

DOING SOMETHING: WILDLIFE HABITAT PROJECT CONTINUES. See page 4

THQ



REGISTER NOW! 2026 FUNDRAISER: SKI/SNOWSHOE THE NEW ACQUISITION. See page 11

HOWL

Fall/Winter 2025 - 26

Celebrating 30 Years

Bi-annual Newsletter Volume 29, Issue 2

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

OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME

By Rochelle Dale, Executive Director

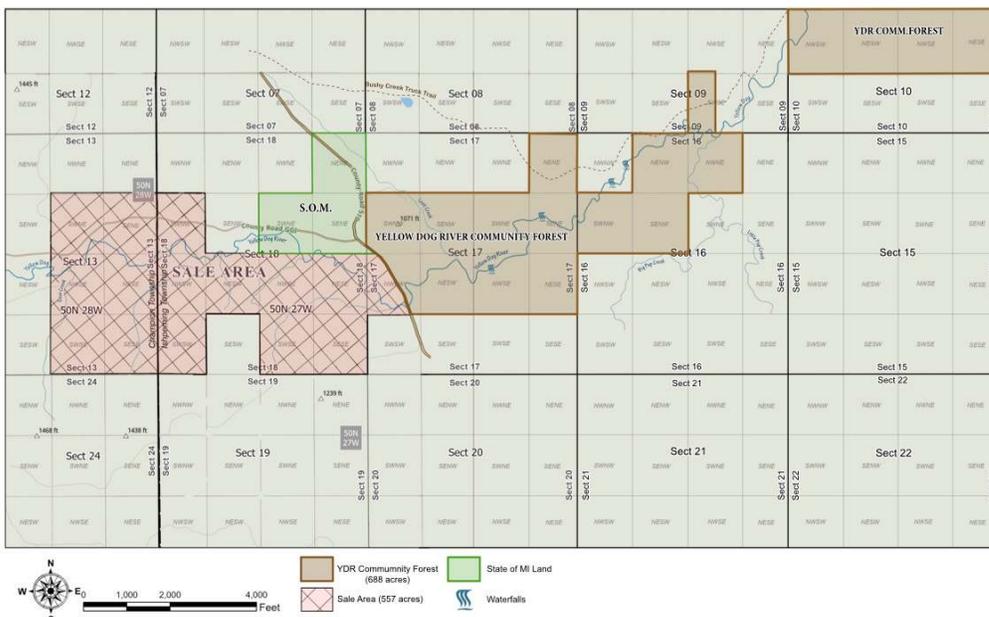
What seemed like a tragedy in the making became a miraculous turnaround. YDWP has signed an agreement to purchase 557 acres of Yellow Dog River corridor upstream from and contiguous with the Yellow Dog River Community Forest!

When we first learned that this area along the river was to be put on the market, we were dismayed, partly because it happened so suddenly and without warning. We checked the asking price and were overwhelmed. How could we raise enough money in time before someone else or some corporation bought it for development?



View of the Huron Mountains atop a vista in the new acquisition. Photo by Sarah Heuer.

YDR COMMUNITY FOREST IN RELATION TO SALE AREA



GIVE A GIFT MEMBERSHIP OR YDWP GEAR THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



Having a hard time coming up with a Christmas gift for your conservation-minded friends and relatives? Consider a gift membership to the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve. In addition to an email message welcoming them to our organization, new members will receive updates on our programs and initiatives via the biannual *Howl* newsletter as well as periodic email blasts.

Those bringing family and friends into the fold with a gift membership of \$50 or more will receive a black ceramic, Yellow Dog River coffee mug. Simply go to the membership page of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve website and select "Gift" at the desired member level.

In addition, we have long and short sleeve T-shirts, tie dyes, ball caps, and insulated tumblers available for purchase on our website. Please complete your order before December 17 to receive your items before Christmas.



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FROM THE VICE-CHAIR: 30 YEARS AND COUNTING

By Jan Zender

As 2025 comes to a close, we are still celebrating our thirty-year commitment to the Yellow Dog River. But we really began the festivities this summer with our annual meeting and concert featuring Ignorant Mob, Michael Waite, Niikah Hatfield, and Wendy Johnson and Dean.

Ignorant Mob, with their reggae rhythms, got the crowd on their feet and dancing. In the early years of YDWP, Ignorant Mob drew a great number of their young fans to YDWP events. Now, those young people are middle-aged folks with children of their own, who are also dancing to the Mob. Several families had three generations present, all having fun together.

All the musicians who participated in the annual meeting celebration have been great supporters of YDWP and over the years have performed many benefit concerts for us. Their early followers have now grown into professional positions from which they too support YDWP.

