

THE HOWL



Spring/Summer 2013

Bi-Annual Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 2

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www.yellowdogwatershed.org



“Preserving the Yellow Dog Watershed in its most natural state for the use of the public, now, and for the benefit of future generations since 1995.”

The Howl

Designed and published by the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve

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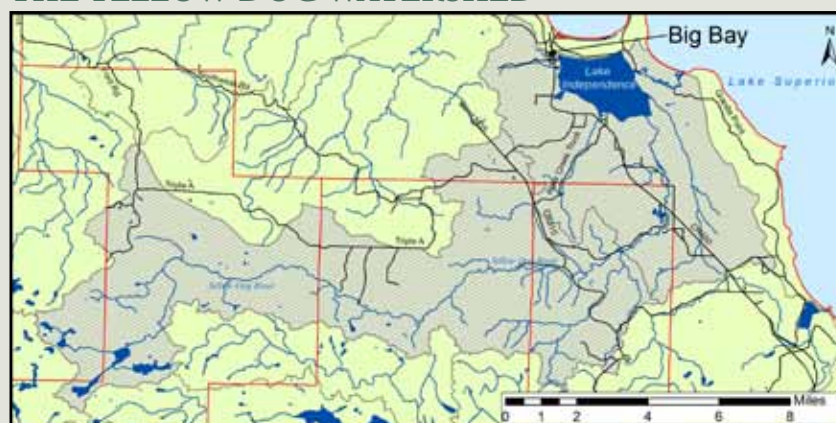
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Hills Falls

Photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

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Top photo Eyeball Falls © Jeremiah Eagle Eye



Mining Update

By Cynthia Pryor

Last year hundreds of people were determined to be heard at an EPA Public Hearing held in Marquette, MI – expressing concerns over the building of County Road 595 from the Rio Tinto Eagle Mine to their facility in Humboldt. Despite huge governmental support of the proposed haul road, a self-educated and articulate public thought otherwise. The road proposal which would have impacted the wetland complexes of several major waterways, including the Yellow Dog, was defeated and turned back by the EPA, the Army Corp of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – all due to people who cared what happened in their community.

Rio Tinto has applied for two new permits in the last several months – one for Air Quality and the other for Groundwater Discharge. The Department of Environmental Quality held a public hearing on the Air Permit earlier this year and again the people made their voices heard. Rio is proposing the removal of a filtering device from their main ventilation shaft that vents the entire workings of the underground mining process. The comments, both written and in person, were enough to have caused DEQ staff to have not yet issued a ruling on this permit – more than three months later.

By law, Rio Tinto needed to file for a new Groundwater Discharge permit that should have been in place by January 2013. Today they are operating under the conditions of their original permit, which show exceedences in many groundwater constituents like mercury, arsenic, vanadium and pH. They are hoping to raise the permit standards to offset these exceedences and it will take a public, again, to raise objections. Public notices for comment are scheduled to be out in the next month or so.

Meanwhile plans for the upgrade of the road system continue to move forward. A public hearing will be held on Monday, July 1, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. EST at the Marquette County Road Commission Office in Ishpeming. The purpose of the public hearing is to discuss the engineering plans for the Category A Reconstruction and Realignment jobs on County Road 601 (M-95 easterly approximately 0.95 miles) and County Road IAA (Michigamme/Champion Township Line westerly approximately .95 miles). Right of way acquisition is currently taking place and construction will start after the 4th of July holiday.

Today, the Rio Tinto Eagle Mine is a reality on the Yellow Dog Plains. The above ground facility is built, the tunnel is bored deep under Eagle Rock to the ore body and the air shaft that will vent the mine sits on the banks of the Salmon Trout River. But! Rio Tinto, as the second largest mining company in the world, is suffering a huge financial set back that has called for the selling of many of their mining assets around the world. In response to a \$45 billion dollar shortfall, several projects have been put under review for cost-cutting purposes and the Eagle Mine is one of them. Obviously, this ore body is rich and important to Rio Tinto, but the corporate headquarters in London has forced a delay of at least one year and maybe more on this project.

