but chose to match WDNR's guidance and issued a consumption guideline as a precautionary measure. MDHHS recommended the guideline stay in effect until there was enough data to reevaluate.

In 2021, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy along with other partners collected smelt from several locations in Lake Superior and its related watershed. Early results from MDHHS PFAS analysis indicate that PFOS levels in smelt collected in Michigan are similar to smelt collected in Wisconsin.

Analysis of the smelt for other contaminants of concern is still underway. Until all data is available, MDHHS recommends that the guideline of one serving per month remain in place for smelt from Lake Superior. When all data is available, MDHHS will update the guidelines for smelt. For more information, visit the Eat Safe Fish program website at Michigan.gov/eatsafefish or call 800-648-6942.