

# ***INVESTING IN THE KEWEENAW'S FUTURE – MOVING TOWARD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT***

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## ***Executive Summary***

In the Keweenaw, more than in most places, the quality of the environment is synonymous with the quality of life. Living close to nature is by far the most important thing the people of our area share. The environment binds us together and gives us a common identity. It makes us a community. This means economic development in the Keweenaw must not be at odds with environmental protection.

Unfortunately, conventional economic thinking devalues community well being by not accounting for the environmental impacts of development. "Progress" is narrowly defined as unlimited, ever-expanding growth and physical development. This report takes an entirely different approach. FOLK advocates *sustainable development*, which measures progress by how well prosperity and environmental protection support each other. Prosperity means much more than just money. One way to define it is "a clean and healthy environment supporting local biodiversity and a diverse, stable, sustainable economy, which in turn provides members of the community with satisfying worklives and a decent, dependable income."

Sustainable development encourages economic activity which is designed to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future inhabitants of Earth to meet theirs. It means recognizing that our local decisions have global impacts. As a practical matter, sustainable development in the Keweenaw will emphasize expanded job opportunities and employment security derived from small and medium-sized businesses, energy and re-source efficiency, and ecosystem health.

FOLK believes sustainable development is particularly suited to the unique social conditions of the Keweenaw, because here people from all walks of life and all income levels are on a fairly equal social footing. We contend that conventional prescriptions for economic development erode this uniqueness, and serve to make the Keweenaw look and feel like everywhere else.

There are three steps a community must take to achieve sustainable development. Step One is to stop needless outflows of money and talent. To stem the "innovation drain" caused by out-migration of youths from the Keweenaw, we endorse an "alumni reunion" program to try to bring successful people back here. Various "buy local" programs can keep dollars circulating in our communities rather than leaking to the outside. More efficient services also prevent wastage of money. Step Two is to support

existing businesses and local control of business. Through surveys, "business incubators," and other support programs, we can bolster our existing economy rather than "chase smoke-stacks." Step Three is to encourage responsible enterprise. The Keweenaw is in an excellent position to capitalize on the burgeoning environmental consciousness in the U.S. We also need to do a better job of educating entrepreneurs and recruiting appropriate new businesses to the Keweenaw.

The third part of the report begins with a discussion of the complex problem of un-employment and job creation. Then we present alternative economic options for various sectors of the economy.

In Forestry and Forest Products, FOLK is calling for the completion of a Comprehensive Forest Assessment before any new pulpwood industry is located in the Keweenaw. In addition to a realistic inventory of harvestable timber, such an assessment would include a poletimber management strategy and analyses of the environmental, economic, and policy factors affecting forestry and forest products. Some of the alternatives we think deserve more attention include a System 6 mill, a small-diameter integrated sawmill complex, a veneer mill, and a mail-order modular furniture operation.

In Tourism, FOLK thinks we need to promote a more balanced mix of fossil-fueled and human-powered recreation. One way would be to develop an inn-to-inn cross-country ski resort system in the Keweenaw. We also support more hiking trails, the Calumet-Quincy National Historical Park proposal, underwater preserves, Ojibwa heritage activities, and other actions.

In Education, FOLK believes the Keweenaw needs better lifelong learning and vo-tech opportunities. A Keweenaw Learning Center (at the former Calumet Air Force Station) and a junior college are among the possibilities. In Telebusiness, we need to do more to attract telemarketers, teleservices, and mail-order companies which could benefit greatly from the rich local talent pool in computers and electronic communication. In Energy and Recycling, FOLK would like to see an audit and retrofit program and phased-in mandatory recycling to keep energy dollars from being wasted. In Agriculture, we advocate using part-time activities such as maple sugaring and apple cidering as a "bridge" to a possible agricultural renaissance in the Keweenaw.

A broad consensus in favor of sustainable development has begun to gather momentum. The most powerful financial institution in the world, the World Bank, recently adopted sustainable development as one of its guiding policies. So have several European governments and many more in the Third World. Canada has created sustainable development "roundtables" to coordinate environmental protection and economic advancement. A growing number of forward-thinking American politicians are embracing the philosophy. The final report of the prestigious United Nations Commission on Environment and Development, titled *Our Common Future*, has become the "bible" of sustainable development and finds wide acceptance among policymakers worldwide. Many citizen's groups here and all around the world are working for sustainable development. All of them are saying it's time for a fundamental change in how we define "progress."

FOLK agrees. We think the yardstick of progress should be how well the economy and the environment harmonize with each other. By embracing sustainable

development, the Keweenaw would be on the cutting edge of relating local development action to a global environmental perspective.

The report is extensively documented. A list of possible funding sources, with pros and cons for each, forms an appendix. There is also a glossary of key terms.