The public and people of the this region need to still be engaged – not in protest so much, but in the clear voicing of our concerns of a company, in financial difficulty, that continues to impose their will on our communities. We must continue to understand the issues as they come up and be prepared to speak about them. Thank you for not sitting silent.

Top photo Eagle Mine © Jeremiah Eagle Eye



Yellow Dog River Watershed Planning Project

A community planning project is underway to determine the goals and priorities of the Yellow Dog River watershed. The main task is to create a document that will be approved by the DEQ to define the actions needed to protect the watershed from known and potential pollutants and to restore the watershed in critical areas where there are problems. So far, stakeholder priorities include but are not limited to: sedimentation reduction, culvert replacement, and invasive species management. On average, watershed management plans take 15-18 months to create. The project is funded by \$4,500 from Freshwater Future and more recently \$3,000 from Patagonia's Environmental Grants Program. Our steering committee is currently reviewing an initial draft of the plan on an online Wikispace. The project will consist of three phases, and we are moving into phase II and will be accepting input from stakeholders. For more information and to become a stakeholder please contact lead project coordinator Mindy Otto, mindy@yellowdogwatershed.org or go to www.yellowdogwatershed.org/blog/wmp/

USGS to Monitor Yellow Dog Plains

On April 18, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community entered into a Cooperative Water Agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to collect water quality data on the Yellow Dog Plains for four years from 2013 to 2016 and a report of their findings will be released in 2017. Work on this agreement has been commencing since early 2012. Concerns about the potential for the introduction and migration of contaminants into tributaries and wetlands of the Yellow Dog Plains were the impetus in getting this agreement going. The impacts which could create this contamination include: mineral exploration drilling, Eagle

Mine, the construction and enhancement of roads, and increased truck traffic. Several groups, including the tribe, YDWP, and the Huron Mountain Club (HMC) discussed the best available science in regards to collecting water quality data. The potential contamination motivated the tribe to seek the assistance from the USGS which is widely considered the Nation's premiere science agency. Data has been collected on the Yellow Dog Plains since 2002 by numerous entities, including YDWP. Additionally, there is already a network of USGS stream gauges on both the Yellow Dog and Salmon-Trout Rivers that take real time readings - see <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/mi/nwis/rt>. Emily Whittaker remarks, "We are excited to have the USGS become more involved. Their data is rarely contested since it is collected by an unbiased party using the highest level of science available. That is exactly what we need in order to protect the area from contamination." HMC, a long-time supporting conservation and landholding organization, will assist with the funding of the USGS program. The KBIC Tribal Council authorized a USGS Joint Funding Agreement on March 28, 2013 to carry out the program.

River Network IMPACT Capacity Building Grant

With support from Freshwater Future through the River Network the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve identified aspects of our organization that could benefit from capacity building projects. The River Network approved our request for \$1,500 to purchase a server, projector, screen and webcam to implement our plans. The server will make operations more efficient by allowing our staff to access files remotely. Furthermore the presentation equipment and webcam will allow us to give presentations and group video-conference for professional development and networking. We are excited to make these changes.

Photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

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New Executive Director Hired

The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve is proud to announce the appointment of our new Executive Director, Melinda Otto. As of May 16, 2013 Melinda (Mindy) has taken the full role as Executive Director. Mindy has been going through intensive training at YDWP to prepare her for this endeavor.



Above: Mindy Otto collecting macroinvertebrates on the Yellow Dog for a stream survey.

Mindy said, "It's not every day that your dream job comes to you. I am deeply inspired to take on this important work"

YDWP's outgoing Executive Director, Emily Whittaker, led the organization for the last five years, and will be taking on a new role with YDWP as Special Projects Manager. Whittaker served as Executive Director since the fall of 2008 and succeeded in building the organization's capacity.

YDWP grew its budget, hired more staff, and strengthened programs aimed at protecting the condition of the watershed. "This place means so much to me and I felt that serving as Director was an honor," says Whittaker.

Emily will stay on as a semi-part time Special Projects Manager. "There are 1 or 2 projects that are starting up now that I will be devoting all of my YDWP time to and they are both very exciting." To read more go to www.yellowdogwatershed.org.

