

THE HOWL



YELLOW DOG
Watershed Preserve

WINTER 2014

BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 1

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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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Electronic Version of Newsletter available at

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On the Cover:

PHOTO CONTEST WINNER

Fishing in the Sunset
Photo © Chauncey Moran

Look!
New Logo!



PHOTO CONTEST RUNNER UP
The Caveman
Photo © Marc Van Grinsven



PHOTO CONTEST RUNNER UP
The Owl
Photo © Wendy Johnson

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2. FILL OUT THE
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YOU CAN
BE PART OF THE
SOLUTION!

LAND CONSERVATION IN THE WATERSHED

BY EMILY WHITTAKER

Many people forget that our organization began mainly as a land trust. We worked on setting aside parcels that were important for ecological reasons as well as those that were a priority for the community. Since 1995, we have undertaken 5 land campaigns and succeeded every time. Our Land Preservation Program has yielded permanent protection of 412 acres in both the Salmon-Trout and Yellow Dog River watersheds. This acreage contains waterfalls, wetlands, headwaters, and key access points to other protected areas. You can read more about all of our preserves on our website: <http://www.yellowdogwatershed.org/blog/programs/land-conservation/>.

We continue to hold this program as a high priority for this organization. It yields real results of tangible protection and there are many places that are threatened in our watershed. We are working on several initiatives under this program that are outlined below:

Watershed Management Plan This project outlines what issues the watershed is facing and how we can solve them. Land preservation is certainly part of that discussion and YDWP has created a section in the WMP that outlines which areas are of highest priority to set aside. This allows us to move forward with the stakeholders with an agreed upon focus for land acquisition.

Community Forest YDWP is working on the initial steps in order to establish a Community Forest in the watershed. A Community Forest is a parcel of land that is set aside specifically because it is used by many community groups. The loss of that parcel to development would reduce the community's ability to enjoy that natural area. We have identified an area that is of utmost importance to the community and is also identified in the WMP as the highest priority for a land acquisition target. YDWP is working with several community groups

on applying for funding to start a Community Forest.

Life Estate Deeds YDWP is also working on a project in which a landowner is interested in passing their property on to our group once they have passed away. This is a great mechanism to continue to own your property while having the assurance that it will be cared for in the future. The life estate mechanism is something to consider if you are interested in passing your property on for conservation. Contact Emily at emily@yellowdogwatershed.org if you are interested in this tool for land conservation.

YELLOW DOG RIVER WATERSHED PLANNING WELL-UNDERWAY

BY MINDY OTTO

YDWP has been working on a large community-based planning project since January 2013. The purpose of the project is to create a DEQ-approved document to quantify and prioritize known and potential water pollution sources and causes in the Yellow Dog Watershed and to create plans to address this pollution. To address these topics we have held 2 community meetings and opened up an online discussion board for the steering committee to discuss stages of the plan's development.

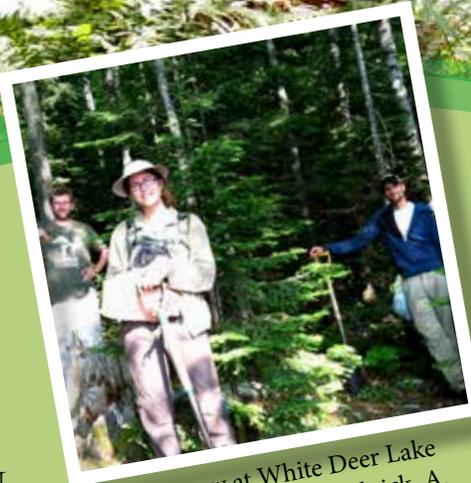
At this point we are working with about 25 stakeholders representing a variety of state and local environmental conservation organizations, individual and corporate landowners in the watershed as well as concerned citizens and activists. Our steering committee met in October at the Peter White Public Library to discuss the watershed and voice concerns. The plan is still under development and will be used to implement best management practices where there are issues of concern. There will eventually be a written document made available to the public for educational purposes, and we intend to consider revising it every five years.



