

The Howl



Fall 2012/Winter 2013

Bi-Annual Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 1



Bald Eagle on Salmon-Trout Bay
Photo taken by John Anderson



From the Board of Directors

George Girod

The word “unprecedented” seems awfully common nowadays. Extreme weather events make us wonder at what is happening with climate change and how it is impacting the areas we dwell in. Last summer I drove from my house near the Yellow Dog River to Marquette. Heading down the road, I found myself on a half-mile stretch with fresh green leaves strewn on the road. I paused to look back and wondered what I was looking at, aside of course from a lot of leaves. Later I learned that a major hail storm hit that very narrow strip of land, leaving other areas nearby totally untouched. Looking at weather events further away, Hurricane Sandy displayed nature’s power upon the East Coast. The damage done was incredible, since this area is not used to seeing hurricanes of this magnitude. Our watershed will endure many weather events in the coming years. Some events may re-sculpt the river bed; depositing sand and other materials. Ecological niches will come, go, and move along its length. Nature has done this since the beginning but gradual historic changes will be played out quicker as weather events become more frequent. Development and extraction activities in the watershed need to take the weather extremes into account during operations. Environmental modeling only make sense when the rules haven’t changed, and our planet has posted new rules. We need to monitor closely and seek explanations for changes we see. We have always done this but now our threats are potentially more damaging. We dare not allow damage to accumulate because prevention, though difficult, is much easier than restoration. We are facing uncharted territory with climate change.

YDWP Awarded Start-up Grant for Watershed Management Plan

Recently YDWP was awarded funding from Freshwater Future, a non-profit group focused supporting other water resource protection organizations throughout the Great Lakes. With the award of \$4,500, we will start the process of creating a Watershed Management Plan (WMP). A WMP is a critical document communities should prepare in order to advocate for protection and restoration of their water resources. With a plan in place, we will be suited to address the multiple concerns we have regarding the watershed. We will follow the established guidelines the U.S. EPA and the MDEQ have for creating these plans to ensure that our project is complete and follows the appropriate standards. YDWP has three main goals for this project: 1) To protect the community from being affected by potential pollution by increasing their capacity, empowering them, and creating a framework for consensus building, 2) Identify environmental and public health concerns of the community and identify ways to resolve those concerns, 3) Ultimately, the project will reduce the level of harmful exposure to the environment and our community by implementing pollution reduction strategies. We are excited and honored by the award from Freshwater Future. This group has supported us well with other grants and internal organizational assistance in the past.

This newsletter comes to you due to the generosity and support from the Indigenous Environmental Network and the Western Mining Action Network. These groups granted YDWP funds to distribute the newsletter, in order to alert our members about the threats to the watershed and what people like you can do.



Salmon-Trout River Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program

YDWP is pleased to let our members know about the establishment of the Salmon-Trout River Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program (STRVSMP). Our staff wrote a grant and it was selected by the Michigan Clean Water Corps for funding. The grant will provide \$7,300 over two years to establish this program. The two main goals of the program are to collect useful scientific information about stream quality, as well as increase the amount of community involvement. With that in mind, our group held a volunteer training in late September to get community members acquainted and ready to help. Thirty-two volunteers attended the training, which included macroinvertebrate collection techniques during a rain soaked outdoor session at the Yellow Dog River, as well as a training at the Thunder Bay Inn covering habitat assessment, macroinvertebrate identification, a pop quiz with prizes and complimentary pizza.



Alec Berghoef collecting macroinvertebrates.

macroinvertebrate organisms collected in a 300 ft section in 30-40 minutes. The East-Branch was rated “Good,” and the Clear Creek was rated “Fair” which could be attributed to sedimentation in the upstream reaches. This program will run continuously and we are very pleased with the quality data collected and the numerous community-minded individuals who took the time to help. Round two of sampling will kick off next spring in May. Contact mindy@yellowdogwatershed.org if you are interested in learning about the river ecosystem.

Once volunteers were ready, the first season of the STRVSMP was kicked off in late September and concluded after two weeks of field work. Volunteers came from Big Bay, Marquette and even Houghton to help collect information about stream health at 8 sites on the river. With the results in, six of the eight sites received an “Excellent” stream quality score based on the number of “Sensitive,” “Somewhat sensitive,” and “Tolerant”



Volunteers gather at Yellow Dog River for training session.