Yellow Dog Staff Member Teaches a Workshop for Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW)

Nine women from all over Michigan came to the Yellow Dog River to learn about stream health, and the work we do at The Preserve. The event was part of program called Becoming an Outdoors Woman, which is offered through the Michigan DNR. The DNR offers the event twice each year. Most states offer BOW programs which are available to women 18 and older. The programs include: hunting, fishing, backpacking, shooting sports, canoeing and many



Photo courtesy of Christy Budnick

more outdoor recreational activities. Christy Budnick, the YDWP Education Coordinator, explained the stream survey process and the women learned about habitats for aquatic life and collected samples of macroinvertebrates. Surveys on the Yellow Dog River will continue through June. Please contact christy@yellowdogwatershed.org or call 906-345-9223 for more information and to volunteer!

Top photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

Wilderness Yoga Retreat

Join us this summer to relax and rejuvenate both body and spirit in the peace of the forest and waters of the Yellow Dog River and its tributaries. The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve will sponsor its first week-end wilderness yoga retreat August 24th- 25th 2013. Yoga classes will be led by Sivananda certified yoga instructors Alexandra Kralova Zender and Kalil Zender. All levels of yoga practitioners are welcome, and advanced asana workshop will be available in the afternoons. In addition to yoga, participants may also take advantage of morning meditation and afternoon workshops or activities including Tai Chi with instructor Jen Silverston, poetry writing with Alex Gubbins, fly fishing with local experts, and guided hikes along the Yellow Dog River. Vegetarian meals and tent sites will be provided (please contact Rochelle Dale at 906-362-8521 with any special dietary needs). Primitive showers and facilities will be on site. Tents will also be available for loan upon request.

The cost of the week-end is \$200.00 and all proceeds go to the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve in the interest of land and river corridor preservation. Register by enclosing your check in the envelope provided or visit our website. Be sure to register early as accommodations are limited. The first two registrants will receive a free massage by



Photo courtesy of the Zender/Dale family

Certified Massage Therapist Christy Budnick, who will be set up for the week-end and offer massage for other participants for an additional fee. Registration deadline is August 9th. Set up begins Friday, August 23. Please visit the YDWP website for more information.



www.yellowdogwatershed.org/blog/yoga

McCormick Wilderness Wetland Restoration

YDWP has received a grant from the National Forest Foundation to restore the health of sensitive wetlands in the McCormick Wilderness Area by removing non-native invasive plants and reseeding treated areas with native species. These wetlands provide habitat for several varieties of rare, threatened, and endangered plants and should be protected for this reason. The project will continue to eradicate European Swamp Thistle in particular, the prominent invasive plant species in the wilderness's wetlands. This plant is an aggressive and prolific colonizer and is out competing many native plants. We will remove these invasive plant communities through manual pulling and transport it out of the area to a proper disposal area. We will then plant a variety of plants that are known to be native to this ecosystem. Staff and volunteers will collect pertinent information using approved reporting criteria and analyze the data to evaluate success. By doing this, we

will effectively reduce the invasive plant population and increase these wetland's ability to support native species.

Our project aims to have a wide reach within the local communities in order to continue to build a sustaining, long term effort to protect this area. Multiple community groups will be participating throughout the project on various levels, including youth and Native American groups. Throughout the project, we will increase the level of awareness about protecting wetlands from invasive plants by reaching out to the community in numerous ways. Results will be shared through social media, printed publications, and public presentations. We received \$5000 to achieve our goal of restoring and protecting wetland habitat. Field work will take place June 15 to September 1, 2013. If you are interested in volunteering for this project please contact us at the office 906-345-9223.