Photo of Yellow Dog River © Emily Whittaker



CHECK OUT the short informational video about our thistle project filmed by YDWP field technician, Nathan Meadows. Find the link on our twitter page here: twitter.com/yellowdogUP



Field crew at White Deer Lake (L-R) D. Shalley, C. Budnick, A. Ubbelohde



Program Coordinator Christy Budnick
Photo © Nathan Meadows

McCORMICK WILDERNESS WETLAND RESTORATION

BY CHRISTY BUDNICK

In 2009, with a grant from the National Forest Foundation, YDWP sent a field crew to the McCormick Wilderness Area to survey and prioritize the impact of all non-native invasive species (NNIS). The European Swamp Thistle, *Cirsium palustre*, had become well-established in sensitive wetland areas and was the largest threat to native ecosystems due to its tendency to crowd out other plants and reproduce rapidly. The swamp thistle was selected as the priority invasive species of concern. In 2011, YDWP received another grant from the National Forest Foundation to begin removing *Cirsium palustre*. With great success, we removed thistles from acres of threatened wetlands and trails. When we returned to the McCormick in 2012 we saw a decrease in the population, but still the number of plants far exceeded any other invasive species in that area. So, in 2013 we applied for and received another grant from the National Forest Foundation to continue with the ongoing project.



Volunteer Guinevere Himes with the Marquette 4-H Teen Wetlands Team in the McCormick Wilderness Area

the Superior Watershed Partnership who also helped organize workdays with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Youth Crew and the Central Upper Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area. We would also like to thank volunteer Dan Cardin of Red Beard Technologies for helping us use innovative technology to collect field information. With a grant from the Norcross Foundation we purchased equipment to collect non-native invasive species location and infestation data remotely. The DataDroid app tabulated our database on a server and allowed us to download the information instantly, sparing us days of data entry.

YDWP has determined that, together, we have removed about 314,179 square feet of non-native invasive swamp thistle, which is more than 7 acres of trails and wetlands, and approximately 10,000 plants! Additionally, we replanted over 2.5 acres of trails and wetlands with native seed to repair the disturbed soil and increase habitat for bees and spiders. The native seed was specifically chosen for the McCormick wetlands and trails by the Ottawa National Forest, who also donated all of the trail seed for this project. We would like to thank all of our volunteers and partners for their hard work and dedication to keeping the U.P. as wild and beautiful as possible. If you would like more information please contact us. We will be looking for volunteers to help with the next season soon.

Over the 2013 season, numerous partners and volunteer groups joined our crew. We would really like to thank participating groups, which included: 4-H Teen Wetlands Team, Cedar Tree Institute, Patagonia, Tree Musketeers, Friends of the McCormick, the Zender & Dale family, Nathan Meadows, and

 **WE STILL COLLECT ECONO FOODS RECEIPTS FOR THEIR 1% GIVE BACK PROGRAM!**

Photos © Christy Budnick and Mindy Otto

VOLUNTEER STREAM MONITORING PROGRAMS

BY CHRISTY BUDNICK

This fall the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve successfully completed our bi-annual survey of the Yellow Dog River and Salmon Trout River. We would like to give a huge thank-you to our amazing volunteers who donated their time and have been dedicated to our cause. The volunteers collected data at 17 sites along the Yellow Dog River, the Salmon Trout River and connected tributaries. This fall the total number of sites on the Yellow Dog River has been reduced from 20 sites to 10 sites for bi-annual monitoring, while maintaining the existing 8 sites on the Salmon Trout River. This makes the total number of sites 18. This action was accepted by our Yellow Dog River Watershed Steering Committee and our Board of Directors to make the program more feasible. In order to reach some of these sites, hiking into the wilderness was sometimes necessary. Volunteers were willing to hike up to 3 1/2 miles carrying equipment. We were not able to monitor one site on Alder Creek because it was below CR 550 bridge construction throughout our sampling season.

