

POLITICAL
CHANGE AND
THE UP
MINING PUSH
See page 6

THE



SAVE THE DATE!
YDWP 30TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION, 8/2
See page 8

HOWL

Spring/Summer 2025

Celebrating 30 Years

Bi-annual Newsletter
Volume 29, Issue 1

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

HOWLING IN THE WILDERNESS: YDWP AT 30

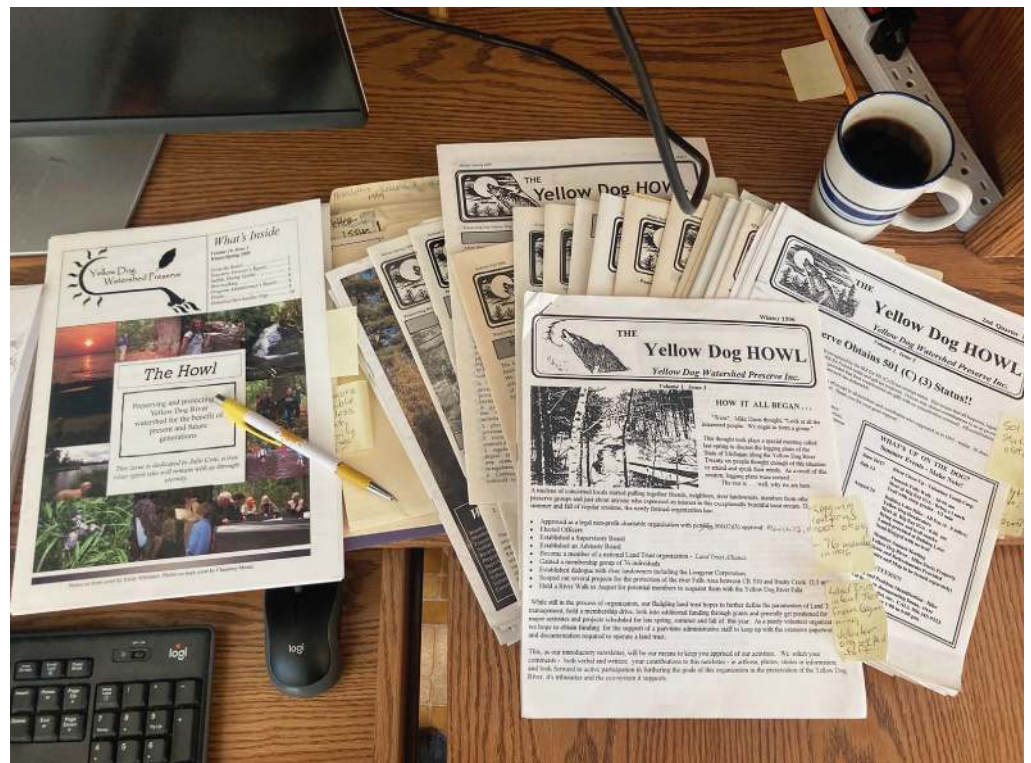
By Brian Noell, Communications Director

The beige filing cabinets in YDWP's office on the Club Road in Big Bay are bulging with documents testifying to the energy and resources that generations of members, board, and staff have invested in our beloved river. Most of the battered manila folders have stories to tell, but none shed more light on our history than past issues of the Yellow Dog *Howl*.

Founded in 1995, the incipient organization lost little time in starting a newsletter. Volume 1, Issue 1, a four-page, stapled, black and white photocopy, was published early in 1996. The previous year, a group of 26 concerned citizens had met to discuss State of Michigan logging plans along the river, which turned into advocacy that affected public policy. The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve quickly coalesced and by March 1996 had 76 members and 501(c)3 status. Although there was no land yet to steward, the first issue of the *Howl* makes clear that the founders intended to create a land trust. Most of the second page was dedicated to explaining the land trust idea and how the new organization might think about this mission.

No sooner was the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve incorporated, however, than it faced its first ecological challenge. Chairman Mike Davis reported that in April 1996 there had been a record winter snowfall with no major thaws, followed by dramatic warming and rain that generated a flood of epic proportions, triggering a 40-acre landslide in a canyon just downstream from Pinnacle Falls. Damned by soil and trees from the collapsing banks, the river formed a whirlpool and cut a new course hundreds of feet from its original channel.

Then Vice-chairman Chauncey Moran, who had noticed the excessive levels of silt in the river and traced it upstream to the site of the cataclysm, documented his observations, which he reported to the DNR and then to *Howl* readers. He wrote, "As I walked around viewing the devastation, I became



aware of the untold forces of this catastrophe and began to think of the fish, animals, and other aquatic creatures that would be affected, maybe for years. I just sat down in shock and continued to look around, trying to keep a scientific perspective. What happened- how could this occur- what could be done about it?"

This event marked the beginning of our organization's commitment, which continues to this day, to establish scientific protocols for monitoring the health of the river and to document anomalies arising from natural or anthropogenic events.

In this same edition of the newsletter, another salient issue emerged that, as land stewards, we also continue to confront today. YDWP was seeking funds for what would be the first of our properties, the Bushy Creek acreage, and a landowner-member had expressed concern that creating a public preserve would cause traffic and parking issues, while visitor campfires, overfishing, and tent sites would have deleterious effects on land and water. *Howl* Editor Cynthia Prior addressed these concerns, quoting the new organization's mission statement: "To preserve the Yellow Dog Watershed in its most natural state, by acquiring land rights for the use of the public and for the benefit of future generations." She

(continued on page 10)

Protect the Yellow Dog River, its watershed, the future of our children, and our wildlife with a legacy gift!

Your legacy gift can help sustain YDWP through the next 30 years. These thoughtful contributions can be the motivating force for special projects and can inspire future generations to cherish this unique environment and strive to protect it.

Legacy gifts may come in different forms, such as bequests, charitable gift annuities, IRA distributions, real estate, or gifts of insurance. Give us a call at 906-345-9223 to discuss possibilities and talk to your financial advisor to learn more.



Directors & Officers

- Chauncey Moran, *Chairperson*
- Jan Zender, *Vice Chair*
- Kristi Mills, *Secretary*
- Lynn Roovers, *Treasurer*
- Jane Fitkin
- Jay Johnson
- Jacklyn Lenten
- Dan Rydholm
- Roy Sarosik

Staff

- Rochelle Dale, *Executive Director*
- Sarah Heuer, *Programs Director*
- Brian Noell, *Communications Director*

WILSON CREEK WOODSMITHING

EXCAVATING
Lot Clearing & Stumping
Driveways
Trails
Culverts
Tree Work

SAWMILL
Timbers & Lumber
Unique Slabs
Customer Logs
HW/SW Logyard

FORESTRY
Low-Impact Special Projects
Log Truck Hauling
Multi-Purpose Trails
Tree Clearing

MISC
Snowplowing
Custom/Remote Projects
Backcountry Trails
Select Carpentry Work

Justin Savu
115 CR KR (Brown Deer Rd.)
Marquette, MI 49855
906-360-7288
thujasavu@hotmail.com

www.justinsavu.com
www.facebook.com/WilsonCreekWoodsmithing
WilsonCreekWoodsmithing

THE YELLOW DOG

it doesn't run straight

it twists

it bends back on itself

sometimes it runs fast

sometimes it slows

always preserve CONSERVE

gearhartblacksmithing@gmail.com
Facebook: Gordon Gearhart Blacksmith
Instagram: Gearhart Blacksmithing

blacksmith
Gordon E. Gearhart III

*Architectural, Sculptural
and Utilitarian Metalworks*

P.O. Box 755
Marquette, MI 49855
(906)346-5990



More than 30 years ago, Rochelle and I heard a rumor that a group of people were getting together to turn the Yellow Dog River into a private preserve, probably putting up gates to keep the people out. We were concerned, so Rochelle, our current Executive Director, went to one of those early meetings. She came home relieved because it was clear that what this group wanted was to keep our favorite places along the river open for people, to protect it from being divided and sold for development. Since we had children at home in those days, we began taking turns going to these monthly meetings and eventually, with the help of a supporter, a professor from Northern Michigan University, we applied for 501c3 status, and in 1995 we became an official organization.