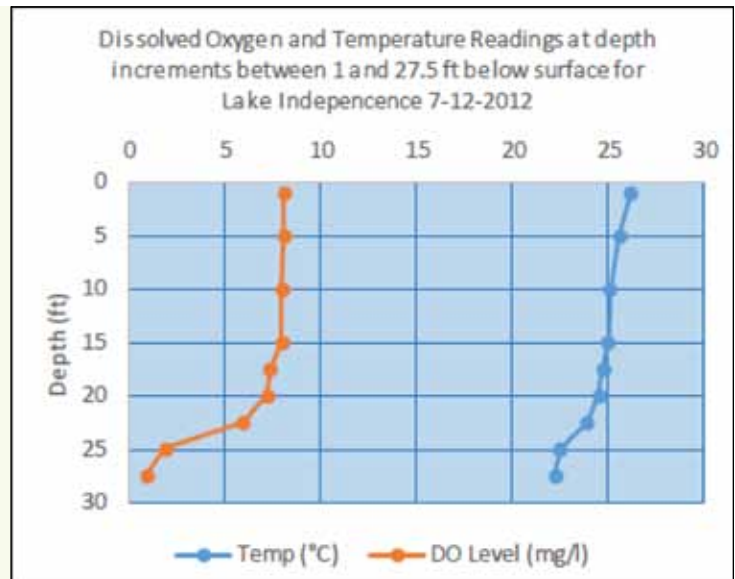
Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program

The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve is enrolled in the MiCorps Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program. The program goal is to provide baseline water quality data for lakes in Michigan and to educate residents about water conditions while building support. The program aims to provide an assessment of lake eutrophication at the end of each season. Lake eutrophication, is a natural aging process which occurs through the gradual accumulation of nutrients, increasing productivity, and a slow filling in of the lake basin with accumulated sediments, silt and muck. Although the process is naturally occurring, humans can speed it up. Lake Independence monitoring constituents include: total phosphorus, chlorophyll, clarity, dissolved oxygen and temperature. These constituents, when measured consistently over time, can generate the Trophic State Index, which is a precise method of describing the productivity of a lake with a numerical index calculated directly from water quality data. The TSI expresses lake productivity on a continuous scale from 0 to 100, with increasing numbers indicating more eutrophic conditions. In other words the continuum progresses from very good to very poor. The leading cause of human-influenced eutrophication, or cultural eutrophication, is contamination by excessive inputs of nutrient, usually nitrogen or phosphorus. Some of the sources of excess nutrients include: runoff from lawns, farm fields and pastures, discharges from septic tanks, and emissions from combustion. All CLMP measurements and samples are collected in the deepest basin of the lake.

The lake shows less stratified temperature in the spring and fall whereas the mid-July graphs show more distinctly colder and less oxygenated bottom depths. As a result of 2012 sampling, the two Trophic State Indices classify the lake as mesotrophic, which is a measure of mid productivity indicating a shallow lake with clear water, some amount of aquatic growth, and generally sufficient dissolved oxygen in the cool, deep-bottom water. The CLMP dissolved oxygen and temperature graphs have classified Lake Independence as a "shallow mesotrophic lake that does not maintain summer stratification." Lake Independence does not maintain stratification of temperature and dissolved oxygen levels and is instead continuously mixed by summer storms because the lake is so shallow. In conclusion the CLMP assessment between 2011 and 2012 does not indicate a state of productivity that is excessively eutrophic. More at www.yellowdogwatershed.org/blog/programs/clmp/

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Grant

YDWP recently received \$2,500 from the Michigan Fly Fishing Club for trout habitat restoration on the Yellow



A mid-July graph shows colder and less oxygenated bottom depths which will be less distinctly stratified in the spring and fall.

Dog River. YDWP staff will work with local community volunteer organizations to install bank stabilization mechanisms and weirs to reduce sedimentation. Currently, sedimentation is the main threat to the local trout population of the Yellow Dog River. Some sedimentation is natural, but many sites have been impacted by human activity, such as building roads too close to the river's edge or sustained foot traffic in areas that are unstable. The amount of sediment that has entered the stream over time has filled in many of the deep pools on the lower stretch of river. Deep pools are critical for trout because they provide refuge during temperature extremes. Also, the substrate has changed significantly over time from coarse gravel to pure sand which impacts fish spawning and reduces the habitat for macroinvertebrates which are food for fish. Through this grant the YDWP will: 1. Reduce the amount of sediment entering the stream that is filling in deep pools, 2. Increase the amount of coarse substrate necessary for successful spawning, 3. Increase the amount of deep pools for trout to use, 4. Provide ample opportunity for community members and organizations to be meaningfully involved in the process.