© Jay Borde

Road-Stream Crossing Inventory

Thanks to funds from Freshwater Future, YDWP was able to gain a better understanding of how existing roads are impacting stream health through conducting a Road Stream Crossing Inventory. Over 130 locations where water pass under or through roadways at some time during the year were marked and assessed for how well the crossing worked. The goal is to assess whether aquatic organisms can pass through, if the crossing is causing erosion, and how the accumulation of all the crossings impact the watershed as a whole. The project included gathering data such as GPS coordinates for all crossings, whether they were functioning, if the contributed excessive sediment to the waterway, photo documentation, and more.



The two pictures on the right illustrate the difference between a functioning road stream crossing and a non-function crossing. The top photo shows the crossing mechanism, a culvert, which is large enough to accommodate larger flows, aquatic organism passage, and stabilized banks. The bottom picture is the inside view of a culvert that has many features that make it non-functional. Most importantly, water cannot flow through this crossing mechanism because it is almost entirely plugged with sediment, rocks, and leaves. Instead, water flows over the road during high water, causing large amounts of sediment to wash off the road into adjacent streams and wetlands. We found many of the crossings in the watershed were crushed, plugged, rusted through, or otherwise not functioning. However, some parts of the watershed are well maintained with good crossings which were installed as recently as 2009. This inventory allows us to prioritize problems, locate partners, and eventually fix poor crossings in our watershed.