This past season wasn't all a party though. From spring through late fall, we worked diligently on restoring 160 acres along the Yellow Dog River to enhance habitat for many species of animals, birds, plants, and trees. I would like to thank all the volunteers who worked so hard, and also UP Whitetails, who were generous with funding, expertise, and volunteers. We all learned a great deal from this project.

In August, YDWP, Trout Unlimited, and Superior Outfitters hosted the annual two-day fly fishing workshop. YDWP fed 40 people throughout the event. We had a fine turnout with full registration. If you missed it this year, look for registration in early summer 2026.

As I was talking with some of the young college-aged participants at the fly-fishing workshop, they expressed their concerns about the future. Several of them were majoring in environmental subjects, and they were worried about loss of funding for graduate school, loss of funding and job cuts in their field, and they worried about their future in general. They see a lifetime of being affected by climate catastrophes. The attack on the environment will mean that all of us will have to be ever vigilant. We will have to work to protect our clean water, clean air, and good habitat for all the impacted living beings.

Thanks to all who helped out this past year. We sincerely hope that we have been able to positively influence everyone who participated in our events. We hope each one goes off with new knowledge and enthusiasm to do good work.



Gettin' a groove on at the thirtieth anniversary celebration.

Photo by Chauncey Moran.

McKenzie Bay Retreat
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A scenic landscape photograph showing a body of water (likely a bay or lake) surrounded by lush green trees and a small building in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

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DOING SOMETHING: THE ONGOING WILDLIFE HABITAT PROJECT IN THE COMMUNITY FOREST

By Rochelle Dale

Perhaps the sound of water falling over stones draws us, as if back toward the womb of the world, rushing as our blood does through our bodies. These rivers are vessels of the earth that give life and ask nothing in return. Perhaps I feel at peace on the river because the sound of it all beats to the same rhythm as my heart. . . the treetop winds seem the same as those that fill my lungs. Whatever it is, I know this: Magic lives in these Hill Country rivers, and each time I turn from them, I dream of returning to them, and I pray that we never kill the magical place I call home.

Steve Ramirez- [Casting Forward](#)

When I read this paragraph from Ramirez, I stopped trying to formulate my own words about the Yellow Dog River and the Upper Peninsula. I couldn't say it any better. Even though Ramirez is talking about the Texas Hill country, it could just as easily have been right here, the Huron Mountain hill country. And perhaps it is this connection with water, our rivers, and nature that can transform our lives.

I believe this may be why we found ourselves on a near-90-degree day at the beginning of October struggling to plant 1,535 saplings high above the Yellow Dog River in an unfrequented section of the Community Forest. This planting session was part of project funded in large part by the Michigan DNR and one of our partners, UP Whitetails, to ensure wildlife habitat for the future despite a warming climate, invasive species, and disease.

After diving into this task, amidst frequent complaints about working conditions, weather, too many invasives, and questions about why we are doing this and what was I thinking, I had to do a little soul searching. I know what inspires and motivates me, but what drives others? This project is for the future. Some of us may never know the long-range outcome, but we can dream and plan as if we will.

From the very beginning, even during the grant writing phase, George Lindquist, long time member and trustee of UP Whitetails and member of the YDR Community Forest advisory board, has provided steady, timely, and enthusiastic support and advice. Not only did UP Whitetails provide financial assistance for seeding and planting, George and wife Julie volunteered on that scorching October day when we planted 1000 white oaks, 500 hemlocks, 25 butternut hickory and 10 shagbark hickory.

Later, I asked George what he believes to be the most critical concern for wildlife. Without having to stop and think, he answered, "habitat loss." That being said, it's a little complicated because it didn't just happen yesterday, but it's been going on since timbering first began in the UP. George explained that we've lost around 90% of hemlocks since the 1850s. Left alone, hemlocks live a long time, 400 years or so, and they provide the shelter that wildlife needs as the seasons shift. However, timber companies cut many of these hemlock groves in the 1800s to make way for maple. When the hemlock stands were frequent and close together, the white-tailed deer were able to migrate gradually, going from one stand to the next on their way to the winter yards. This gave them time to eat acorns at each stop and fatten up for the cold months ahead. Without these stopover spots, the deer go straight to their winter grounds, where many of them will starve before the winter is over if they have not fattened up beforehand.



Brush shelter building in one of the project area wildlife clearings. Photo by Sarah Heuer.



George Lindquist and wife Julie at the October tree planting. George is also a member of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs and, in that capacity, he will be advocating that the new Michigan State Management Plan prioritizes managing state forests for wildlife. Photo by Rochelle Dale.

There's reason to be excited about our work and the trees we planted. The white oaks, recommended by our local DNR biologist because of their resistance to oak wilt disease and their adaptability to warmer temperatures, also produce a less acidic acorn favored by white-tailed deer. Mostly, red oak is the naturally occurring species in our area, but any acorns are good food sources, and a high acorn yield makes a big difference for deer health and survival rate.

