



Upcoming Events

June 24 - 6:30 PM FOLK steering committee meets at Ted and Alice Soldan's home in Pelkie.

August 9 - 9:30 AM FOLK members are invited to join us at our segment of the North Country Trail (see article in this newsletter for directions) for a hike and trailwork.

FOLK Activities

FOLK members have attended the following events since the last newsletter:

- North Country Trail workshop/clean up
• Otter River Watershed Meeting
• Huron River Watershed Training
• April Highway Pickup
• Macroinvertebrate sampling on the Huron River

A Gift for Our Members

At the FOLK Steering Committee meeting in May, the go-ahead was given to include a gift to our members with each membership renewal. The gift is a handsome and durable Acme 1500 shopping bag with the FOLK logo printed on one side. These bags have been field tested for the past several months, and have even held up during a 7-day backcountry hike on Isle Royale.

The bags are made of ripstop nylon, and fold easily into a pouch that slips into your pocket or purse. We hope to accomplish several things with this project.

First we'd like to get the word out that FOLK is still there, active, and looking for new members. Second, we'd like to do our part to reduce the number of throwaway paper and plastic shopping bags that are wasted. And third, we'd like to use this gift to thank our loyal members.

The bags come from reusablebags.com, and the printing was done by tsdesigns.com. The latter has received awards for their commitment to sustainable development, and uses only phthalate-free inks in their printing process.

FOLK purchased 300 of these bags, and will distribute them for the next year (one per household.) If you just sent in your renewal, you can wait until you submit your next year's, or send another check and we'll tack on another year to your membership. If you prefer not to receive your free bag with your renewal, just check the appropriate box in the membership form on the lower right corner of this page.

Fran Whitman Attends Rio Tinto Shareholder Mtg in London

This past April, longtime FOLK member and steering committee member Fran Whitman joined a distinguished delegation from the UP on a trip to London, England to attend the annual meeting of Rio Tinto (RTZ), the parent company of Kennecott Minerals. Kennecott is the company that is planning a sulfide mine on the Yellow Dog Plains. Fran's decision to make this trip was her own, and she turned down offers of financial support from FOLK. The other members of the UP delegation were Susan LaFernier from the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Gabriel Caplett from the Northwoods Wilderness Recovery/YD Summer, and Cynthia Pryor from the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve. This group was collectively known as the Eagle Coalition.

The primary purpose of this trip was to attend and speak, if possible, at the shareholders' meeting. The delegation had a full schedule for the 6 days they were in London. Events were hosted by the London Mining Network, Friends of the Earth, West Papua Freedom, Action Aid and Partizan (People Against RTZ). "They (Partizan) were our little angels," said Fran. "They met us at the airport, and arranged the proxys for people that didn't have shares of stock."

At the annual meeting Susan LaFernier spoke. Gabriel Caplett also addressed the board and spoke about the proposed Eagle Project, problems with the Kennecott tailings impoundment, and the Flambeau Mine. In addition to the concerns raised by Susan and Gabriel, the board heard about the Grasberh Mine from the West Papua Human Rights and Environmental Issues group, Rio Tinto Mines in Madagascar, the Pebble Mine in Alaska, and a potash mine in Argentina.

During the re-election of Tom Albanese to the board, Cynthia Pryor commented that Mr. Albanese seemed uninformed about the situation at the YD Plains, and suggested that he visit the area to hear from community members. After the meeting, members of the Eagle Coalition met privately with Tom Albanese. Cynthia presented him with resolutions and a 10,000 signature petition opposing the mine.

After the shareholder meetings in London, the Eagle Coalition members met with other groups regarding Rio Tinto's mining operations. Once again the good people at Partizan stepped up to the plate to assist the Eagle Coalition members. Fran explained, "They took us to the Friends of the Earth headquarters for a meeting, and a meeting at the University of London. They also arranged the protest in front of the [Rio Tinto] general meeting."

While many of us are doing important work here at home, it is significant that this group of fine people saw to it that the shareholders of Rio Tinto were not painted an overly rosy picture by the board and their publicists. Congratulations and many thanks to the members of the Eagle Coalition.