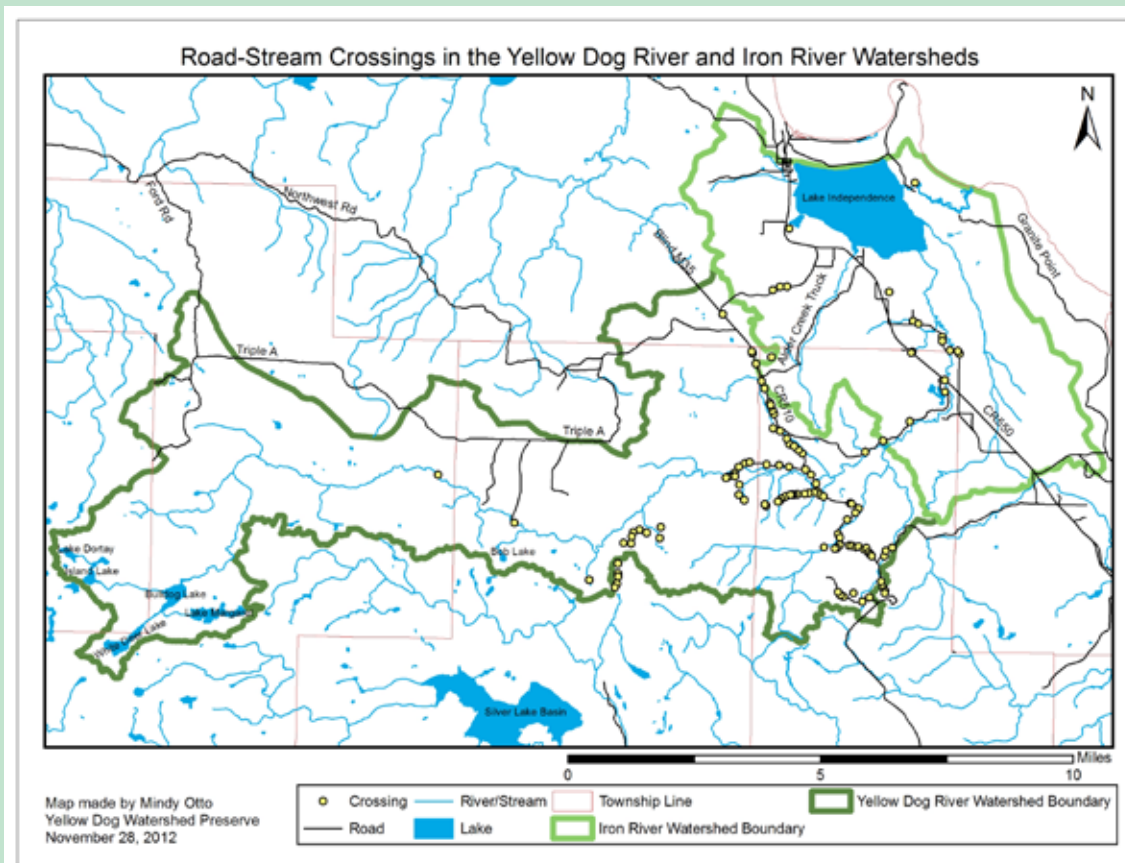




Photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

New York Film Crew Visits YDWP

This October a documentary film crew from New York City made the long trek to Big Bay to talk with YDWP about making a documentary about mining projects near the Great Lakes. The film crew's recent documentary, which was shown at the Calumet Theatre the day before their visit, chronicled the "1913 Massacre" in Calumet, MI. The idea for their latest documentary all started when the filmmakers/directors Ken Ross and Louis V. Galdieri followed the story behind a Woody Guthrie song about striking copper mine workers who were killed in a major disaster in 1913. Seventy-four people died, and fifty-nine were children. The facts of the devastating historical event remain mysterious and the community remains divided in their interpretations. The tag line of the film is, "see what your greed for money has done." The focus of their next film is present-day mining and the social, economic, and political implications of the industry. Excited about the new material, the crew has already begun interviews. On October 9th, the film crew came to Big Bay hoping to capture a story. YDWP's Executive Director, Emily Whittaker, and Assistant Manager, Mindy Otto, led the three filmmakers and their equipment along the Yellow Dog River in the rain to the Hills Falls. After collecting footage from the river, the interviews continued at the Thunder Bay Inn. The crew is working on editing the footage to develop a trailer, which should be out next year. For more information about the filmmakers go to <http://1913massacre.com>.



Film crew members with YDWP
From left to right: Crew assistant Kirk Larson, Film maker Ken Ross, YDWP Executive Director Emily Whittaker, and Film maker Louis Galdieri at Hills Falls on the Yellow Dog River

Switchback Gear Supports Non-Profits Like Us!

Not only is Switchback Gear in Marquette an excellent place to buy outdoor gear, but it is also a great place to support YDWP. Starting this December, you can bring in your used/new outdoor gear and instead of getting the consignment money back when someone buys your items, you can say you want that money donated to YDWP. They will keep track of the funds and send a check when we have some money ready. Thank you Switchback!

DON'T FORGET: WE STILL COLLECT ECONO FOODS RECEIPTS FOR THEIR 1% GIVE BACK PROGRAM!