Volunteers are sent into the river in groups to collect macroinvertebrates from specific habitats following the Michigan Clean Water Corps protocol. After the bugs are collected they are sorted and species are counted. Different bugs thrive in different levels of water cleanliness. For example, mayflies and stoneflies are in the sensitive category, which means they need really clean water to survive. On the other hand, leeches and aquatic worms can live in just about anything so they are in the tolerant category. After we sort all of the bugs, we use the MiCorps index calculations to determine a stream quality score for the site, which may be: poor, fair, good or excellent. The stream quality scores indicate that the Yellow Dog and Salmon Trout Rivers are healthy at this point. However, it is important to note that the Salmon Trout has only been monitored for three seasons which is not yet a complete analysis according to our Quality Assurance Project Plan. This year out of 8 sites on the Salmon Trout, we had: 4 excellent sites, 3 good sites, and one fair site. We have determined that the 'fair' site is in recovery from a culvert and road washout that happened in 2011, when a large amount of sediment washed downstream and filled in some of the macro invertebrate

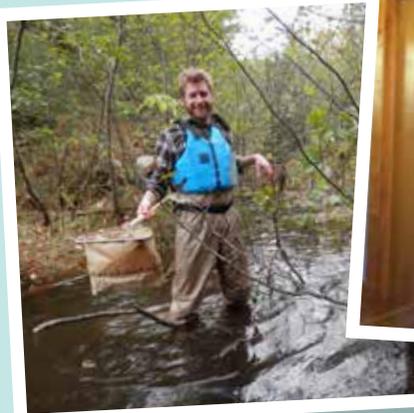
habitats. Over the last three collections at this site, the numbers have been slowly and consistently improving. This means that the health of the stream at that site is slowly improving. For 9 out of 10 sites on the Yellow Dog, we had: 5 excellent sites, 3 good sites, and one fair site. The site that scored fair has a ford going through it and is located on the Little Pup, a tributary of the Yellow Dog. Recent heavy logging and traffic could have caused a loss of ideal habitat conditions but our analysis is not yet conclusive. We will continue bi-annual monitoring of all 18 sites and work with local decision-makers to address concerns.

This year a few of our volunteers stepped up and donated extra time to become volunteer crew leaders for the stream monitoring programs. Leaders were responsible for coordinating their group on the collection day, completing datasheets, and increasing their knowledge and ability to identify the bugs. We would really like to thank these honorary individuals for going above and beyond the call of duty, they

are: Carla Gregory, Adam Magnuson, Declan Shalley, Reed Saam and Joe Parks! The grant we received from MiCorps to monitor the Salmon Trout River was designed to train volunteers to take crew leader positions who will eventually run the fieldwork portion of the project. Yellow Dog staff will maintain the administrative side as well as analyze and house the data. If you would like to see how the Salmon Trout River measures up to other streams in Michigan, visit: <http://www.micorps.net/>. Click on data exchange and search for Salmon Trout. To learn more about the Yellow Dog River please contact us. With one more training session to go in the spring of 2014 our program is succeeding with the perseverance of our wonderful volunteers! Thanks again for a great season!



Volunteer Monitoring Training Day at the Yellow Dog River



Volunteer Leader Declan Shalley

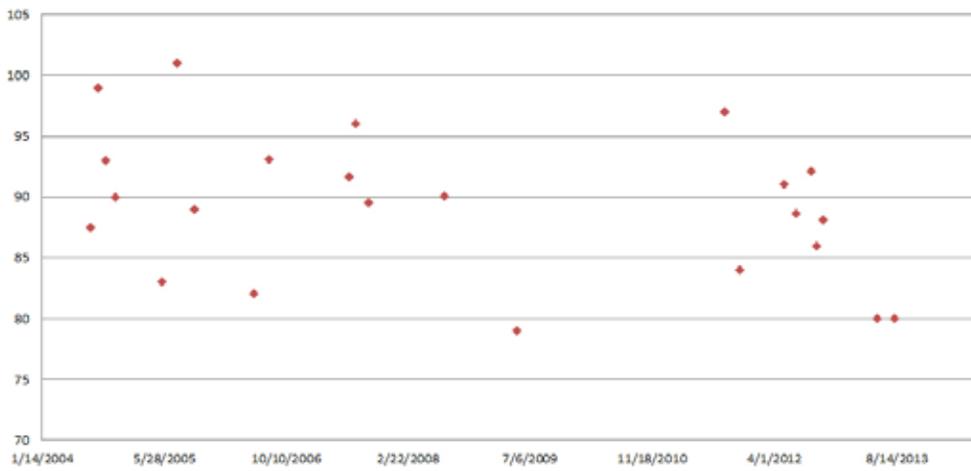


Volunteer Leader Carla Gregory



(L-R) D. Shalley, R. Saam, P. Tangora in the Yellow Dog River, catching macroinvertebrates