Throughout all these years, we have had many directors who have graciously given their time to help us realize our mission, to preserve the river in its most natural state. There have been countless people who have donated so much time and energy: all the generous people who have given us money, all the musicians who have played free concerts for fundraising events, all the volunteers who helped with water monitoring, tree planting or other projects throughout these 30 years. Without all this help, we could not have realized any part of our dream to protect our beautiful river.

Currently, our staff (Rochelle, Sarah, and Brian) work very hard with grant writing, education and outreach programs, water monitoring, land monitoring, 101 miscellaneous things, and creating these beautiful *Howl* editions to keep us all informed. For example, for this issue, Brian read 30 years' worth of newsletters in order to write "Howling in the Wilderness: YDWP at 30," a retrospective look at the issues of the past three decades.

The Lakota people I once lived with told us we should live our lives with care so that seven generations from now, those descendants will be able to live in a beautiful, healthy place too. When our daughter was little, she swam in the Yellow Dog pretending she was a dog lapping up water. Now, our grandchildren happily drink the Yellow Dog River, and we hope they teach their grandchildren to take care of these precious gifts, and their grandchildren to teach their grandchildren and on and on.

To all my relations.

PRESERVING HABITAT AND HISTORY: A NEW ACQUISITION
By Rochelle Dale, Executive Director

The Yellow Dog Plains provide an exceptional habitat for wildlife, especially migrating birds of the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways because of the vast variety of ecosystems: emergent wetlands, forested wetlands, upland mixed hardwoods, and mixed conifers. The Plains are also dotted with ponds and lakes of various sizes, which make for a very rich environment.

Recently, YDWP has been able to add another essential piece to our protected lands on the Plains. Thanks to anonymous donors, YDWP purchased 40 acres surrounding the south half of Andersen Pond from Lyme Timber. The pond drains directly into the wetlands acquired last year with funding from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant.

According to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service new report, 95% of all wetlands in the US are freshwater, and as of 2019, these only covered half the area they did in the early years of this country. Worse yet, losses have increased by 50% since 2009, and USFWS predicts that they will accelerate without additional conservation actions. Being able to protect these ponds and wetlands in the face of climate change and a developing industrial complex is crucial, and Andersen Pond is a key component in maintaining the sensitive wetlands of the Mudjekewis Wildlife Corridor and the Christ Andersen Headwaters Preserve.

Christ Andersen's name is linked to many places on the Yellow Dog Plains. He worked alongside Cyrus Bentley during the early part of the 20th century in creating the Bentley Trail. In the 1950s, he helped Fred Rydholm find the remote, hidden, all but lost trail in the swamp, and he even assisted Fred with his cabin in the Mudjekewis Wildlife Refuge. Andersen Corner, Andersen Pond, and Andersen Creek are all named after Christ and his family, and his home, although no longer standing, was on the shore of Andersen Pond.

We are thrilled and thankful to be able to preserve this piece of history and wildlife habitat. Thank you to the donors who made this possible!



A view of Andersen Pond from the new YDWP acquisition. Photo by Rochelle Dale.

REGISTER NOW: FLY FISHING WORKSHOP ON THE YELLOW DOG, AUGUST 23-24



Our fourth annual fly-fishing workshop on the Yellow Dog River will take place on Saturday and Sunday, August 23 and 24. This collaborative event is hosted by the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, the Fred Waara Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and Superior Outfitters.

Participants do not need their own equipment: TU and Superior Outfitters will supply fly rods, flies, and other accouterments. However, participants should bring wading shoes of some sort and clothes that can get wet. Waders are optional but not necessary at this time of year. YDWP will provide camping sites and the meals for both days. No need to bring dishes, but do bring tent, sleeping gear, water bottle, and a headlamp. Camping is rustic, and electricity is not available.

Classes are limited to 20 students. A \$50 donation is requested at registration. Youths 13-15 are welcome with an accompanying adult, and teens 16-17 may attend alone with parental approval. A Michigan fishing license is required for those 17 and older. No dogs, please.

To register or for more information, visit the Events page of the YDWP website.

At left: “You gotta love the tiny brookie!” Zach Eckert, a 2024 fly-fishing workshop attendee, enjoying a day on the river. Photo by Charlie Reinertsen.

FORESTS FOR ALL: YDWP BUILDS ON A LEGACY IN THE COMMUNITY FOREST

By Rochelle Dale

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike. - John Muir

In his 1970 State of the Union address, Richard M. Nixon said, “Clean air, clean water, open spaces - these should once again be the birthright of every American.” However, the US Forest Service (USFS) estimates that 6,000 acres of open space are lost each day, mostly from private owners who accede to development pressure and sell their property, commercial forest (CF) lands included. To help address this phenomenon, the USFS created a Community Forest and Open Spaces grant program, which became part of the 2008 Farm Bill. Funds were ready for distribution beginning in 2012. Its purpose was to assist tribes or non-profit organizations in protecting forestlands from conversion to non-forest uses by making acquisitions and establishing community forests.

The Yellow Dog River Community Forest was a dream from the very beginning of this organization. YDWP founders hoped that one day, somehow, we would be able to preserve this water-fall-rich stretch of river for future generations to recreate in and enjoy as we have enjoyed it. This dream began to manifest in 2013 when JM Longyear offered to sell portions of the river corridor to YDWP, giving us first option to buy before divi-



After its establishment, the Community Forest quickly became a public resource. In May, 2018 the Marquette Alternative High School visited for an educational program. Photo by Kalif Zender.

ding and selling for development. We gambled. It was a lot of money to raise in the required 2 years, and we had to put down a sizeable non-refundable downpayment. Quickly, Emily Whittaker, who was then Special Projects Manager, went to work looking for funding, and found the US Forest Service Community Forest and Open Spaces grant.

Thankfully, Longyear granted us an extension for one more year on our fundraising timeline, so after 3 years, with a \$400,000 Community Forest grant in place, we were able to match those funds with donations from private foundations, generous funding from local groups and individuals, anonymous donors, and a variety of fundraising drives and events. We purchased 668 acres from Longyear for \$1,100,000 in September 2016. Then Max and Mary Putters donated 20 acres adjacent to the Longyear lands, which brought the total acreage of the Yellow Dog River Community Forest to 688.