Beautiful shot of Lake Independence surrounded by Lake Superior - May 10, 2013 © Jeremiah Eagle Eye



Bothwell Middle School Students Visit the Yellow Dog

The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve staff visited the Yellow Dog River with thirty Bothwell Middle School fifth graders to look at native plants and aquatic life. The students got to take part in a demonstration macroinvertebrate



Bothwell Middle School fifth-graders pick out macroinvertebrates collected from the Yellow Dog River. (Photo by Jackie Stark) © Mining Journal

stream survey to assess the water quality in the Yellow Dog River in May. The students were studying life sciences and making connections with other sciences as well. At the site, Emily Whittaker lead students on a native plants walk to challenge students to identify as many native plants as they could. "The day was a great success and the students were very fun to work with" said Mindy Otto. The Mining Journal came to the site and released a story about the event which you can read about on the www.miningjournal.net if you search for Yellow Dog Adventure. The day was funded by a grant from the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition.

Top photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

Salmon Trout Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program

The second season of the Salmon Trout Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program is coming to an end. We were able to work around conditions such like high water, severely eroded roadways and the first mosquito hatch. Like other watersheds in the state we faced a high water issue in late spring. Our river looked like the photo above in late May which forced us to set back out spring sampling dates to wait for safe conditions. We are so grateful for everyone that has contributed to this project. Special thanks goes out to Carla Gregory, Jan Zender, Rochelle Dale, and Sven and Marcia Gonstead for contributing vehicles or extra time to make the project happen. As for the results, so far the six



From left, Volunteers Adam Magnuson, Dan Marchky, and Dan Magnuson at the West Branch of the Salmon Trout

sites sampled have received excellent water quality scores but we have not yet sampled the Snake Creek or the Clear Creek yet. We will hope to see that trend continue.

Don't Forget to recycle your batteries! Our program has battery drop sites in Marquette, Republic, Ishpeming and Gwinn. The latest new site is the Peter White Public Library.