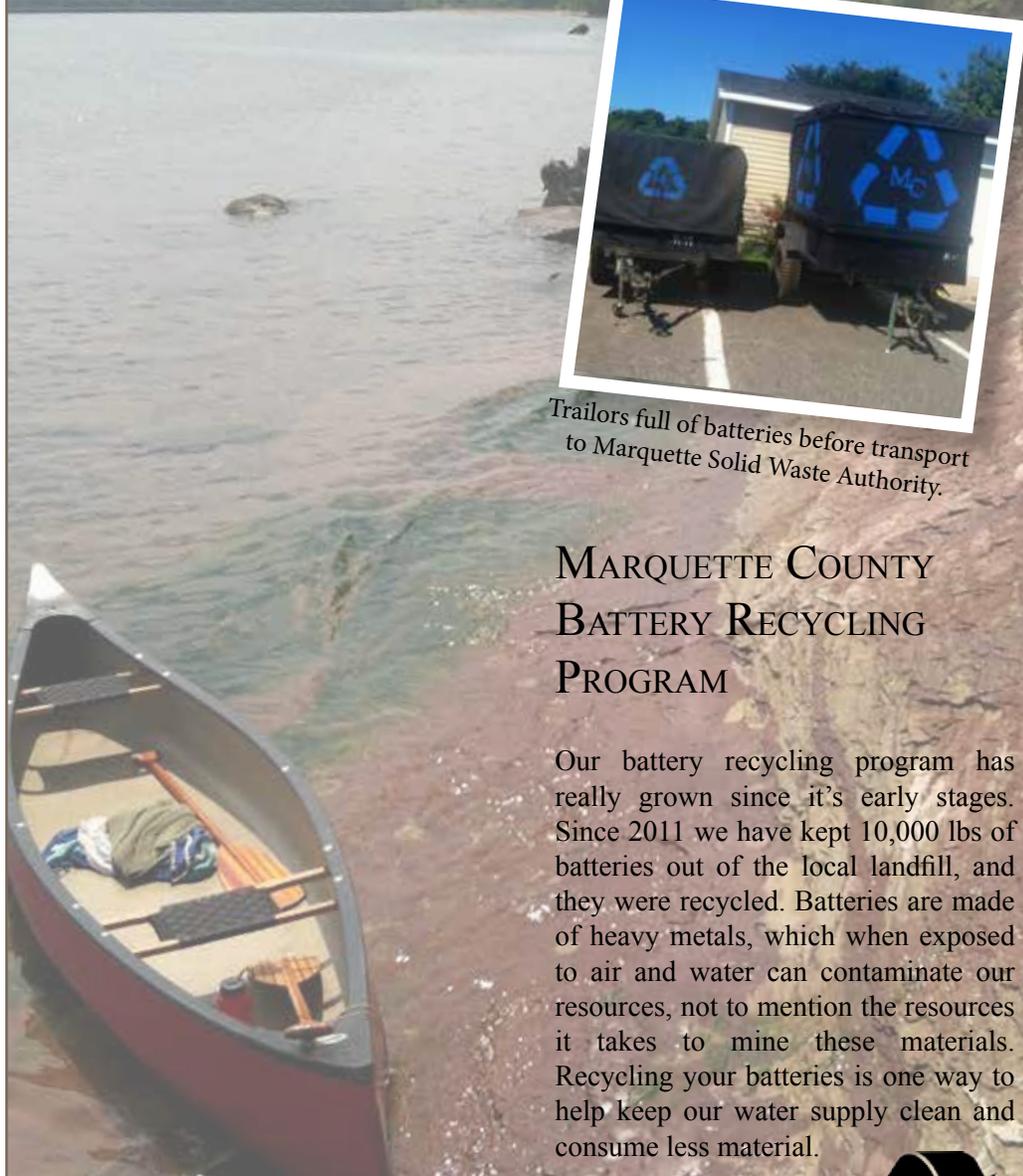
Specific Conductance (uS/cm) Over time at the Salmon Trout River Middle Branch (USGS Gauge Station)