The former Longyear property was, of course, enrolled in the Michigan commercial forest program (CF). Lands in CF must remain open to the public for hunting and fishing (foot travel only), and the owners are required to cut timber according to a state-approved forestry plan. In exchange, property taxes are significantly reduced. When the Longyear parcels came into YDWP’s hands, anonymous donors funded the removal of 182 acres from the CF program. In the Community Forest Management Plan, this 182-acre section became the wilderness zone, a large, remote, unmodified natural environment. The remaining acreage had to remain in CF until we could raise the funds to pay the penalty fees for removal. In 2017, to comply with state mandates on CF lands, a new forestry plan was created for the Community Forest.

Last year, in the spring/summer issue of the *Howl*, YDWP launched a campaign to remove another 150 acres of the Community Forest from CF designation. These lands contain large areas of mature hardwoods, the trails to the falls, and receive a steady stream of visitors; however, according to the forestry plan, they were slated for logging in the next few years. The campaign exceeded our expectations and generated enough funding to remove 268 acres from CF, which we made official on March 19, 2025. In the meantime, members have continued to donate, and we will be removing another 80 acres this summer.

Only a 160-acre parcel that is not contiguous with the rest of the Community Forest remains in CF, which we are managing with funding from a Michigan DNR Wildlife Habitat grant until it too can be removed. This section of the Community Forest is a breakout area for whitetail deer and other wildlife as they leave their wintering grounds and return to their summer homes. Practicing sustainable forestry, YDWP is encouraging the growth of the already existing mast-producing trees, planting a variety of climate-resilient species, and creating age diversity in aspen groves to enhance habitat for the golden-winged warbler, a species of greatest concern in the Michigan Wildlife Action Plan.



Volunteer Valerie Stromquist and Vice-chair Jan Zender planting a sand cherry in a Community Forest upland clearing. Photo by Sarah Heuer.

With the help of Lake to Lake Cisma, we also have surveyed hemlock groves in this parcel for the invasive woolly adelgid, thankfully finding none. This spring, with volunteer assistance, we planted 90 fruit and nut trees/shrubs and seeded yellow clover for pollinators and soil enhancement. During the summer, we will sow roadways and disturbed areas with rye for deer and other browsers and build small animal brush shelters according to Natural Resources Conservation Service standards. In the fall, we will supplement the hemlock groves with new seedlings, and introduce white oaks, chestnuts, and black walnuts in the hardwood areas. We will continue to monitor and plan a follow-up replacement planting in 2026, if needed.

Keep an eye out for announcements about upcoming volunteer days. Also, join us for a tour of the wildlife habitat project, taking place during our 30-year anniversary celebration on August 2.



Volunteers planted two varieties of serviceberry (Allegheny and saskatoon) during recent work days. Photo by Sarah Heuer.

By Brian Noell

The second Trump administration has upended virtually every assumption underpinning the American mining economy in the era of climate change, leaving irresolution and instability in its wake. The industry’s marketing emphasis on “energy transition” was rendered irrelevant virtually overnight by the federal policy of “energy dominance” announced on the administration’s first day in office, privileging fossil fuels and eliminating incentives for “green” technologies. Electric cars, solar panels, and windmills rely more heavily on the copper and nickel extracted in the UP than do natural gas and coal-fired powerplants and gas and diesel cars and trucks. And, although there are other potential outlets for these metals, such as enhanced onshore tech and defense manufacturing as well as data centers to power energy-hungry AI, the federal about-face is likely to cause demand to drop considerably in the short term.

The contraction of the broader economy could compound the collapse of domestic demand provoked by the policy shift away from “green energy.” Indeed, the price of copper on the world market, after reaching an all-time high on March 26, dropped precipitously in April as a response to dramatic tariff increases. Nickel prices also have been volatile in the face of White House trade policy. Many investors are betting on a recession that will slow production everywhere of technologies utilizing copper and nickel, thereby curtailing short-term demand for mined ore.

Another unknown is the effect that aggressive America-first policies will have on the cross-border partnerships that sustain mining projects in the upper Midwest. Trump’s policies threaten the bottom lines of Canadian mining companies like Highland Copper, trying to sell expensive extractive projects to investors in the age of tariffs and protectionism. Eagle Mine, which ships its ore from Humboldt Mill to Sudbury, Ontario for final processing, faces uncertainty in this area as well.

Yet, there are forces that might lead investors to be bullish on mining in the UP. Long-term projections indicate that demand will increase significantly for the metals extracted here, key components in electronics and batteries used in a wide array of consumer products and in today’s most rapidly expanding technology, artificial intelligence. Moreover, the federal government has issued executive orders aimed at fast tracking proposed mining ventures as well as opening federal lands to mining that were never in play before. The Trump administration is also gutting federal mining rules, which makes it cheaper for companies to operate once a project is in full production. The costs will be borne instead by mine workers, whose occupational safety protections will be curtailed, and by the surrounding natural and human communities, whose air and water will increasingly be fouled by pollution.

Even as the regulatory environment on the federal level becomes more favorable toward the mining industry, the State of Michigan has been circumspect about extraction projects. In December 2024, in the face of continued public opposition, the legislature once again rejected the proposed \$50 million grant to Highland Copper for the development of the Copperwood Mine adjacent to Lake Superior and Porcupine Mountain State Park.

Also last year, reasoned argument by the public led the Tilden Mine in Ishpeming to withdraw its permit application to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to fill 78 acres of wetlands with tailings. In March of this year, EGLE held a hearing on the company’s revised proposal, which reduced the scope of that destruction to 33 acres. The final decision has not been made, but YDWP is hopeful, given our public comments on the revised plan, as well as those provided by other local organizations and citizens, that this impact will be reduced even further.

Meanwhile, Eagle Mine is seeking to amend its state mining permit to reintroduce dewatered tailings into the underground voids left by extraction. In our comments submitted to EGLE regulators on March 21, YDWP recommended that, since it would be using the mine site itself as a disposal facility, Eagle

should be required to employ procedures in line with those in place at the Humboldt Mill, such as the monitoring of wells to confirm that deposited tailings are not contaminating surrounding groundwater. We are also concerned about the amount of water to be removed from the aquifer to produce cement and pump it into the mine. In our comments, we observed that present levels are already too high and are affecting the water table on the Plains, so these additional withdrawals could significantly impact the volume of water flowing into ponds and streams in the Yellow Dog and Salmon Trout watersheds.

A decision by EGLE on the Eagle Mine dewatered tailings reintroduction project is forthcoming. Whatever the outcome in this case, as well as the Tilden proposal to destroy wetlands on the other side of Marquette County, we have reason for cautious optimism. Although regulatory safeguards are being dismantled on the federal level, Michigan is maintaining its commitment to science-based decision making and is assuring that permit applications are available to the public for scrutiny and comment.

“EVEN AS THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT ON THE FEDERAL LEVEL BECOMES MORE FAVORABLE TOWARD THE MINING INDUSTRY, THE STATE OF MICHIGAN HAS BEEN CIRCUMSPECT ABOUT EXTRACTION PROJECTS.

Despite the challenging regulatory environment for mining companies in Michigan, exploration and extraction schemes continue to proliferate. Supporters of Copperwood have not given up on the pot of money designated for the project and rejected twice by the legislature. We have just learned that Upper Peninsula legislators, including Marquette’s Karl Bohnak, now are requesting that the \$50 million be repackaged and given directly to Wakefield Township for infrastructure improvements around the mine site, which, boosters hope will spur further investment.

