



Upcoming Events

September 23 - Steering Committee meets at the Rulison's. Call 334-2553 for more information.

The FOLK General Membership Meeting is tentatively scheduled for the end of October. The date, place, and time will be announced shortly.

FOLK Activities

FOLK Steering Committee Members have attended the following events since the last newsletter:

- Highway cleanups July 14 & Sept 17
Protect the Earth Summit August 2&3
Otter River Watershed Assessment Meeting August 26 in Tapiola
Bi-National Lake Superior Forum September 5, 2008 in Houghton

FOLK Tote Bags

So far, we've given away about 30 FOLK tote bags to members that have renewed. There are still lots left, but that means we've given away 10% of our total stock in about a month. To ensure you'll get your own, send along your renewal and your very own will be on its way shortly.

We've found that the greatest usage has been achieved by folks that carry theirs along with them. Besides the obvious uses involving shopping, they've been used in the garden to retrieve produce, backpacking to keep smaller items together in the pack, and even at fast food joints. Fast food? Yup. On a recent trip I stopped at Subway and ordered lunch for my family. They routinely wrap their subs in waxed paper, and then put them all together in a plastic bag. I asked the cashier if she'd mind using my FOLK tote bag instead of their throw-away plastic, and she said that would be fine. Besides saving one plastic bag, I could tell from the look the clerk gave me that a seed had been planted. And that is what it's all about, right?

Even if you've recently renewed your membership, you can get your FOLK tote by sending in another renewal, and we'll tack on another year to your expiration date. So don't delay and get your tote bag coming. And feel free to share your own creative uses of the tote with us.

Please check your mailing label and let us know if there are any errors. Also, please inform us if you relocate temporarily or permanently, or if you'd rather not receive this newsletter.

Environmental Assessment Released for Prickett Impoundment

On August 28, 2008, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released its Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Prickett Impoundment in Baraga/Houghton counties. This 66 page document is available online at http://www.ferc.gov. A easier link to this document has also been placed on the FOLK web page http://www.folkup.org

The EA devotes a significant amount of space to describing the geography, geology, and wildlife characteristics of the area. It also lists the names of individuals and organizations (including FOLK) and resource agencies that have filed documentation either in favor or against UPPCO's proposed Shoreline Management Plan (SMP). FERC then lists point-by-point the controversial sections of the SMP, and usually concludes that impacts will be "minimal," thus there will be no significant impact. FERC seems poised to approve UPPCO's SMP for Prickett with minimal modifications.

UPPCO intends to sell its "non-project lands" surrounding the Prickett impoundment. This property belongs to them, and even though it has been maintained as a wilderness recreation area for over 6 decades, they are within their rights to sell the lands. The "project lands" which include a minimum 200-foot buffer lie between the water and the soon-to-be-sold "non-project lands". This project lands buffer was established for the purpose of ensuring aesthetic management of the reservoir and prevention of shoreline activities that may adversely affect the scenic quality of Prickett Lake and the nearby reaches of the Sturgeon Wild and Scenic River. The license specifically requires that any use of project lands must protect and enhance the scenic, recreational, and other environmental values of the project. UPPCO is proposing 87 private boat slips along the shoreline (which is inside the project lands.) It is not clear how 87 private docks will enhance the scenic value of Prickett Lake.

If you feel moved to express your concerns to the FERC about their environmental assessment, here are some points to consider:

* No private docks on Prickett Lake; they have never been allowed. Any increased boat activity on the lake due to UPPCO's sale of non-project lands could be handled by upgrading the existing DNR public dock facilities on the lake. If private docks for the personal use of adjacent property users are prohibited, it is unlikely that the non-project lands will be intensely developed, thus reducing the degradation of the lake.

* Ask FERC to deny UPPCO's request to amend their license or require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Prickett project prior to the approval of any private uses of the project lands.

The EA acknowledges that with the approval of the SMP, "The reservoir and surrounding area may become less attractive to recreationists who prefer more serene, natural recreation activities." It is unfortunate that even in the relatively pristine Upper Peninsula of Michigan there are few wilderness lakes, and that number is dwindling. It is frustrating to watch a federal agency (FERC) whose responsibility is to protect and enhance project shorelines for future generations merely acquiesce to UPPCO's proposals that are clearly in conflict with the current license requirements. Send comments by 9/29/08 to Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission P-2402-108, 888 First Street, NE, Washington DC 20426



FOLK

FOLK, formed in 1989, was established to oppose the siting of any paper/pulp mill in Keweenaw Bay. FOLK continues to promote a healthy environment in the Keweenaw Peninsula and the Lake Superior Watershed.