Currently, oaks only account for 2% of our UP forests, which means these stands are critical. Cory Howes, the certified forester on this project, believes that the "establishment of white oak and other mast-producing species will contribute to long-term habitat quality and overall forest resilience across the 160-acre project area."

Cory has been a part of this project since the grant writing stage. He helped figure out the budget for the grant, found loggers who could do the work we needed, and helped decide what trees to plant and where. Cory says that because of this MDNR grant, we were able to "implement silvicultural treatments that otherwise wouldn't have been economically feasible such as creating several small patch clearcuts within the aspen component to regenerate a younger age class, enhancing structural diversity and providing critical early successional habitat for species such as white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, turkey, and a variety of songbirds." We hope also to see the golden-winged warbler, a species of greatest concern in Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan.

Throughout this past field season, we've engaged over 25 volunteers, ranging in age from 9 to 70-something. With their help, and with all staff on board, here's what we accomplished:

- Planted 90 fruit and nut trees and shrubs
- Fenced apples and provided protective tubing for other small saplings
- Hauled water to trees when necessary
- Planted pollinator plants: milkweed, coreopsis, and native sunflower
- Built 3 animal brush shelters according to USDA recommendations
- Sowed 195 pounds of rye and yellow clover
- Planted 1000 white oaks, 500 hemlocks, and 35 hickories

Cory, George, and all of us are curious about next year and looking forward to seeing how these efforts contribute to the health and growth of our local wildlife populations. No doubt about it: this project has been a lot of work! We would come home tired, sweaty, dirty, or wet. And will all of those trees and plants make it through the winter? Probably not. We'll need to do some replanting, but we still have grant funding for that purpose.

Is it worth it, and why are we doing this? My mom had a saying: "Do something, even if it's wrong." That's not to say she advocated doing the wrong thing, rather that you can't stand by and do nothing. After doing your homework, you make a decision, and with that, you take a risk. With this project we're trying to set things right, or at least undo some harm. We're caring for this magical place along a magical river. Only time will tell if our attempts at assisted migration and habitat enhancement are successful, but I can't wait until next year to see the apples and coreopsis bloom!



White oak and shagbark hickory ready for planting. Photo by Lisa Cohn.



Bucks in velvet, August 2025, near Harlow Lake. Deer migrating through our habitat enhancement area are often headed to this area, where there is a major wintering complex. Photo by John Anderson

VOLUNTEER VOICES

By Sarah Heuer, Programs Coordinator

Over the years, I have had the privilege to work with and get to know so many interesting individuals who have given their time and talents to serve the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve. From stream and lake monitoring to tree planting and seeding, culvert restoration, trail work, kiosk installation, brush shelter building, food preparation, event set-up and tear-down, and trash pick-up, folks have contributed to our mission in myriad ways. I admire YDWP volunteers for having the ambition to get into the wild for a challenging experience. We ask a lot of them on long days in remote places, wielding shovels and nets, pushing wheelbarrows, braving heat, cold, rain, and bugs.

The selfless acts of others also have made many memorable experiences for me. As Programs Coordinator, I run the spring and fall stream monitoring program, which, of any of our initiatives, requires by far the most time from volunteers. They are not just signing up for a few hours; they are stuck deep in the woods with me (a stranger) for most of the day. They can't just turn around and go home if they don't like it, or me. It's a big ask, really.

I used to worry that I needed to give them all the right answers to their questions, but that concern gradually faded, because really all they wanted was to have an enjoyable experience on the river, talking about so much more than just the science of it all. We talk about life. River life and our lives. Sometimes it's even therapeutic.

This year we embarked on a forestry for wildlife project in a little-visited section of the Community Forest that called for long, arduous workdays. One volunteer, who attended an intense tree planting event on an unseasonably warm October Saturday, shared a personal experience about the healing effect of selfless service:

When I showed up for a six-hour tree planting session this fall, I was recovering from an illness of the body and mind. I haven't felt physically or spiritually safe in my current life situation for a while, and being in survival mode for so long caused my body to react suddenly. My body was yelling, "Something is wrong!" through major issues with my digestion, nausea, and drowsiness that left me bedridden for two days and sick for weeks. You wouldn't think so, but planting trees all day was exactly what I needed.