There also is a considerable hubbub at the Boulderdash exploration site, around 30 miles west of Marquette. The company conducting the test drilling, Talon Metals, began touting its discoveries last year. In March, Lundin, the company that owns Eagle Mine a mere 8 miles to the east, has partnered with the much smaller company to fund more robust exploration, which they are planning to launch this spring after the snow recedes.

For its part, Highland Copper is also seeking to reanimate the defunct White Pine mine in Ontonagon County, 20 miles northeast of its Copperwood venture. The original operation closed in 1997, and the new project, White Pine North, would use existing infrastructure to recover ore left behind when the previous mine went belly up. Of potential concern is the fact that the company is planning to dispose of waste in a tailings basin constructed in the early 1970s, whose outflows, a 1992 EPA study showed, routinely found their way into Lake Superior. The scale of this operation would be significantly larger than Copperwood and is expected to reach the permitting stage in a year or so.

The mining economy has always been boom-and-bust, and communities that depend on it for their livelihoods bear the brunt when the market turns sour and the pits close. There is a good argument to be made that the Upper Peninsula’s historical dependence on mineral extraction is what has kept the region poor. Nevertheless, mining companies keep promising that their projects will reanimate the local economy, often in the very communities hollowed out by previous bust cycles. History teaches that mining is a risky proposition even in the most stable of economic and political times. Banking on it in the present climate, as many in the capital markets are doing to sustain the projects afoot in the Upper Peninsula, is even riskier. In this environment, it is not just communities who stand to lose; investors too may reap the whirlwind from sowing seeds in the unpredictable winds of the Trump-era economy.

By Rochelle Dale



Fred Rydholm snowshoeing the Bentley Trail in 1955. Scanned from a Kodachromestereo slide by Kathleen Heideman.



Dan Vrieland emerging from the trail onto the shores of Bentley Lake 70 years later. Photo by Wade Saari.

On March 1, 2025, twenty-three intrepid adventurers braved the wind and single-digit temperatures to ski or snowshoe a notable section of the historic Bentley Trail through the Mudjekewis Wildlife Refuge.

The Bentley, as we say for short, was the dream project of Cyrus Bentley back in the early 20th century. At the time, industrialist Cyrus McCormick had acquired the lands that are now the McCormick Wilderness Area, where he built his main lodge on an island on White Deer Lake near Michigamme. McCormick and Bentley were friends and business partners who spent their free time camping, exploring the forests and lakes, and dreaming. Bentley, an early member of the Huron Mountain Club, imagined a walking trail from White Deer Lake to the shores of Lake Superior in the Club.

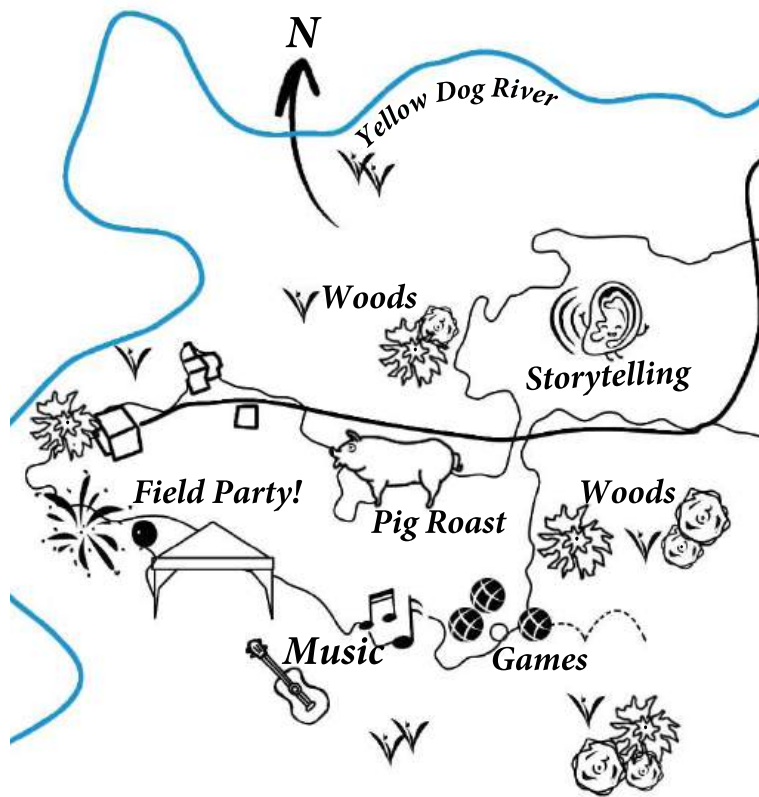
Since Bentley was also a man of action, he set about making this 30-mile trail a reality. He had help of course; Christ Andersen, Christ’s brother Jim, and many others worked as wilderness guides and laborers, clearing and marking the new trail. Thirty miles is a long walk. After a particularly grueling slog through tag alders in the Yellow Dog swamp, they popped out onto the Yellow Dog Plains and two sparkling little ponds surrounded by tall jack pines. The group decided that this would be the halfway stop-over location, a place to spend a night or two, recover, and enjoy the wilderness. The two ponds later became known as Bentley Pond West and Bentley Pond East (not to be confused with Bentley Lake, which is much bigger and farther south). For overnight sojourners. Bentley and his crew eventually constructed the Arbutus Lodge, overlooking the larger east pond. With guides to fish the Yellow Dog River and prepare fresh brook trout in the adjacent cook shack for the guests, life must have been good. By 1915 or so, the trail was refined enough for several hikers to walk side by side comfortably.

By the 1930s, however, the trail had fallen into disuse and soon was overgrown and difficult to find. Fortunately, in 1949, C. Fred Rydholm arrived on the scene. Having served in WWII as a Navy hospital corpsman, Fred was just beginning his career as a schoolteacher. He was captivated by the history of the area, and particularly the Bentley Trail. He began to acquire land on the Yellow Dog Plains, and his first purchase was the area surrounding the two Bentley ponds and the weathering Arbutus lodge. While the Lodge is no longer standing, the site is marked. In addition to Bentley Lake to the south, it is now part of the 1000-acre Mudjekewis Wildlife Refuge gifted to YDWP in 2019 by Fred’s wife, June, and the Rydholm family.

During the 1950s, while Fred was building his own cabin in his spare time, he was also in search of the hidden trail. Guided by old blazes, he managed to find most of it, but there were certain swampy sections that caused him trouble. At the time, Christ Andersen was still alive and back in the area, so Fred asked him for assistance. Christ not only helped identify the trails through the swamp, he also helped Fred finish the cabin. From the mid-50s through much of the 90s, Fred guided many groups along the Bentley. When his cabin was finally functional, it became the new halfway lodge where weary hikers fell into a deep sleep listening to Fred’s stories, comforted by the warmth of a fire.

The Bentley can be rugged in places. As Fred’s knees aged, the trail faded into memory, especially after his passing in 2009. In recent years, however, through the perseverance of YDWP members (including Chauncey Moran, Kathleen Heideman, Dan Vrieland, Wade Saari, and Mike Finlay) the trail is being rediscovered, marked, and reopened. The ski/snowshoe trek in March was the first guided winter outing to the ponds where the Arbutus Lodge once stood. Hikers then proceeded onward to Bentley Lake, identified by a sign Fred painted on driftwood many decades ago. For most of us on the trip, this was our first visit to the remote, legendary lake we heard so much about.