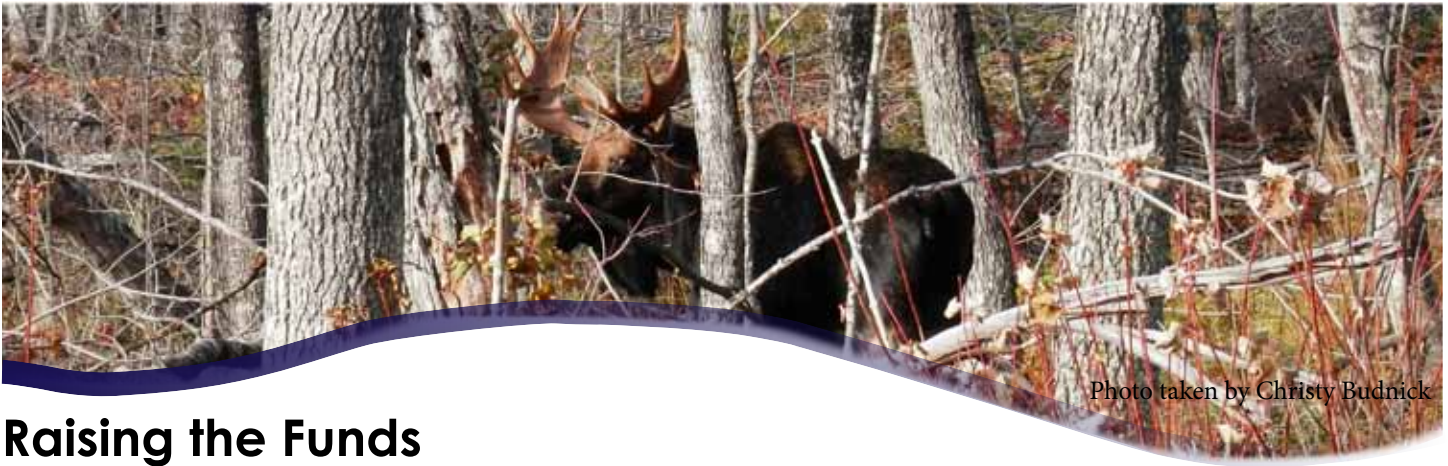


Photo taken by Christy Budnick

Raising the Funds

There are many ways you can help keep the work going that protects the Yellow Dog and Salmon-Trout River watersheds from harm. Here are few new ones to think about.

Planned Giving We have been approached by several members recently about how their legacy might live on through planned giving, so we thought it might be a good idea to bring this up with our membership. Planned giving is something for everyone to think about and comes in several varieties. This type of giving is a specific gift of money, equity, or property that is deferred by the donor to a later date, sometimes as a way to give when someone passes away. One of the most common gifts given through planned giving is the donation of real property. Other ways include the donation of securities, cash, and/or life insurance, to name a few. The benefit of planned giving is that whatever is being donated stays in someone's possession until they pass away, and only then does the asset transfer to a non-profit. Our organization continues to have these conversations with members who are looking at planned giving as a way to continue to help protect this area even after they are gone. If you have any questions, or would like to talk to us about planned giving, call us at 906-345-9223.



Isle Royale Coasters Qwest © Wayne Snyder

Artwork Sale Donation Wayne Snyder is an American author, photographer, illustrator, painter, poet, and conservationist. He has written a number of books about the world of fly fishing including: *The Golden Age* (Rochester Media, 2010), *Why I Fish* (self-published), and *Rivers Of No Return* (Rochester Media, 2012). Last year he created a painting entitled "Isle Royale Coasters Qwest" of a Michigan Coaster Brook Trout, and will be offering prints of this painting for \$75. We are excited to say that for each print sold, he will donate \$20 to support the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve and our stream monitoring activity on the Salmon-Trout River. Coasters prefer clean waters and a limited pH range and are very sensitive to pollution and changes in water chemistry. Wayne writes, "Other than Isle Royale, this Lake Superior river [the Salmon-Trout] is one of the last refuges of the Coaster brook trout in the U.S. but this river is now being

threatened by mine development in the Yellow Dog Plains." The print image is 16" X 20" with a 1" white border on quality acid-free textured paper. On facebook you can find more information about this remarkable man. Contact us at ydsp@yellowdogwatershed.org if you would like to order a print and support our cause.

Chauncey Moran of YDWP wins Binational Environmental Stewardship Award

The Annual Environmental Stewardship Awards were presented to American and Canadian environmental activists by the Lake Superior Binational Forum in Superior, Wisconsin this past July. We are extremely proud and not-so-surprised that one of the Yellow Dog's most dedicated educators, our very own "River Walker," Chauncey Moran, has won an individual Environmental Stewardship Award. Jon Saari of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition also won an award. The Lake Superior Binational Forum is composed of twelve Canadian and twelve American stakeholders which share the mission to protect the entire ecosystem of Lake Superior including air, land, water, human life, and wildlife. Only six Americans were given awards this year under the categories of Youth, Individual Adult, Business, Tribe, or Organization. The awards were chosen by a panel of judges from both the United States and Canada and are intended to honor individuals who, "have accomplished significant and successful actions that minimize the negative impacts or restore the natural environment in the Lake Superior basin." (www.lakesuperiorforum.org).