While my symptoms were milder on the day of tree planting, so much physical labor in the heat was not easy. But as the hours passed, I entered into a trance. I found that as I stood in the autumn forest enveloped by golden light, helping to create new life, future generations, the uncomfortable physical sensations faded



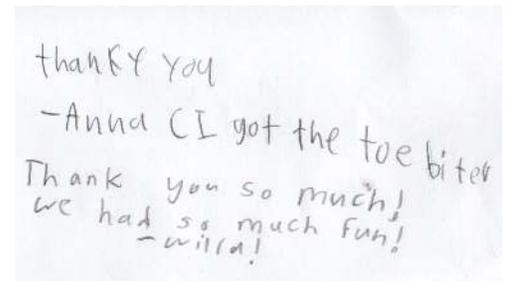
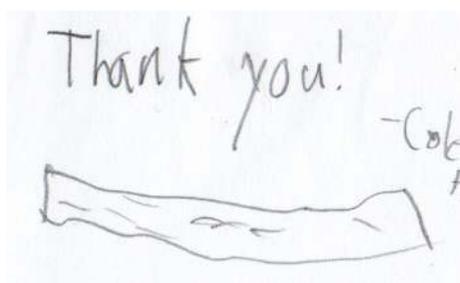
Father Marquette Catholic Academy 6th graders hiking in the Community Forest after water monitoring. Photo by Alex Gencheff.

into the background. That day I so intensely felt God all around me. I could peel back the layers of my fatigue and frustration and find my essence, the essence of us all. I became the golden light, and I could finally surrender as I guided saplings into the soil. It was a day I will never forget.

I volunteer to help the Yellow Dog Watershed, but, in turn, a part of me is healed in the process.

Kids play a major role in our volunteer programs too. They aren't signing up themselves to participate, but their teachers and/or parents know that this gives them an opportunity to have a meaningful experience in nature. They almost always rise to the challenge. Yes, school groups can be taxing. It can feel like a whirlwind of chaos at times and everything is coming unglued, but children really do grasp the importance of natural systems and are always astonished by the abundance of life forms they find in the river. They embrace it all, uninhibited and fearless when being led into the chilly spring or fall waters to collect bug samples. One teacher who regularly brings her class to the Yellow Dog has this to say:

For the past 2 years, the staff of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve have helped my 6th grade students to experience the Preserve in a very special way - by hosting field trips! My students have had the opportunity to don waders, collect macroinvertebrates, take stream data, and learn the importance of protecting pristine natural areas. The staff have been extremely patient, accommodating, and kind to young learners just "getting their toes wet" with ecological knowledge. I hope to continue bringing my classes out to have these experiences in the hopes of creating future generations committed to being the guardians and protectors of this beautiful place we call home.



What makes working with school groups meaningful for me is that the students are just kids in a wild river. They want to have fun, seeing each other get wet and laughing as they struggle to move against the current, trying not to fall in. But if they do, more often than not that's okay because it's a thrilling experience. We are helping to create a memory and a connection for them to the natural world that can become the basis for an enduring commitment to stewardship.

Volunteering is an experience, and that's how we learn to grow, through our experiences in the real world with real people. Not just reading about it in a book, listening to a lecture, or surfing the internet watching other people's experiences. Another volunteer concurs:

I started volunteering with the YDWP this spring, and since then, I have learned so much and met many inspiring people. A highlight for me this year was water monitoring. I got to learn about macroinvertebrates like caddisflies and hellgrammites, and I saw what a sculpin is. It was so exciting to see what lies beneath the surface of the water! Overall, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to get involved in conservation work and hang out with people who are passionate about maintaining and improving our local environment.

Volunteering with YDWP is about developing and sustaining community, but outside of the space of our daily lives. Thanks to all of you who have put yourselves out there to help us. We hope you benefitted as much from your experience as we have from your work. For those of you who have not yet gotten involved, join us, and if you have already participated, please come back again and again, as many of you already do.



We find an escape from our sterile and fluorescent-lit weekday environs to prowl the wilderness of the Yellow Dog Preserve. The trickling of the babbling river restores our energy and volunteer events allow us to give some of that energy back.

We have shared our love of the Yellow Dog Community Forest Preserve with friends and our growing family. We were joined by our dear friends in volunteering for the trash cleanup in 2024, discovering fewer discarded items than anticipated, suggesting that most other people visiting this wilderness respect it too.

We brought our then 5-month-old daughter Roxanne with us, strapped in a backpack, to the spring bug collection in 2025. As our parents toted us around on outdoor adventures, we thought it was only fitting to share the wonders of the Yellow Dog with her at a young age.

We hope our little nymph finds watching the caddisflies crawl out of their carefully constructed rock homes and the mayflies flit from under the leaves just as special as we do. Volunteering on the Preserve offers the surprises life brings when you show a little patience and attention, appreciating life in all forms and the surprises you find under every rock.