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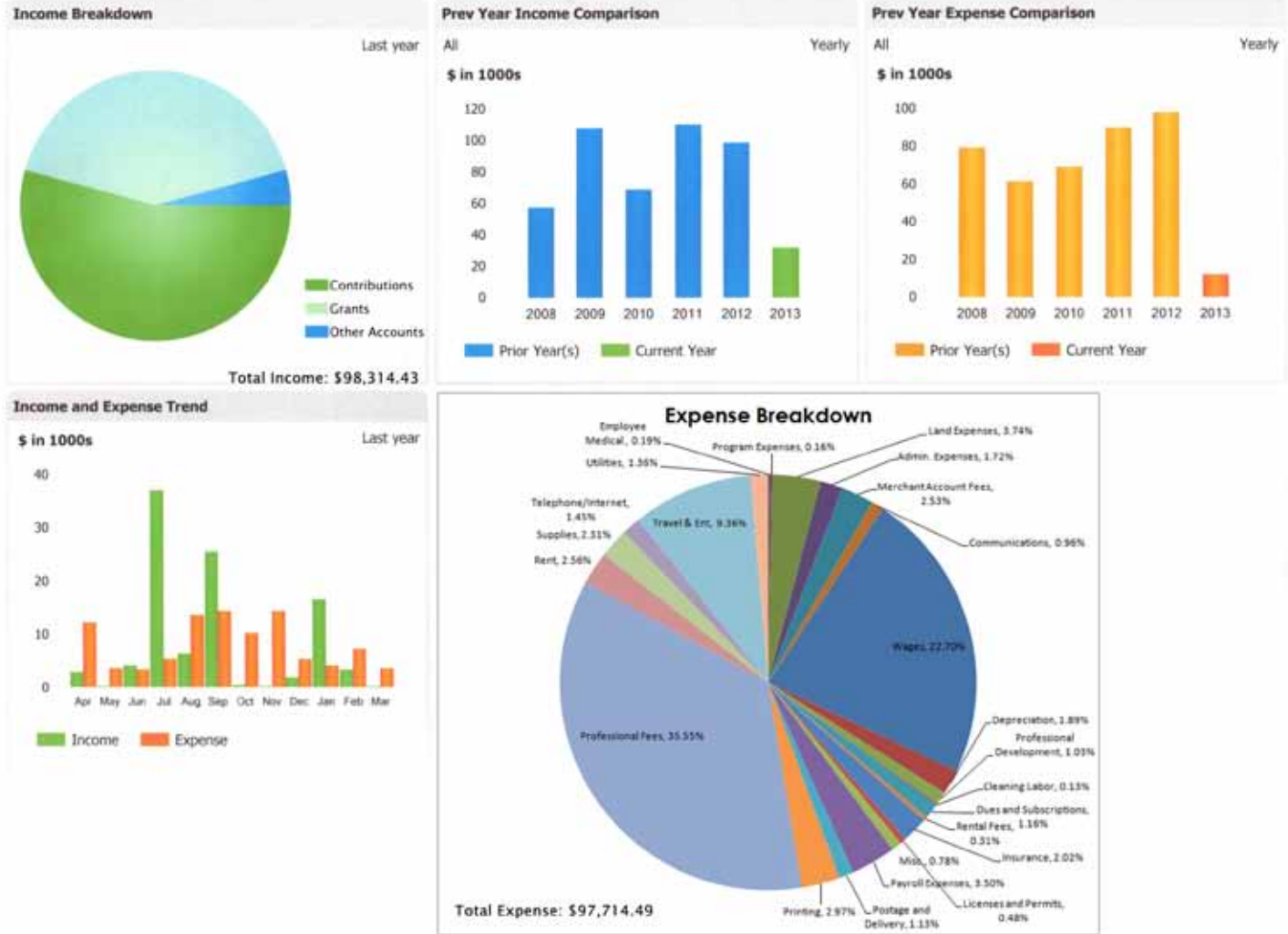
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Company Snapshot - Last Fiscal Year April 2012 through March 2013



Company Snapshot Narrative Breakdown

Overall the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve is doing well with 3 part time employees and one semi-part time employee. We receive 54% of our income from donor contributions, 42% of our income from grants, 1.8% admin income, 1.4% from fundraising activities and the rest is miscellaneous and interest. The YDWP budget has expanded since 2008 and we are off to a great start in the new fiscal year (April 2013 through March 2014). The majority of our expenses for the last fiscal year went towards professional fees which include: lab fees and contracted professional work. The second main expense is wages for our employees. Yellow Dog Staff and dedicated supporters attend a few conferences each year which fall under our travel and entertainment expenses. Other main expenses include: land expenses, rent, depreciation, merchant accounts and payroll expenses.

Grant Received from Norcross Foundation

The Preserve has received a \$2,000 grant from the

Norcross Foundation to purchase equipment to make our data collection systems more efficient and to conduct sedimentation monitoring. Part of the funds will be used to purchase tablets with hard waterproof cases to take out in the field and will be first used in the McCormick Wilderness Area for the wetland restoration project. The tablets will be installed with specialized data entry apps so volunteers can use them to enter data which will then be easy to upload into our databases. The tablets will also have GPS and photo capabilities so data collection will all be contained in one device for easy accessibility and portability. Other funds from the grant will be used to purchase a transect and rod for sedimentation monitoring. Sedimentation is a natural process that occurs when stream banks slowly erode into the waterways. However, this process has been accelerated by human activities such as: increased erosion in high activity areas, driving through fords, and impaired road/stream crossings. Quantifying the sediment will enable YDWP to apply for funds to restore critical areas that are contributing the most sediment to the stream.

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12/7/12 to 6/7/13

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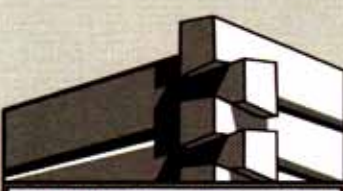
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Hills Falls raging © Jeremiah Eagle Eye



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