

## **The Economic Benefits to Wilderness Preservation**

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Over the centuries the economy has taken many turns. For the past years the U.S. has been battling a recession period. These recent events have forced generations to become creative in terms of the job market. Michigan jobs have hit rock bottom, and Northern Michigan is faced with the decision of sulfide mining for economic growth. The Upper Peninsula is well known for its forests, mountains, and rivers. To preserve these blessings of land and water is a way of securing a better future economically.

By keeping the Yellow Dog River preserved it will increase tourism for the state of Michigan. Yearly, tourism brings over 1,400,000 people to Marquette County. Tourism has brought more than 77 million dollars to the local economy specifically. As a result, tourism has brought 1,600 local jobs. On the other hand, the Flambeau Mine in Wisconsin, which lasted four years (1993-1997), hired forty locals in basic laborer jobs. The well paid positions were filled by bringing people in from other mining operations. The proposed Yellow Dog Plains mine project is said to be worth almost 2.8 billion dollars. However, over 90% of the income will then leave Michigan. This project will bring in jobs but for the short term. The estimated time stretch of working on the mine is five to seven years. These jobs might not even go to Michigan residents. From the past, many mining communities' economies have worsened after the mine was shut down. Mining requires paving of roads and adding more railways. The business demands a processing area, trailing ponds, electric power grids to supply the capacity needed to operate. This will then lead to no more public access.

Numbers of people appreciate nature and its biodiversity. Artists use the stunning scenery for inspiration. City dwellers look to nature as means of escape from their busy lives.

There are also outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy observing, studying, and using the land for recreation. Keeping areas preserved and in the natural state will help the local economy by increasing the amount of tourism. Preserving land has proven to be successful in the past. For example, the state of Utah in 1986 reserved 3.2 million acres of land. Now, Utah is adding 5.9 million acres to preserve the wildlife. This means that fifteen percent of Utah is wilderness.

Also a part of preserving land and fresh water is the boost in land values for local economies. Property that is very close to protected areas usually sees an increase in value. Economists call this concept the “proximate principle.” It has been proven that to attract more residents to the area, preserve the land. In Dallas Texas a study showed that homes facing open land were worth twenty two percent more than the homes farther away.

Leaving land open really does save money. Undeveloped acreage costs less to service than developed land. An American Trust study showed that the cost to revenue ratio to provide public land services was about \$.35 an acre. The developed land service cost is about \$1.16 an acre. This calculation shows about a \$.81 difference. Needless to say, it is cheaper to keep land open to protect land values.

Statistical data has shown wildlife preservation is vital to helping communities grow economically for a solid future, and it is crucial to be thinking about the future. Clean water and land are needed to live. So we must remember this African Proverb, “filthy water cannot be washed.”