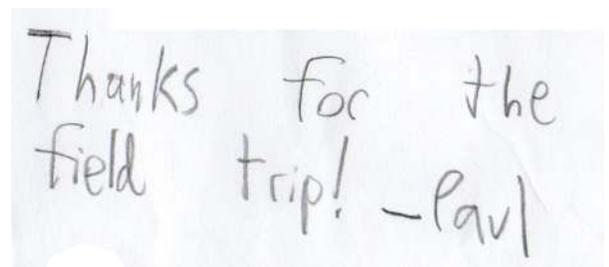
-Sam and Abby Prentice



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OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME

(continued from page 1)

erosion caused by new development and road building, loss of wildlife habitat, and, of course, loss of public access. Another reason for concern is that half of the land is in Ishpeming Township, where building setbacks are only 30 feet, which is considerably less than what should be required to avoid erosion on a river with such high velocity and the potential for rapid spring snow melt (We have advocated for the township to change their zoning, but so far that hasn't happened).

Now, with a purchase agreement secured, we can put those concerns aside and think about raising the additional \$400,000. Currently, YDWP is reaching out to other foundations and local organizations; however, this likely will not get us all the way there. We will need your help too. By spring of 2026, we will have concrete numbers to share as we progress toward our goal, so look for updates. Our first fundraiser will be the ski/snowshoe event on February 28 (see page 11). In the meantime, if you would like your gift to apply to the 2025 tax year, specify on your check, bequest, or website donation form that you are contributing to the Yellow Dog River Corridor purchase. Contributions in any amount are welcome.

We have long wished to preserve this section of river corridor, but in recent years, acquiring it seemed a daunting task. Land had become expensive, even in the backwoods, and, Longyear showed little inclination to sell. Our chance with Manulife came suddenly, and the timeframe was short. An incredibly generous donor stepped forward immediately, enabling us to make a credible offer, creating the opportunity of a lifetime.

When combined with the existing Community Forest, the new property will create a 4-mile corridor of preserved river frontage containing 1,245 acres of forest, which, in accordance with our mission, YDWP will maintain in its most natural state, keeping the waters clean, making it available for generations of visitors to enjoy and wildlife to thrive.



A seasonal access road runs through the new acquisition on the north side of the Yellow Dog, providing easy access for outdoor recreation. Photo by Sarah Heuer.



The rocky hills on the south side of the river are prime backcountry ski terrain in winter. Photo by Sarah Heuer.



The section of river in the new property is popular with anglers for its abundant brook trout habitat. Photo by John Anderson.

WATERKEEPER SUMMIT: HOW FORTUNATE WE ARE

By Rochelle Dale



Waterkeeper Alliance connects and supports local Waterkeeper programs to provide a voice for waterways and their communities worldwide. It designates a single individual as “Waterkeeper” to patrol waterways, making sure environmental laws are upheld and communities are protected from industrial pollution. For decades, Chauncey Moran has been the Yellow Dog Riverkeeper.

I recently attended the Waterkeeper North American Summit that took place in Pittsburgh PA, where the Allegheny and the Monongahela Rivers come together to form the Ohio. While Pittsburgh may be known today for its modern industry and football team, historically it was famous for its 3 rivers, making it a fitting place to hold a conference about water. Watershed organizations from U.S. and Canada gathered to discuss policies, issues, and strategies concerning the health of our rivers, lakes, bays and coastal regions. Although it was sometimes overwhelming for a Yooper, the sharing of information and the networking with professional water advocates will be extremely useful for our work here on the Yellow Dog.

Upon my return, my daughter asked me the classic question, “What was your key take-away?” I responded in a joking fashion, “Never leave the U.P. and fight tooth and nail to keep it safe.”

Seriously though, we are extremely fortunate here in the U.P. Numerous rivers, lakes, and bays throughout the rest of the country have been contaminated by multiple types of horrendous pollution: plastics and microplastics, effluent from wastewater treatment facilities and concentrated animal feeding operations, agricultural run-off, PFAS, and toxics from chemical manufacturing. Now there are emerging threats on the horizon, particularly data centers, with their massive consumption of water and electricity. With regulatory roll-backs and the weakening of the Clean Water Act on the federal level, we can expect to see industrial pollution get even worse in the nation’s waterways and wetlands.

Of course, the U.P. does face its own threats, but, overall, our waters are clean. So, the real takeaway is that we must be vigilant, fight tooth and nail to keep our U.P. waters healthy, and support those organizations who work for environmental protection. We can make a difference, but it won’t be easy.

Actually, I’m glad I left the U.P. to attend this summit, gain new perspectives and meet new people doing similar work, but I’m really happy to be home on the Yellow Dog!