Chauncey Moran and Jon Saari © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

Chauncey regularly visits numerous sites along the Yellow Dog River and Salmon-Trout River, collecting and compiling scientific data, taking photographs, and water samples since 1995. His intention to preserve the watershed is clearly shown by meticulous compilation of baseline data to develop benchmarks that could signal dangerous trends in the future. Upon receiving this award Chauncey said humbly, "We are most gracious in your honoring all of us as it is the team that illuminates the value of one's potential to inspire those that continue." Chauncey is the Yellow Dog RIVERKEEPER, which is a position established by the Waterkeeper Alliance. He is among 181 other "Waterkeepers" around the world which share a mission to patrol the local waterways, enforce environmental laws, and protect communities from threats to the environment. Please express your gratitude for Chauncey's incredible efforts and send your congratulations to criverwalkerr@aol.com.

IMPACT Program

Thanks to the great work of the River Network and its partners, our group is able to participate in a program called Aligning for Impact. This program is meant for groups who wish to continually evaluate and improve their operations, to ensure that they are meeting their goals, and if not, how to change their work plans to meet their goals. Our staff communicates with consultants from the program, including Jill Ryan from Freshwater Future, and uses evaluation tools to measure our progress. We are excited to be learning new ways of gauging success so that we can better communicate our achievements to our members.



A freshwater crayfish found near the mouth of the Yellow Dog River.

Outreach and Education

10,000 Trees: The Manitou Project

Our group partnered with the Cedar Tree Institute this summer with the goal of planting 10,000 White Cedar trees throughout the Upper Peninsula. Our group helped organize where to plant the trees in our watershed, set up volunteers to help, and did much of the actual planting of cedars in the Yellow Dog River watershed. With the help of staff and volunteers, we planted over 500 trees in our watershed. The White Cedar tree is a significant part of the ecosystem and provides food and habitat for many species. In particular, game such as grouse depend on this type of tree heavily, as do white tailed deer. We were glad to help this species continue to be present in the river ecosystem. Many thanks to the Cedar Tree Institute, the Big Bay Girl Scouts, and YDWP volunteers and staff for the phenomenal effort put forward to make the watershed healthy for everyone and everything.



YDWP volunteer Amaya Rodenborg-Kent plants a white cedar at the Jean Farwell wilderness.

Big Bay Girl Scouts

Staff from YDWP spent some quality time with the local Girl Scout troop in an effort to encourage environmental stewardship among the younger generation in Big Bay. We took the scouts out for a Native Plant hike along the river, where they split into two teams and competed for who could find specific native plants first. The girls identified plant species such as Spring Beauties, Bracken Ferns, Wintergreen, and Trailing Arbutus. After the plant hike, the girls spent quite awhile just playing in the river and enjoying what it had to offer. It was rewarding to see our local youth valuing the clean water, the solitude, and the plant communities that depend upon a healthy ecosystem. They enjoyed it so much that they later held a camping trip in the area.



Girl Scout Troop members look for Spring Beauties along the river trail.

Reaching out to Local Students

YDWP was able to work with two classes from Northern Michigan University this past semester. One Environmental Studies class came out to explore wilderness areas and hiked through the McCormick Wilderness. Another class from the English department came to the river and talked with our staff about the idea of land preservation. YDWP came back to their classrooms later on and presented more information on that idea. The students then wrote essays on different aspects of land preservation. The student essays will be posted on YDWP's website by the end of the year, along with pictures and some video footage. Also, YDWP worked with Powell Township School's 5-8th grades, teaching them about lotic ecosystems. We also instructed students on how to use protocols to sample water and send it to a lab for testing.



Students from Northern Michigan University spend the afternoon with YDWP in the McCormick Wilderness Area

Water Quality Protection Program

2012 was a very busy field season for us here and we accomplished a great deal of work protecting our freshwater resources. Here is a look at some of the tasks we completed:

- **Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program:** Tested Lake Independence 16 times throughout the summer for chlorophyll, transparency, temperature, phosphorus, and dissolved oxygen. Results were furnished to the CLMP program.
- **Springs Analyses:** A total of 10 sites were sampled with Keweenaw Bay Indian Community 4 times during 2012 for a large number of surface water parameters such as chloride, total dissolved solids, and metals. These sample locations are the very beginnings of the East and Middle Branch Salmon-Trout River and are critical locations for gathering baseline conditions of water resources in the area.
- **Baseline Surface Water Sampling:** Multiple sites within both the Yellow Dog and Salmon-Trout River watersheds were tested by Dr. John Ejnik of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for trace metals, field parameters, and more. These baseline sites were tested 3 times this summer and sent to a certified lab for analysis. This marks the 8th year that this type of high quality water testing has been done.
- **Yellow Dog River Volunteer Monitoring Sites:** For the tenth year in a row, volunteers pitched in and assisted with monitoring the conditions of the river. Thanks to Chris Lawler, Nancy and Jeremiah Moran, Ben and Amaya Kent, John Anderson, Sue Belanger, Catherine Parker, Anjila Holland, Carla Gregory, Nicole DeMol, and of course, the Riverwalker.



Mindy Otto testing the water in Lake Independence for the Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program



A Hellgramite aka a Dobsonfly larve. Hellgramites are sensitive to pollution and poor water quality.



Example of metal that gets recycled through this program for the county.

Battery Recycling Continues and Expands

It has been over a year now and the Battery Recycling program that YDWP established with its partners continues to reduce the need for raw materials. Over 10,000 pounds of batteries have gone through the program to date and the community continues to utilize the service. Thanks to a grant from the Marquette County Community Foundation, the Marquette County Solid Waste Authority was fitted with a machine called a hammermill, which crushes alkaline batteries and separates the metal for recycling. Pictured at left is an example of what the batteries look like after they are processed through the hammermill. The metal is sent to recycling facility. Most places that recycle metal do not bother with alkalines in particular, but just imagine how much metal gets thrown away each year across the country. We can at least do our part. Other communities are now being served as well, with the addition of drop sites in Republic, Ishpeming, and Gwinn. Check out our website for more info.

County Road 595 Update



Jessica Koski
Mining Technical Assistant
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
Photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced December 4th that they are both removing and upholding objections to the permit for County Road 595. The objection over whether the Marquette County Road Commission did an adequate job analyzing the alternative routes was removed. The objection over whether the Road Commission supplied an adequate Compensatory Mitigation Plan was upheld.

This project was formally known as the Woodland Road when Kennecott Eagle Minerals, along with three other entities, applied to have this road built from the Yellow Dog Plains to the Humboldt Mill. During the Woodland Road's application process, the federal government became involved due to the amount of wetlands that would be negatively impacted. Kennecott and their partners withdrew their permit application for the Woodland Road after federal involvement and instead began working with the Marquette County Road Commission to push the project forward as a public road, County Road 595. The permit application for County Road 595 was originally submitted by the Road Commission to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in February of 2012. Several reviews and comment periods were conducted by the state but since the project

again posed significant negative impacts on aquatic resources, the federal government became involved. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reviewed the application and supplied extensive comments that were highly critical of the project. Some examples include clarifying the project purpose. The stated purpose of the road, according to the applicant, is to serve public needs in this area, such as increase recreational opportunities and better emergency access. However, the Army Corps correctly noted that the primary beneficiary would be Kennecott, since the road begins at Eagle Mine and ends at Humboldt Mill. If it was a haul road for ore, the application should state that as the project purpose. Additionally, comments were made by field staff from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources noting that construction of the road would be taking place during nesting season. Upwards of 89 varieties of birds were noted in the potentially impacted area. The EPA came up with their objections in April 2012, after consultation with the federal and state agencies. The applicant then had additional time to resubmit information regarding the EPA's concerns.

The public had another chance to comment about the project during a hearing hosted by the U.S. EPA in Marquette in August. Many comments came from elected officials supporting the project. Only two elected officials were critical, one Marquette County Commissioner and one Powell Township Supervisor. However, once the elected officials were done, the community at large took to the podium to address decision makers of the EPA. The majority of the citizens commenting did not agree with their elected representatives and supplied a great deal of information on why the EPA should uphold their objections to the project.