Membership form box containing FOLK logo, contact information fields (Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Telephone, Date), membership options (Individual, Senior Citizen, Organization, Educational Fund, Additional Contributions), and a Total enclosed field.

## FOLK adopts a segment of the North Country Trail

by Doug Welker

A 2.5 mile segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail in Laird Twp. in southern Houghton County is now under the "ownership" of FOLK. The section of trail that FOLK has adopted extends from the junction of South Laird Road and Ottawa National Forest Road 1360 southwestward through sections 3 and 4, and the northwest corner of section 9. There's a trailhead on South Laird Road, with room for several vehicles. Along the trail are nice northern hardwoods / hemlock stands, several steep-sided ravines, two permanent streams, a cedar / hemlock lowland, a large beaver pond, and a boardwalk. It's a section of trail that my wife Marjory and I hike on occasion.

By "ownership" I mean that it is now under the care of FOLK, which will do at least annual monitoring and other trail work as needed, such as maintaining blazes, lopping branches, and, for some, more difficult trail work such as using chain saws, tread leveling, and improving wetland crossings.

If you are interested in helping on the trail, including simply hiking the trail and reporting what you find, please contact Doug Welker ([dwelker@up.net](mailto:dwelker@up.net), 906-338-2680) or any other FOLK Steering Committee member.

## Your Mineral Rights

A disturbing trend is revealing itself in the UP. Since Kennecott announced the Eagle Project on the Yellow Dog Plains, other companies have announced plans to explore for minerals or open mines. Do you own the mineral rights to your property? It might be a good time to dust off your property deed and find out.

## New Life for the Otter River Watershed Council

Years ago after the *Whole Earth Catalog* published its last edition, a magazine called the *Coevolution Quarterly* took its place. One unique feature of this magazine is that it chose a theme for each issue. One in particular comes to my mind... the watershed edition. The lead-in article asked, "Do you know your watershed?" I knew my watershed very well, and still do. My property slopes downhill for about a quarter of a mile, and the ground water empties into a stream we fondly call The Watson Creek. From there it travels about a half mile before it empties into the Otter River.

This edition of *Coevolution Quarterly* opened my eyes to the concept of a watershed, and also made me realize I bear some responsibility for what reaches the Otter River; and that I need to act responsibly in that regard for my own sake and the sake of all my neighbors. Our rivers are the planet's circulatory system, and nothing can survive with a sick blood stream.

Some years ago, a small group of locals got together and formed a group that took a hard look at the Otter River. It was determined that the river itself, but also Otter Lake, the river's ultimate destination, was filling up with sediment, and that something needed to be done. This group was active for several years, and procured some funding to fix several sites on the river in an effort to slow the erosion causing the damage. After the funding ended, most members of the group moved on to other projects. The good they accomplished is still evident, especially at the Hazel Swamp crossing near Alston, MI. One member of the group, steering committee member Dave Rulison, who is a property owner on the river and an avid fisherman, has continued to monitor the situation and became concerned with what he saw. Dave talked to several people in the fall of 2007, and a group got together to discuss options for restarting the process. Among those present was Bruce Peterson, Baraga NRCS District Conservationist. Bruce was not optimistic about the chances of getting any sort of grant to continue the work due to the lateness of the year, but he submitted a proposal anyway. In March of 2008 the group was happy to learn that a Rapid Watershed Assessment Grant had been funded for the Otter River. While not a lot of money, it is sufficient to get the ball rolling on this project again.

The grant includes funding for data collection at many county road crossings of the river and its branches. This will be accomplished by using a special camera with a built-in GPS unit. Each picture that is taken will also record the precise location of the shot. The group is also talking about outreach activities including direct-mailed newsletters, press releases, surveys, and public meetings.

Do you live on the Otter River Watershed? If so, perhaps you'd be interested in learning more about this project. If not, what watershed do you live on? How healthy is it? How much good might one more concerned citizen do to improve the health of your watershed?