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MINING ACTIVITY ON THE HURON RIVER ACCELERATING WITH LUNDIN'S INVESTMENT IN BOULDERDASH

By Brian Noell, Communications Director

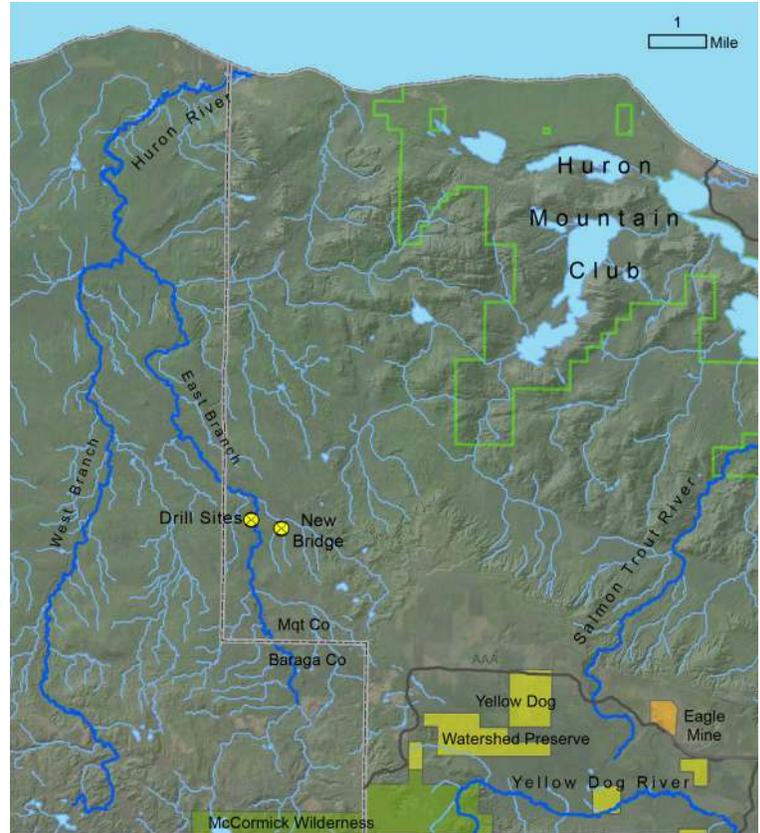
This summer, with the assistance of a Freshwater Future Project Grant, YDWP initiated an exploratory mine site monitoring program, using a suite of digital tools paired with on-the-ground investigation. The most significant site we are following is the Boulderdash Project, less than 5 miles west of the Huron Mountain Club, along the East Branch of the Huron River on the Marquette/Baraga County line.

The company coordinating test drilling, Talon Metals, made considerable waves in August 2022, when it entered into an option agreement with UPX Minerals for an 80% share in the mineral rights on around 400,000 acres in Marquette, Baraga, Houghton, and Iron County, initially owned by the Ford Motor Company, then sold to Rio Tinto (former owners of Eagle Mine) and finally to UPX.

In September 2023, the US Department of Defense entered an agreement with the company, providing \$20.6 million to speed exploration and exploitation of deposits at their flagship mine in Tamarack, Minnesota. In November of that year Talon secured an additional \$114.8 million from the Department of Energy for a battery minerals processing facility to be built in North Dakota. It also has an agreement to supply Tesla with 165 million pounds of nickel concentrate from its Minnesota operations.

In October 2024, Talon announced a significant copper and nickel discovery at the Boulderdash site, part of the same formation as the deposit being exploited by Eagle Mine, 8 miles to the east. This announcement drew the attention of Lundin, Eagle's parent company, and in March of this year, the two partnered to fund more robust exploration on the Huron River.

The option agreement between Lundin and Talon gives the former a potential majority stake, not only at Boulderdash, but on any discoveries in 33,000 of



Pump supplying water to drilling operations only hundreds of feet from the Huron River.

the 400,000 acres in the Ford package. However, after each 10,000 meters of drilling, Lundin has the option to pull out. The company may be hedging its bets, but it has an acute interest in this project. Unlike Talon, it has the capital and experience to develop a viable mine, not to mention resources and personnel at nearby Eagle, where yields are declining and the slated closure approaches.

YDWP and Citizens for a Safe and Clean Lake Superior monitored Boulderdash this summer and discovered at least 4 clearings, each containing multiple drill holes. One of the sites is a mere 250 feet from the Huron River itself. On August 14, the subcontractor doing the test drilling at Boulderdash applied for a permit to build a temporary bridge over a tributary on the East side of the Huron River, meaning they now will be prospecting deeper into Marquette County, only 3 miles from the southwest boundary of the Huron Mountain Club.

The Huron River, remote and untamed, is a remarkable ecosystem. Unobstructed by dams and far from high-traffic roadways, it provides quality habitat for a variety of fish to feed and spawn, especially in the spectacular estuary it forms as it enters Lake Superior. Not surprisingly, this location is a largely unmonitored but increasingly popular camping and fishing spot.

A mine on the banks of the Huron River would transform the area. Paved roads and electricity would be pushed deep into the wild, succeeded by truck traffic, subterranean blasting, and light pollution. This is not to mention the threats mining operations might pose to the river ecosystem and to Lake Superior herself.