The EPA read through comments and supplied their decision, along with the a document listing the requirements that applicant needs to satisfy the remaining objection over the Mitigation Plan. That letter states that the applicant will be required to supply more information, such as a long term management plan for streams and wetland mitigation, secured mineral rights of wetland preservation area, a stewardship agreement with a third party who will maintain the proposed preservation area, and demonstrated financial assurances for construction and long term management of aquatic resources. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality has 30 days to satisfy the objection by either denying the permit or issuing a permit for the application that contained a sufficient Compensatory Mitigation Plan. If the MDEQ does not act within that time period, the permit application would then be transferred to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. For more information on the EPA's action, visit their website at <http://www.epa.gov/region5/water/cr595/>. This website has the documentation including the EPA's letter to the MDEQ, the EPA's list of requirements for the mitigation plan, and all past documents regarding the project.



Photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

Reflections of Riverwalker

In 1870, my ancestors came to northern Marquette County to seek adventure and employment. It has been nearly 20 years since I returned as a resident to this area to walk in its many diverse watersheds, especially our beloved Yellow Dog, Salmon-Trout, and Huron Rivers, all of which are located within walking distance of our family residence on Lost Creek. It remains apparent that as the seasons and precipitation change so does the river corridor, naturally. However, some of those natural changes occur as a result of activity that affect changes in natural river ecology in a negative way that should be monitored, analyzed, and remediated as applicable.

As I have observed these changes, I am reminded that it is our responsibility to monitor these changes and attempt to determine their cause. Since our past activities in watersheds have altered the future outcome of what the river corridors are to become, we must record the present, study the past, and accurately evaluate the most effective plan for protecting and conserving the natural states of change. Several years ago, it seemed that few folks understood the importance of healthy river systems; however, several dedicated individuals have come forward to record, study, and evaluate collected data to formulate the health of our river systems. Much of this work is done by volunteer effort, complimenting the core YDWP staff. We emphasize collecting data that is accurate and repeatable following specific guidelines of protocol. In the past few years, these folks have shown an unselfish and dedicated interest in aiding the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve by facilitating goals and outcomes that not only raise the bar, but also aid in achieving the highest levels of conservation for future generations. My confidence rests in the current and future River Keepers, who are Riverwalkers as well.

With the grace of the Creator, your prayers, and financial support, the organization has accomplished much and intends to continue to do so. We hope to expand in the area of youth involvement. For the care of the river will yield much fruit. As it is written in Jeremiah 17:8, “For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and spreadeth out her roots by the river and shall not see when the heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

Remaining hopeful and faithful to that end.....Riverwalker, Chauncey Moran

We could have saved the Earth but we were too damned cheap.
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the Earth. Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.
Thich Nhat Hanh



Spruce Grouse is among the species living in the area of proposed CR595.
Photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye



Photo taken by John Anderson

Contested Case Appeal

The Michigan Court of Appeals decided this August to hear oral arguments regarding a 2007 decision by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to issue mining and groundwater discharge permits to Kennecott Minerals for Eagle Mine. The case was brought forward by the original petitioners, which includes the National Wildlife Federation, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, and Huron Mountain Club.

No date for oral arguments has been set, although briefs and responses are being filed currently. The Court of Appeals accepted to hear the case on all issues brought forth by the petitioners, including the legitimacy of the Treated Wastewater Infiltration System, damage to water quality, and issues contesting the granting of the mining permit itself.

Winter Ski along the Yellow Dog River

Join us for a friend-raising/fundraising ski on February 2nd. Meet up with us at the YDWP office (303 Bensinger, Big Bay) at 10 am and we will carpool to the river and take a lovely ski along the river's edge. We will stop for a campfire, snacks, and cups of hot tea/cocoa provided by us. We will be out for 3-4 hours and you will need to have your own ski equipment (back country skis would be the best, but cross country could work too). We welcome intermediate to experienced skiers on this particular trip. Contact us to let us know if you are up for skiing a beautiful place and meeting the people who care for it! 906-345-9223 or ydwp@yellowdogwatershed.org. Donations accepted/encouraged.



Hills falls. Photo © Jeremiah Eagle Eye

Thank You for Your Support

This list reflects all gifts as of 4/17/12 to 12/7/12

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Our mission since 1995 has been to protect and preserve the Yellow Dog River and its watershed for the benefit of present and future generations.