YOU'RE INVITED!
YELLOW DOG WATERSHED PRESERVE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, AUGUST 2



August 2, 2025, 2-10pm
605 County Rd. KCH (Remington Rd.) in Powell Township

Annual Meeting: Our 30th-year celebration commences with a short annual meeting.

Hike in the Community Forest: You have the opportunity to see the work we've been doing in a seldom-visited section of the Community Forest with funding from a Michigan DNR wildlife habitat grant.

Potluck Dinner: Rock River Farms is roasting a pig on site. Please bring a dish to contribute to the potluck and your own dishware and cutlery to minimize waste and clean-up. YDWP will provide drinking and sparkling water. You are welcome to carry in your own alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages. Chairs and/or blankets for lounging are recommended.

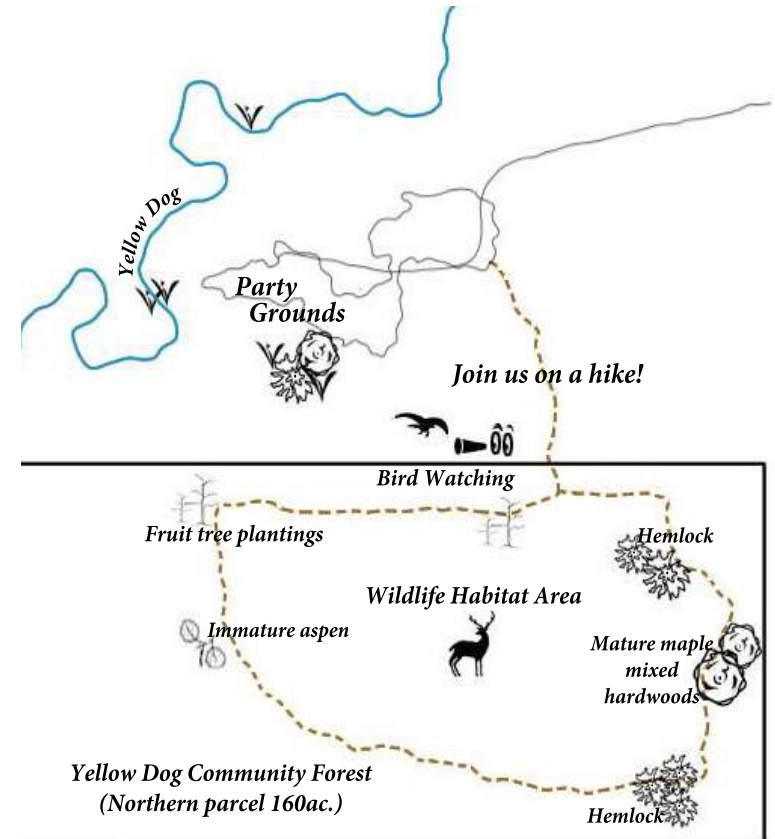
Stories: YDWP acknowledges past directors and staff, as well as donors, members, and volunteers who have selflessly given time and energy over the decades to protect the watershed. Everyone is welcome to share their own Yellow Dog memories.

Music: Entertainment begins with a kids' open-mic, followed by local artists, featuring the legendary Ignorant Mob!

Campfire: Burning in the evening hours for roasting hot dogs, toasting marshmallows, and enhancing ambiance.

\$10 admission

More details to follow. If you have questions, contact rochelle@yellowdogwatershed.org



Local musicians have always contributed their talents to help the Yellow Dog. Here Michael Waite (foreground), former director Cythia Prior, and others jam at a past event on the site of this year's celebration. Photo by Wendy Johnson.



Ignorant Mob is reuniting...and it feels so good! Photo by Graeme Mfetane.



Due to popular demand: the return of kids' open mic. Photo by Wendy Johnson.

HOWLING IN THE WILDERNESS
(continued from page 1)

continued, “The ‘use of the public’ means just that- to ensure that the public right to this wonderful river is maintained...without impinging unduly on the privacy of those who own the land the river runs through.”

By the end of 1997 a *Howl* headline emphatically announced that the Bushy Creek acquisition had been completed: “Purchase of 12-acre Yellow Dog River Property a GO!!” The following spring, land deed in hand and officially a land trust, the organization was reflecting once more on its mission of conserving land while maintaining public access. Cythia Prior opined,

The bottom line is keeping this river accessible: free flowing, unfettered and untamed for our children and our children’s children. You can’t own a river- you can only own the land it flows through. The right to exclusive use is a real issue, as we all treasure our privacy. But if we can just think back to what drew us to the river in the first place- its breathtaking golden beauty, its soaring trees, its aura of solitude, its rushing waters and the fact that you could be there and find such a place! Can man and wild river coexist? Perhaps, if we can hold ourselves back from fencing it in and continue to love it for what it is- a river whole and free, and one of the closest things we have to true wilderness we have left.

In the fall 1998 newsletter, Cynthia reported that logging companies were attending Yellow Dog meetings and that they were cooperating on river setbacks for logging sites. She wrote hopefully that these relationships could be maintained and cultivated: “We cannot stress enough that our organization is not against logging- we just want it done right and per ‘Best Management Practices’Good, responsible corporate ownership of the large tracts of land in the Upper Peninsula WILL help keep it wild.”

She calls attention to an enduring paradox inherent in preserving wild land in an economic system founded on private property, a system that requires corporate, private, public, and non-profit actors to act expansively and with good faith. As soon as a corporation’s strategy changes, as it did in 2024 when Longyear sold its timber assets in the watershed to Manulife Corporation, an insurance company with little history in our area and scant logging experience, keeping the river “unfettered and untamed” is potentially undermined.

The same is true when private landowners are fed up with side-by-sides and snowmobiles intruding on their privacy and restrict access to their land via “No Trespassing” signs and gates. We tend to view these measures as recent, but they were of concern in the 90s as well. In the summer 1999 *Howl*, local wilderness guide Jeff TenEyck addressed the

tenuousness of access to the region’s wild lands, observing the proliferation of gates on private property, which barred sportsmen and hikers from mountains, lakes, and streams.

A means for organizations like ours to ameliorate this problem is to acquire property for conservation and keep it open for public use. Legacy giving is the linchpin of property acquisition for most land trusts, and it has been crucial for YDWP as well. The winter/spring 2000 *Howl* featured a tribute to an early supporter, whose death spurred her family to purchase 160 acres of wetland near where the Yellow Dog empties into Lake Independence and donate it to our organization for protection. The Jean Farwell Wilderness was the largest acquisition to date and helped to build the organization’s reputation for preservation in the community and became a source of matching funds through which a subsequent acquisition was made.



The philosophy of the growing organization continued to be articulated in the fall 2000 newsletter. Planning and Zoning Committee Chair Jan Zender, echoing native wisdom from various traditions, imagined a council meeting in which tribal leaders celebrated their sacred bond with the trees, the Delaware and Ojibwa with the maple, the Iroquois with the basswood, and the Lakota with the cottonwood, the “grandfathers,” as all would call them. He contrasted this with his recent attendance at a meeting of foresters:

In this meeting we sat on chairs around humming electric lights, and we spoke about good forestry techniques. We didn’t talk about “Grandfathers” or even “trees.” Instead, we talked about fiber, fiber content, fiber products, good harvesting techniques and optimum re-

turns....In the Indian way, the language used to refer to the forest and trees created respect, awe, and love. But what is lost when the “Grandfathers” are known as “fiber products” Can we love our fiber product? Respect our fiber product?