YELLOW DOG AND USGS SURFACE WATER SAMPLING INITIAL COMPARISON FROM THE YELLOW DOG PLAINS

Since 2004 Yellow Dog has compiled data from professional consultants who conducted chemical analysis of the surface waters at 14 sites on the plains including many of the Salmon Trout Springs in partnership with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC). The USGS entered into a Cooperative Water Agreement with KBIC after preparing a scope of work that was reviewed by program partners YDWP and the Huron Mountain Club. The program will run from 2013 to 2016 and a report will be furnished upon completion.

YDWP has been studying some of their results and compared them to data that was collected previously. Our analysis of the USGS results from the first few sampling sessions indicates that our data points are very similar, however, a larger dataset will be needed over time in order to confirm this.



Trailers full of batteries before transport to Marquette Solid Waste Authority.

MARQUETTE COUNTY BATTERY RECYCLING PROGRAM

Our battery recycling program has really grown since it's early stages. Since 2011 we have kept 10,000 lbs of batteries out of the local landfill, and they were recycled. Batteries are made of heavy metals, which when exposed to air and water can contaminate our resources, not to mention the resources it takes to mine these materials. Recycling your batteries is one way to help keep our water supply clean and consume less material.

DON'T FORGET TO RECYCLE YOUR BATTERIES! OUR PROGRAM HAS BATTERY DROP SITES IN MARQUETTE, REPUBLIC, ISHPEMING AND GWINN. ALSO, WE ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS! PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND THE ADDRESS OF YOUR NEAREST DROP SITE.



Photo: North of Squaw Beach in Big Bay © Mindy Otto

ROAD CONSTRUCTION PLANNED ON THE YELLOW DOG PLAINS

THE COUNTY ROAD AAA/COUNTY ROAD 510
SAGA

For the past few years, the conversation about transporting ore from the Eagle Mine in northern Marquette County has been an uncertain struggle at best. Now more recently, the situation has begun to involve property owners on CRAAA/510, multiple levels of local government, citizen activist groups, the Marquette County Road Commission, and the mine ownership. The story is not so different from the CR595 haul road story that is only too recently in the past, and not entirely dead and gone. Dialogue between differing parties has been tense at hearings with the road commission or Powell Township and the public has expressed concerns about safety, wildlife, and aesthetics on the road corridor.

County Road 550 was resurfaced over the summer of 2013, and is the designated route to haul ore from Eagle Mine to the Humboldt Mill. Rio Tinto began the project and the funding for it was later transferred to Lundin Mining Co. The additional road work for the Triple A road and County Road 510 remained unplanned until this past fall. In September we learned of the plan to build new sections of road instead of upgrade County Road 510 and County Road AAA to a paved 55mph Class A highway with passing lanes. Some very small sections of the old road are planned to be kept but the majority of the route would be completely new road which will cut across private property. According to the Road Commission, the road work will cost around \$20.8 million dollars and will be paid for entirely by “private” funds. Events have transpired rapidly and the Marquette County Road Commission has been holding regular special meetings to approve the construction. Work plans for the road were made public in late September and the plans were approved at 70% complete by November.

Where the road deviates from the existing route, some landowners could be facing eminent domain of their land for the highway. In Michigan, it is illegal to use eminent domain to take property for corporate benefit. Local landowners with property along the route have been outspoken at public meetings demanding direct communication with the decision-makers about their options. Many public comments have been made about the proposed 55 mph speed limit, requesting that the speed be reduced to preserve the safety of the road and the quiet nature of the area.