It is still early in this process, but developing a strategy for action in advance of mine construction will be crucial if citizens are to have voice in the outcome. YDWP has initiated discussions with other stakeholders, the initial step in coalition building. Please feel free to contact us if you are concerned about the Huron River Watershed and would like to get involved.

FUNDRAISER SKI/SNOWSHOE IN THE NEW RIVER CORRIDOR

February 28, 2026 (March 7 “rain date”)
\$50 minimum donation

EXPLORE YDWP’S NEW 557-ACRE PROPERTY ON YOUR SKIS OR SNOWSHOES, AND HELP US RAISE FUNDS FOR THE ACQUISITION. ENJOY THE HILL-TOP SCENERY, WETLANDS, RIVERFRONT, AND FEEDER STREAMS, AS WELL AS LUNCH COOKED ON A WOOD STOVE INSIDE A SNOW-WALKER WINTER TENT.

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Register today:
yellowdogwatershed.org/events/



*Hilly terrain in the new property: great for backcountry skiing!
Photo by Sarah Heuer.*



*Both the titanium stove and the custom-made Egyptian cotton tent were designed for winter travel: lightweight, and small enough to be pulled on a toboggan by a person on snowshoes. This tent, which sleeps up to 10, has been used several times over the years for week-long excursions in the McCormick Wilderness Area.
Photo by Rochelle Dale.*



*Lunch spread in the winter tent, 2020 ski/snowshoe event.
Photo by Kalil Zender.*

A GATHERING TO REMEMBER: YDWP THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

By Sarah Heuer

YDWP's thirtieth annual meeting was held on August 2 at the former stomping grounds for numerous Yellow Dog events on what used to be Mike Davis and Mary O'Donnell's property, now owned by Ann Reinthal and co-managed by Ann and Mary. Returning to this place gave emotional significance to the milestone and honored a shared journey that has helped shaped this organization and our community over three decades.

We started work on their land in the fall of 2024, when Ann and Mary gave us permission to widen an old logging road leading to our northern 160-acre parcel of the Community Forest. This work continued in the spring of 2025 as we planted trees, seeded grass, and built brush shelters, commuting along their driveway each and every time, occasionally running into Mary, always with a big smile on her face, happy to see us hard at work. Come mid-July our attention seamlessly shifted from this project to our party preparations.

We planned to stage the celebration in the open field and apple orchard a short distance from the riverside house, where a dilapidated old stage stood, a little worse for wear. This had been the venue for YDWP events years before, and Mary was happy that we were enlivening it once more. Ann was pleased too, having envisioned that the space would be revived for events like ours.

Party plans were discussed in Mary's home, on the ridge above where the Yellow Dog River winds around a large bend. I enjoyed her openhearted hospitality as she affectionately reminisced about her life with Mike, YDWP's first Chairman, their adventures and some of his antics. She encouraged us to use whatever we needed to get the job done, including her riding lawnmower, weed-whacker, hand trimmers, trash bins, as well as the outside spigot for pressure washing tents, clean-up, and drinking water. I felt as if her help and stories were a bridge that connected us back to the days when the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve was just in its infancy.

Ignorant Mob and Michael Waite helped bridge that gap too. Both had been event performers in the early years and enthusiastically accepted our invitation to participate in the thirtieth anniversary celebration. The Mob and their crew not only fixed up the existing stage but expanded it with a large flatbed trailer to make additional room for the band and their gear. Michael was booked for a wedding that day but made the extra effort to be part of our evening's entertainment. Wendy Johnson, former Yellow Dog employee and her partner Dean, came all the way from Ann Arbor to perform, singing a memorable rendition of Nena's "99 Red Balloons" during their set. And the sound was amazing thanks to Jim Supanich of Sombrero Sound Company, getting people on their feet, young and old, dancing in the grassy field.

Throughout the last 8 years with YDWP, I've heard numerous stories of former celebrations at "Mary's Place on the Yellow Dog." Many times, I've sifted through old photos of the bygone days, when everyone looked so young, maybe a little more carefree in a world maybe a little less complicated, sharing an emotional and personal stake in this land they called home. They gathered to have fun, and they gathered to share the collective responsibility for their home, this wilderness that a river runs through. And here we were years later, still gathering for the same reasons.





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At this year's event, we had a crowd of over 200 people supporting YDWP's ongoing commitment to stewarding land and water. For attendees, we led a guided hike from our habitat enhancement sites in the adjoining section of the Community Forest to the high bluffs hugging the Yellow Dog River and back to Ann and Mary's west property line. There was a smorgasbord of food available afterward, and camaraderie was easy to find. We heard words of gratitude from our Chairman Chauncey Moran, and Executive Director, Rochelle Dale, both of whom have been with the organization from the beginning, recalling the contributions of past YDWP personnel whose work we still continue to build upon today.