It continues to be a core belief of YDWP that developing a commitment to conservation requires this sort of reverence, and the only way to develop that kind of relationship is to experience it. From those early days, tree planting events, educational programming for kids, hikes, and annual ski trips were important elements in realizing that mission. As retiring board member George Girod echoed in the winter 2022 *Howl*, “We are fighting for the right for everyone to enjoy the natural beauty of this place. If they fall in love with it, they will want to protect it.”

Jan Zender’s articulation of the philosophical, even spiritual, grounding, of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve in the fall 2000 newsletter was complemented only a few pages later by hard-nosed pragmatism. Cynthia Prior, now the organization’s Chairwoman, reported on efforts to bring townships, landowners, and logging companies together to “find consensus on a river protection zoning package for the Yellow Dog River and its tributaries.” The meetings were contentious:

The views vary from “I know, as a landowner, what is best for the river. I would never do anything to hurt it- I don’t need someone telling me what to do,” to “Just follow Best Management Practices- that’s what they are there for. We do not need local units of government telling us what to do, to “We want to do something- what are the other townships doing? We can’t act on our own.”

The dilemma Cynthia articulated in 2000 continues today. As we have reported in recent editions of the *Howl*, we continue our public advocacy with the townships with virtually the same agenda, particularly the establishment of natural forest buffer zone regulations along the riverside and extending building setback requirements. These goals, though finally met in some of the townships through which the river flows, have still not been realized in others.

As advocacy continued in the early 2000s, land acquisition proceeded apace. The tone of the winter/spring 2001-2 newsletter is positively giddy over the potential acquisition of two additional parcels, which both would be finalized by early 2003. Using the Jean Farwell Wilderness as a match, YDWP was able to obtain a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant to purchase 160 acres in the Salmon Trout Headwaters.

Readers also learned that donors Lon and Lynn Emerick had provided a large portion of the funds necessary for the purchase of the 40-acre parcel that would become the core of the Pinnacle Falls Preserve. The rest was raised through a series of events orchestrated by Membership and Fund-raising Coordinator Wendy Johnson, including a concert by nationally known singer/songwriter Greg Brown and local legends Steppin’ N It that netted almost \$15,000.

The euphoria engendered by the two acquisitions of early 2003 would not last long. A new and ominous chapter in YDWP’s history opened in the winter/spring 2003-4 *Howl* with the uncharacteristically sedate headline, “Sulfide Mining and the State of Michigan.” Over the next four years, the fight over Eagle Mine became all-consuming for many in the organization. In the fall of 2004, Cynthia Prior wrote,

The mining issue has taken my life. The complexities of understanding the process, what is regulated and what is not and the whole scope of trying to get your arms around an unknown industry is outrageously perilous to your health, wealth, and married life. Folks ask me, “Well, how are we doing? Are we going to stop the mine?” And I sometimes can only look at them and have no words to say because the issues are so complex, so political, so impactful to our really innocent little world here in Big Bay- that I am sometimes speechless and filled with a deep grief for this beautiful land at the end of the road.

Membership in YDWP spiked in the face of the mining threat, and long lists of new members begin to take up significant space in the newsletter. Photo spreads of muddy trenches, no trespassing signs, drill rigs, and workers in white lab coats begin to appear, as do aerial shots of progress on the mining exploration site. The tone of the newsletter becomes decidedly technical: bullet-pointed articles about the proposed Michigan statute regulating nonferrous metallic mining, dated (or sometimes bullet-pointed) notes on water quality protocols and advocacy, and reports on policy discussions at public hearings held by an array of government agencies.

This period of study and activism culminated in December 2005 with a large protest in Lansing. Cynthia Prior reported,

We had all worked together for months, these leaders of citizen’s groups, environmental groups, tribes, and just plain concerned citizens, worked hard to comprehend the change in lifestyle that had overtaken us all. Gone were the days of carefree fun- a level of serious intent had spread its pall over our communities...Our airways were bombarded with TV ads depicting the promise of “opportunity” with Kennecott’s mining ventures in the UP. The ground was taken over by the loud noise of drilling rigs, bulldozers and large trucks hauling more big

equipment to our backwoods. The water looked the same as it always did- crystal in the sun, and cold-ice cold. But for how long?

By autumn 2006, the organization numbered 275 members. But political activism also had significant costs. Relations with mine-supporting citizens in Powell Township deteriorated. The organization had not made a land acquisition since early 2003. Educational activities diminished as fundraisers for anti-mine activism increased. Perhaps most importantly, as Cynthia Prior had pointed out the year before, the spirit that animated YDWP at the beginning was ebbing.



Centerfold from winter/spring 2004-5 issue of the *Howl*, whose front page headline reads, “The Fight of our Lives.”

The nadir was reached in the spring of 2007, when the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality approved Kennecott’s application to mine on the Yellow Dog Plains. Facing defeat on the permitting front, Chaucey Moran advocated a return to the organization’s original mission: safeguarding the watershed through a more holistic engagement with the river itself:

MONITOR! MONITOR! MONITOR! I believe that should be the cry of everyone sincerely interested in conservation, protection, and restoration of the waters of the planet earth. Start local! While we have a tendency and obligation to blame poor legislation and no or poor enforcement of current or past regulations, we are not off the hook for continuing to propagate the best conservation and protection measures that may serve as long term benchmarks to this end...Not enough people are spending time to educate themselves with the current physical conditions of the watershed in their immediate sphere of influence.

(continued on next page)



Drawings of aquatic macroinvertebrates by Powell Township School 5th and 6th graders in the winter/spring 2004-5 *Howl*.

HOWLING IN THE WILDERNESS

In the fall of 2007, Emily Whittaker came onboard as Project Coordinator, introducing fresh ideas and youthful energy to the organization. The front-page headline in the winter/spring 2008 edition announced, “Back to the Future...and back to our core values.” A statement of purpose without byline followed:

While we are still 110% involved in the sulfide mining issue on the Yellow Dog Plains, we have made a conscious decision to work back (and move forward!) to those things for which our organization was founded. We have hired a program manager, Emily Whittaker, whose job is to develop programs around water quality monitoring, landowner education, citizen/student involvement in the watershed and basically, to encourage this community to take time and have fun again in this wonderful place.

While this edition of the *Howl* was chock-full of highly technical mine-related reporting as well as an account of the February 2008 vigil at Eagle Rock, occurring on the day the lease and land use permits were signed for the mine in Lansing, promised change was on the horizon. The next issue was published a year later, the first, in keeping with the spirit of renewal, in full color. Executive Director Cynthia Prior proclaimed,

We want to be more VISIBLE and less ANTI! By nature of the Sulfide Mining Campaign, we have had to be opposed to the Kennecott proposals. But we wish to firmly get back on track with our focus on our core values. We will be moving forward with all those programs we have been talking about in the past months: nature mapping, volunteer water monitoring programs, outreach in the public schools, etc.