It is important for the community to keep in mind that once the mine is closed there is no plan in place for maintenance of these new roads that were made to service large trucks. After the life of the mine has passed, public funding would likely be used to maintain the road. YDWP is concerned about public tax dollars being used to maintain a haul route made specifically for Eagle Mine. We urge you to contact both the Marquette County Road Commission and the Marquette County Board of Commissioners. Let them know that tax dollars should not be used toward this project at anytime, especially for ongoing maintenance after the mine is closed.

MINING UPDATE: REVISED GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE PERMIT APPLICATION

Eagle Project, the nickel and copper mine on the Yellow Dog Plains, was purchased by Lundin Mining Company in July 2013. The change in ownership from Rio Tinto to Lundin Mining did not cause any changes in the legal battle with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality over the validity of the mining and groundwater permits. The original four petitioners: YDWP, National Wildlife Federation, Huron Mountain Club, and Keweenaw Bay Indian Community are still waiting to hear the date set for oral arguments in the Michigan Court of Appeals. Eagle Project has also recently submitted a revised groundwater discharge permit application for the mine facility as their original permits expired after 5 years. It is now open for public comment.

The revised permit contains a number of alterations from the original permit document. For example, the MDEQ will now require the mine to monitor uranium levels. However, the requirement is “Report Only,” which means a high concentration of uranium in water samples will still not be a groundwater permit violation. Other changes in the permit include new standards for pH and vanadium in groundwater wells. Also, conditions in the permit allow the mine to request a reduction in monitoring frequency after 6 months of mining the orebody. Yellow Dog has responded to the new application with a request to hold a public hearing on the topic, and the MDEQ has not yet stated whether or not they will fulfill that request. The MDEQ will be accepting public comment on the proposed changes until January 20, 2013. Written comments should be mailed to Jeannette Bailey, Permits Section, Water Bureau, Department of Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 30273, Lansing, Michigan 48909. Or, to submit comments online visit: <http://www.deq.state.mi.us/owis> and search in “Marquette County.”

A UNIQUE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

BY ALEX UBBELOHDE

This past spring I received notice from the company that I work for, Patagonia, that I was approved to do an internship with the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve. I applied to work with them for two reasons. One, I grew up in the UP (Houghton) and was excited for the opportunity to try and give back a little to the area that gave so much to me. Second, having spent over half my life battling a fishing obsession, I have regularly found myself drawn to rivers. Based on my schedule, I was able to spend a week in July and two weeks in October working with them. I worked in Big Bay and in the surrounding watershed, and I was also able to do some remote work for them while back in Chicago, my current home.

From early conversations with Mindy and Emily, I had a basic idea of the work that YDWP did in the field and was excited to help out. On my first trip up, I joined Mindy and a group of volunteers on a project in the McCormick Wilderness doing invasive species removal. I was struck by a couple of things on this project. Foremost was the passion and drive that all of the volunteers had. Pulling European Swamp Thistles is tedious work which entails deseeding them if necessary, digging them up by their roots and hanging them upside down in a tree so their roots can't find a hold again. While I can't remember a total number that we pulled over the 2 days it was definitely in the thousands. I have not been that sore for a while (I blame the city for making me soft). I was also struck by the beauty of that wilderness. I constantly found myself distracted by ducks on the lake, rock formations, pitcher plants, and a variety of other things. They definitely made tedious work enjoyable. If you haven't been, make a point of going (just bring a bug shirt if you go in July).

While my experience in the McCormick was a highlight, many of the other projects I helped with were just as rewarding. Decoding USGS water sample data and transferring it to tables and graphs was one of those, and while I found it enjoyable I doubt that anyone reading this would appreciate a detailed account. The last project that I will talk a little about is the stream survey and macro invertebrate sampling that I was able to assist with. We sampled the aquatic creatures (mostly bugs) in a section of the river and classified them to get an idea of the water quality. The quantity and diversity of life within a section is amazing. Stonefly nymphs, mayfly nymphs, alder fly nymphs, hellgrammites....one could quickly feel like Bubba listing off shrimp dishes in Forrest Gump. I can not do it justice, but luckily YDWP often does the studies with volunteer help so you can experience it for yourself!