The shared vision of care and responsibility was heightened for me when Bryn, Ignorant Mob's drummer, opened the set with an a cappella version of Jean Ritchie's, "Black Waters." Ritchie wrote this song in 1967 about strip mining in Kentucky near her hometown poisoning the waters in the valleys below, echoing the threat we face today in the U.P. from sulfide mining.

Bryn's performance brought tears to my eyes. It was a message to us all to enjoy the sweetness and beauty of this life, but also to be cautious, proactive, diligent, resilient, and mindful in face of the hardships we all must endure. We can't always control what happens, but we can control how we react to it. And this message is a big part of what we do here at the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve and why we persevere. A very fitting performance by a very special artist indeed, to commemorate this organization, our mission and the people who make it unique.



Previous page top: Chauncey Moran acknowledging Mary O'Donnell at the annual meeting. Photo by Sarah Heuer.

Previous page bottom: The event was better attended than any we have had in years. Photo by Chauncey Moran.

Above right: Ignorant Mob's drummer, Bryn Jungwirth. Photo by Chauncey Moran.

At right: Board, staff, and members who participated in the business portion of the annual meeting. Photo by Chauncey Moran.



IN MEMORIAM: BILL KINJORSKI

Former YDWP board member and owner of the Big Bay Outfitters, Bill Kinjorski, passed away on November 26, 2025. From his shop in the old town hall, Bill rented canoes and kayaks and sold maps, outdoor gear, fishing equipment, and artwork. He also dispensed advice about Yellow Dog adventure opportunities, introducing many visitors to the wonders of the watershed.

Bill served on the YDWP board from 2004 to 2018, bringing a charming smile and easygoing attitude to official proceedings. YDWP was fortunate to share space in the town hall building with Bill during his final years at the Outfitters (we had the side with the two jail cells). He cheerfully manned the gift shop when we weren't in the office and frequently came to visit when we were present.

An avid paddler and sportsman, Bill embodied the ethos of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, his conservation values growing from his broad and deep experience in the outdoors.



PLANNED GIVING: THE FUTURE OF THE WATERSHED WILL BE BRIGHT

Holiday greetings from all of us at YDWP!

From our work with schoolchildren, donors, members, and volunteers of all ages, the staff and board of YDWP have seen that commitment to environmental preservation comes from experience in the natural world, or, more precisely, experience with a particular place. The conservation mindset in all of us was born from concrete experience, not from general principles.

Those who have contributed to the mission of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve as donors, members, and volunteers have all had that experience, and from it springs their dedication to nurturing and conserving our shimmering corner of the world for future generations.

Yearly contributions and the hard work of volunteers sustain our organization from day to day, but YDWP's ability to protect the Watershed for ages to come is greatly enhanced by legacy gifts. Bequests, securities, charitable gift annuities, IRA distributions, real estate, and gifts of insurance may be substantial, but they don't necessarily involve greater expenditure by the donor. A recent legacy contributor noted that his \$10,000 donation of securities to our organization actually involved an initial investment of only \$250!

Think of the experiences you have had in the Yellow Dog and how vital it is that coming generations have them too. Can this commitment become part of your strategic planning? Please talk to your financial advisor about the possibilities.

The prudent investments you have made in the past can have an enormous impact on the future of our watershed, giving your grandchildren and their children the opportunity to experience its unspoiled wonders and, in turn, become stewards of the conservation legacy you imparted to them.



Felix Wiltzius with Sergey on a water monitoring day in the Jean Farwell Wilderness Area. Photo by Sarah Heuer.



KIRTLAND'S CENSUS YIELDS A SINGING MALE

During the spring 2025 Kirtland's Warbler survey on the Yellow Dog Plains, a male was discovered happily singing and darting about the jack pine. The bird stayed in the same vicinity for a few weeks. He was very active, so we could not get a photo. However, we were able to capture audio of him in his habitat.

It is always a joy to see and hear a male KW, especially on a rainy spring morning on the Yellow Dog Plains. Hopefully he was successful, and we will encounter his offspring this next season!

Kirtland's in Jack Pine. Watercolor by Nancy Moran.

THANK YOU MEMBERS AND DONORS

May 24 - December 1, 2025

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*In Honor of Fly-fishing Workshop
Volunteers*

John Gillette
In Memory of Douglas Gillette



Brush shelter building in the Community Forest. Photo by Sarah Heuer.



Hike through YDWP wildlife habitat enhancement area. Photo by Sarah Heuer.



Staff and volunteers in front of completed brush shelter. Photo by Dave Kadell.



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOURTH ANNUAL FLY-FISHING WORKSHOP.
PHOTOS BY DANIEL WOLSKI.