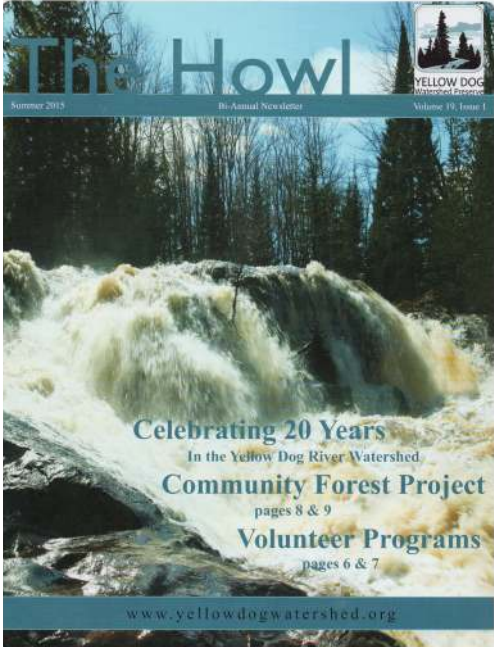
Subsequent newsletters reflect this more community-minded vision. The summer/fall 2010 edition features articles by students in Rochelle Dale’s English classes at NMU on families living off-grid in the watershed. Now the Executive Director, Emily Whittaker reported on a variety of grants obtained to improve programs and office infrastructure. Birding, hiking, beach cleanup, invasive plant removal, and a film festival were announced, even as Cynthia Prior reported the scope of potential ecological damage from the proposed road between the new mine and the Humboldt Mill, as well as the need for continued action to stop it from being run through unspoiled wilderness.

The winter/spring 2011 *Howl* was slim but, again, was produced in eye-popping color. In the following edition Board Chair Lorin Lardie announced:

Since our last newsletter, which was the first full color issue, we have heard from many of our members and supporters about how the vivid images and presentation has made a dramatic impact on our readers. We couldn’t agree more. The full color format is much more expensive than our previous versions, but we have been funded once again by the Western Mining Action Network and Indigenous Environmental Network. The groups gave us funding to bring you these special publications... Once again, this issue is sure to inspire you to come see the laughing river, camp in the deep forests, or catch a prized trout. It is imperative to the river’s health and to our work that we have scores of people who personally know how important this area is.



Above: Howl editors leaned into color photography in 2011.
Below: The cover page from the 20th anniversary issue, summer 2015.



All the while, debates about the proposed hauling route continued and construction on the Eagle Mine itself proceeded. That progress was dramatically documented in the spring 2012 newsletter with an aerial photo centerfold by Chauncey Moran menacingly titled “Belly of the Beast.”

By the spring of 2013, Emily Whittaker had stepped into the Special Projects Manager role, and YDWP hired Mindy Otto as Executive Director as well as other young staff. This team engaged fully in grant-writing and public outreach and expanded water monitoring to include the Salmon Trout Watershed and Lake Independence. Most consequentially, they worked with local stakeholders to produce a watershed management plan that would serve as a steppingstone to establishing what would become YDWP’s crown-jewel, the Yellow Dog River Community Forest.

In the winter of 2014, Emily Whittaker reported on the initiative to *Howl* readers,

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 watershed management plan 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.

Appropriately, the 20-year anniversary edition of the *Howl*, appearing in summer 2015, featured a fleshed-out plan for making the Community Forest a reality. Emily Whittaker wrote,

Upon completion the project aims to protect 935 acres of forest, wetland, and granite mountains as well as 6.5 miles of river/tributary. The total cost of the project is \$1.4 million. Recently, the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve was awarded a grant for \$400,000 from the Community Forest and Open Spaces Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, the group has raised \$225,000 in cash and \$35,000 in donated real estate.

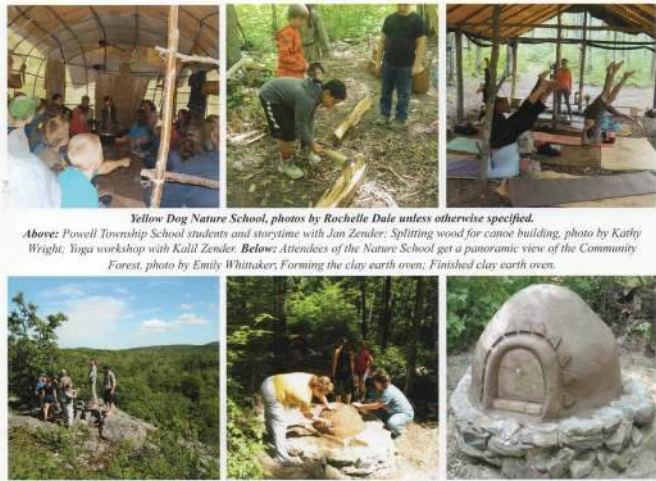


YDWP completed the Community Forest acquisition in 2016. The fall/winter edition of the *Howl* invited the public to help plan for its future.

She added, meaningfully, “We still need to continue our fundraising efforts to reach our goal.” By the next summer, through herculean effort, the money had been raised. With characteristic humor, Emily reported,

While no celebrities stepped in to help, during the first week of March we did get another private foundation to provide a \$150,000 grant. With this last major gift, we could see that we were very close and all of our hard work and years of fundraising, rejection letters, and crazy looks was all worth it. We held one more fundraiser and launched an online campaign through Crowdrise. More people stepped forward, and by the deadline, we reached our goal. Overjoyed might just be an understatement.

Subsequent editions of the *Howl* lavish deserved attention on the Community Forest: the development of trails and construction of footbridges in 2016, the first Bioblitz survey of the preserve’s plant and animal species in 2017, and the construction of the custom-built trailhead kiosk in 2018. And nearby, at the new Zender/Dale Forest Retreat, a series of nature school programs was introduced: birch bark canoe building and indigenous architecture demonstrations for kids, clay oven construction, forest yoga retreats, and mushroom foraging.



Activities at the new Yellow Dog Nature School kicked off in 2016. Rochelle Dale reported on the inaugural season in the fall/winter 2016-17 issue.

Change, however, was once again in the air. In the fall of 2018, the present generation of staff began to come into its own. Rochelle Dale took the helm as Administrator and Sarah Heuer as Program Coordinator. The *Howl* reflected that shift; a new design was unveiled in the spring of 2020, just as the pandemic was turning the world upside down.

Many individuals had worked tirelessly over the decades to bequeath to the present staff and board a vigorous organization. In an article for the first edition of the revamped newsletter, Rochelle Dale thanked Emily Whittaker and husband, former board member Ben Kent, for their service, but also acknowledged Wendy Johnson, who worked diligently in the background for YDWP since the beginning:

I remember her in those early years organizing and directing activities at our annual meeting with a baby on her hip and a list of directives in her hand. She had been instrumental in promoting fundraising events and concerts- like the Greg Brown benefit concert for the purchase of Pinnacle Falls. Her energy seemed endless. Later she took on jobs that no one else wanted: taking care of insurance, renewing licenses and basically all the unglamorous upkeep jobs, but she always did them with a smile and a shrug because she was helping the Yellow Dog.