I am very grateful that Mindy, Emily and all the rest of the folks who are a part of this great group allowed me to come up and volunteer. While there are many threats to this amazing area, it is encouraging to see this group of passionate, determined, fun-loving people, fighting to protect it.



Alex Ubbelohde holding the YSI meter in the Salmon Trout River E. Branch and downloading data from YDWP's conductivity loggers.

JOIN US!

FOR OUR ANNUAL BACKCOUNTRY SKI

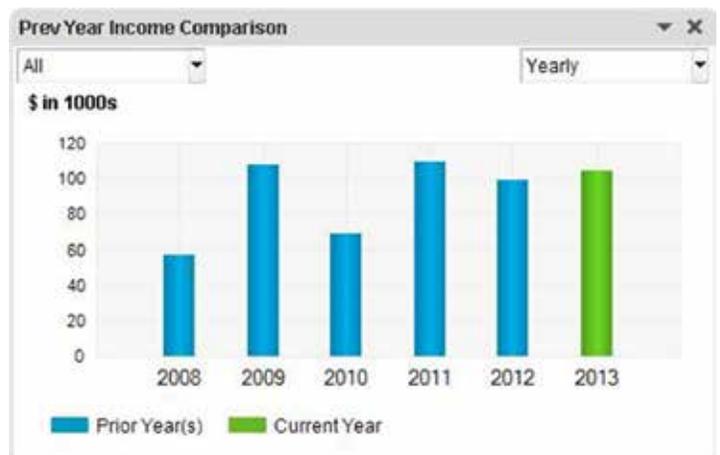
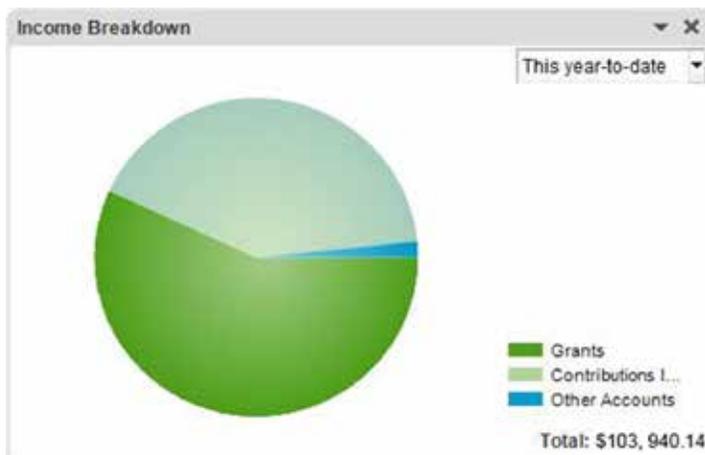
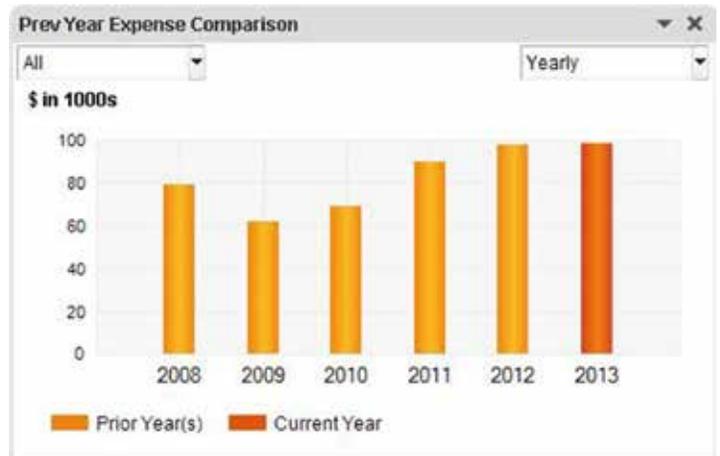
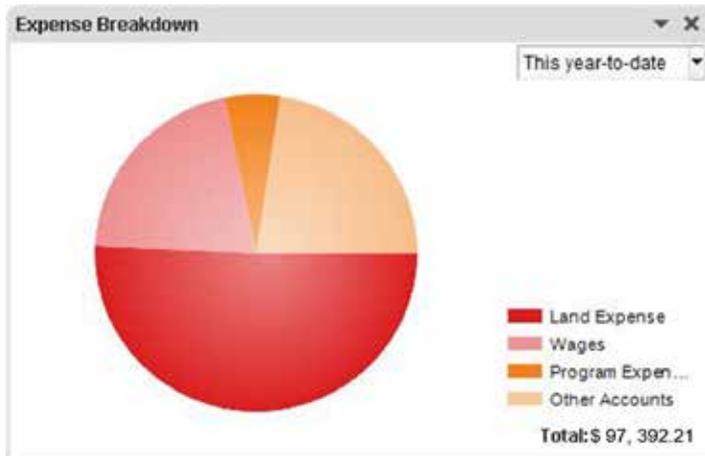
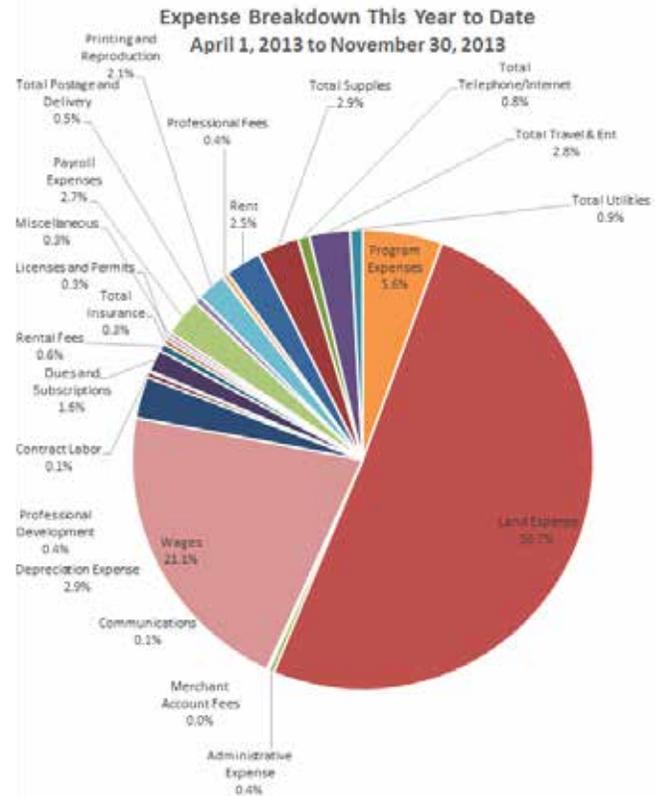
On February 22, 2013 meet at the office at 10 AM and soon we will set out to explore the Yellow Dog wilderness. Bring skis, snacks and water and follow us for some fun! *Donations accepted and \$10 minimum suggested. Intermediate to advanced skiers only. Call (906) 345-9223 to RSVP or for more info. Or, see our website for more information and updates about the event.*



Photo: Ski Trip 2013 near Hills Falls on the Yellow Dog River © Mindy Otto

COMPANY SNAPSHOT NARRATIVE BREAKDOWN

The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve is accomplishing a lot with 3 part-time employees, and one semi part-time employee. Over the past fiscal year-to-date (April 1st through November 30, 2013) we received 55% of our income from grants, 40% from donor contributions, <1% administrative income, 4% from fundraising activities, and <1% is miscellaneous and interest income. The majority of our expenses this fiscal year-to-date have gone towards purchasing land for preservation, followed by wages, and program expenses. Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve purchases high-end equipment to run our programs (depreciation category), such as: computers, handheld GPS devices, and water quality meters. See expense breakdown. Please note this report was created from financial records up to November 30, 2013.



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The Evening of Entertainment and Annual Meeting 2013 at Ore Dock Brewing Company was a success! Nearly 180 people attended. Thank you so much to all who donated, we are so grateful for our community.
 MarquetteMagazine.com photo © Soullenz Photography

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 Gloria Versailles
 Mike Waite
 Raymond R Wales
 Washed Up Soap
 Winter Sky Wool
 Mike and Anita Whittaker
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In memory of Judge Quinnel
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