(continued on next page)

McKenzie Bay Retreat
8794 Co Rd 550 Big Bay 906 345-9467
tdarlene44@gmail.com

MARQUETTE FOOD CO-OP

COMMUNITY MINDED & COMMUNITY-OWNED

NATURAL AND ORGANIC GROCERY STORE

502 W. Washington St., Marquette, MI • marquettefood.coop

HOWLING IN THE WILDERNESS

A large cast of characters had come on stage or managed from the wings, only to pass responsibility for the show to others who loved the river and brought fresh energy to preserving it. 30 years of newsletter editions testify that continuity in such change has always come from the organization’s mission “to preserve the Yellow Dog Watershed in its most natural state for the use of the public now, and for the benefit of future generations.”

In his front-page article in the spring 2020 *Howl*, Jan Zender used an apt metaphor for the spirit that animates YDWP in good times and bad. He spoke of the joy of children in syrup season and reminded readers of the “grandfathers,” the maples towering over the generations and offering their sweet essence in the hardest time of the year:

Once the sap and sugar is all made and the trees have stopped flowing, Native Peoples will put up a thanksgiving feast or dance as a way of showing how this beautiful gift of the trees is appreciated. In olden times, this gift often kept people from starving in a season when hunting was difficult and the green plants had yet to appear.



Rochelle Dale and her granddaughter tapping maple trees in spring 2020. Photo by Sarah Heuer.

Appreciation for the gifts of the natural world brings about spiritual strength and mental well-being, but it also underpins our physical survival. By giving thanks for land and water, working to preserve the integrity of natural systems, and encouraging others to do the same, the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve aims to bequeath this birthright to our grandchildren and the generations to come.



Kalil Zender
METALSMITHING

Handmade. Custom. Bespoke. Metalsmithing and Lapidary in Marquette, MI
www.kalilzender.com @kalilzendermetalsmithing

ELLEN'S CABIN VACATION RENTAL

COZY, REMOTE, BACKCOUNTRY RETREAT, SLEEPS 4 (+2)

PRIME LOCATION FOR HIKING, BIKING, SKIING, CANOING
NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL, DEAD RIVER, SILVER LAKE AND DEAD RIVER BASINS NEARBY



906-362-8717
WWW.AIRBNB.COM/ROOMS/500325470?

THANK YOU MEMBERS AND DONORS

December 5, 2024 - May 23, 2025

Donors

Jamie Campbell
Mary Campbell
John & Patricia Case
Citizens for a Safe and Clean Lake Superior
Community Foundation of Marquette County
Karen & Paul Cox
Natalie Dale
Patrick & Lynn de Freitas
Megan Easterling
Allan & Gail Edgar
Jeffery Fogel
Chris Fries
Grainger Industrial Supply Company
Jude Halloran
Susan Houston
Mary Lambert
Dave McCabe
Jim & Lisa Muenzenberger
Gordon Niessen
James Noone
Terry & Frances O'Neill
Carolyn & Rolf Peterson
Diana Peterson
Roberta Seiss
LeRoy Smith
Superiorland Duplicate Bridge Club
James & Sheila Vandenberghe
Catherine & Donald Whitney

Renewing Members

John & Lisa Anderson
Karen Bacula
Dave Barber & Heidi Shatz
Sara & Ronald Basso
Richard Bell
John & Rebecca Bercini
John Biddlecome
Mike & Shannon Bowen
William & Virginia Bowen
Elizabeth Calcutt
Maura & Kenneth Davenport
Clare DePue
Sarah Drury
Edie Farwell & Jay Mead
Jay & Linda Farwell
Clare Fastiggi & Abe Turner
Dennis & Kim Ferraro
Mike & Betsy Finlay
Jane Fitkin
Jo Foley
Frank Foster
Chris Fries
Steve Garske
John Gillette & Sarah Mittlefehldt
William & Diantha Harris
Fred Hawley
John & Julie Highlen
Warren & Susan Hingst
Scott Hudson
Eric Johnstone
Sarah & David Karnes
Jim & Barb Kidder
Jack Kleiber
Eric & Marlo Korhonen
Kim Kost
Keith Kuykendall
Amy Lehman

Jacklyn Lenten
Alec Lindsay & Kate Teeter
Susan Long
Amie Lucas
Paul Marin & Betsy Little
Michael Marsden
Viviane Masshardt-Bee
John & Karin Mattis
Ted Mattis
Fred & Kathy Maynard
Dave McCabe & Andrea Gonstead
Kerry McGinley & Karen Burkman
Roslyn McGrath
Kristi Mills
Jerry Mohlman
Polly Moore
Tom Mountz
Jim & Lisa Muenzenberger
Pam & Edward Muzzey
Carolyn Myers
James Noone
Sally Olsen
Maureen Peabody
Mary Picard
Nancy & Pete Price
Susan Puncochar
Jan & John Rebers
John & Kayce Reinertsen
Ann Reinthal
Curt Robare
Teri Rockwood
Kevin Rodibaugh
Daniel & Jennifer Russell
Wade Saari
Tom & Mary Saphner
Linda Seiler & Julius Wydzierzecki
Roberta Seiss
Greg Seppanen & Carol Henry
Paul & Margaret Sloan
Eileen & Darryl Small
LeRoy Smith
Keegan Springfield
Tom Steen & Carol Cook
Craig & Phyllis Stien
Lynn Suits
Susy & Rolf Swanson
Rick Stoll & Kathryn Erdmann
Mary Tackett
Marilyn Tobin
Michelle Touton
Joel & Patti Trick
Mark Troutdt
Michael Uschold
Nancy Uschold
Cindy & Mark Ventimiglia
Chip & Tracy Walklet
Frances Whitman
Suzanne Williams
Kay Williamson
Michael Wood

Welcome New Members!

Tom Asmus
Karl Johnson & Zhi Qiao
Doug Lindblom
Adam Lucas
Michael Lynn
Terry Messmer
Katie O'Brien
Carrie & Wally Pearson

Cinda & Karl Pettys
Lori Rogers
Thomas Schlegel
Gloria & Frank Schoepf

Honor Gifts

Nancy Bailey
Liz & Dennis Boe
Peggy Jensen
Mark Mitchell & Diane Partrick
Linda Morrison
Ann Weller
In memory of Lynn Emerick

Ezra Dedenbach
On behalf of Marc Dedenbach



Thanks also to our volunteers, especially those who joined us for the 5/14 tree planting day. Pictured left to right: Grace Argeropoulos, Jim Miller, Jan Zender, Rochelle Dale, Brian Noell, Izaak Miller, Valerie Stromquist, and Lauren Moore. Missing from photo: Kristi Mills and Sarah Heuer. Special thanks to John Highlen, Cory Howes, and Mark Bevins. Photos by Sarah Heuer.



Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve

PO Box 5

Big Bay, MI 49808

(906)345-9223

ydpw@yellowdogwatershed.org

www.yellowdogwatershed.org



Ski/snowshoe expedition co-leader Wade Saari holding the “Bentley” sign Fred Rydholm posted decades ago on a tree by the lake. Photo by Julie Highlen.



*The original blazes marking the Bentley Trail were hewn into trees with hatchets. Today they help identify lost sections of the trail.
Photo by Florence Zender.*



Temperatures were frigid for the 2025 Yellow Dog ski/snowshoe event on March 1. Participants paused only briefly for a picture on Bentley Lake before retreating back into the woods. Photo by Wade Saari.