(Please Print) Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Telephone

Date

- Individual (Annual Membership) - \$10
Senior Citizen, Unemployed, Student (Annual) - \$5
Organization (Annual) - \$35
Check here if you do NOT want a FOLK tote bag
Contribution to FOLK's Educational Fund.
Additional Contributions:

Total enclosed:

Send to: FOLK · PO Box 213 · L'Anse, Michigan 49946

Protect the Earth Summit Held in Marquette

by Catherine Andrews

Camaraderie and a sense of community infused the gathering of citizen activists at “Yellow Dog Summer” in Marquette on Aug. 2nd and 3rd. Participants attended from MI, WI, MN and Ontario to share their stories and support the effort to stop sulfide mining in this water rich peninsula we call home. The theme for this event was inspired by a quote from the late Red Cliff activist, Walt Bresette, “Community, like love and water, knows no boundary.”

Activists Al Gedicks, author of “Resource Rebels” and Laura Furtman, co-author of “The Buzzards Have Landed” presented an overview of mining opposition in Wisconsin. The alliance between native and non-native communities was integral to preventing sulfide mining at the Mole Lake Indian Reservation near Crandon, WI. This successful coalition included tribal members, sport fishing and environmental groups and local citizens from 18 to 80.

Keweenaw Bay Indian Community member and representative from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife, Jim St. Arnold, explained that the Lake Superior Chippewa have hunting, fishing and gathering rights guaranteed by the Treaty of 1842 and these rights protect waters entering and leaving (outflow) all ceded land. Federal Treaty Rights take precedence over State laws and regulations.

If a sulfide nickel mine is approved, then what next? According to Gail Griffith, retired chemistry professor from Marquette, unsafe levels of uranium (anything over 5 ppm) exist in some water samples in Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw counties. There are a very limited number of regulations on the exploration of minerals if a company owns the mineral rights. Radioactive and other unmonitored residue from sampling “isn’t a concern,” according to Griffith

We are grateful to “Yellow Dog Summer,” “Keepers of the Water” and “Students Against Sulfide Mining” for sponsoring this important workshop along with the Rally on Sat. and the Walk to Eagle Rock on Sunday. We learned that big companies no longer have the advantage of being the only global players. It is our opportunity and responsibility to utilize the methods that have worked for other activists to prevent these companies and others from destroying the land, water and air that sustains all life.

Otter River Rapid Watershed Assessment Meeting Held

On Tuesday, August 26, about 35 people attended a meeting at the Doelle Senior Citizens Center in Tapiola, Michigan. Everyone present was interested in the Otter River Watershed. The meeting was hosted by the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as part of the Rapid Watershed Assessment (RWA) funding that was received for the Otter.

As part of the RWA, everyone in the Otter River watershed, and all FOLK members, received a 6 page mailing explaining the situation on the Otter. Those that attended the meeting had probably either read this newsletter or heard about it through the media.

Bruce Peterson, who manages the local NRCS office, opened the meeting with a short presentation. He explained about the Rapid Watershed Assessment funding process, and that the Otter was one of only two Michigan river systems that received this funding in 2008. Peterson believed the scarce funds came to our area because of the quality of this river system. Mike LaPointe, area conservationist of the NRCS in Marquette also attended the attend this meeting.

Questions and comments dominated the rest of the meeting. The overriding concern expressed by the members of the public regarded the dwindling numbers of fish in the Otter over the years. Stories were told about the quality and quantity of fishing holes that existed on this river 20 or 30 years ago that have vanished due to sedimentation. The discussion turned to possible causes for the degradation of the river and the lake it empties into, but no real conclusions were drawn.

Steering Committee Dave Rulison attended the meeting, and has spent a great deal of time this summer evaluating the river. He's visited numerous road crossings of feeder creeks and gathered important data at each, and has made 3 trips in his kayak on stretches of the river. In many areas he noted banks 30 or more feet high with little vegetation and raw earth spilling into the river. Many of these are located on sections of the river that are not accessible by road, making repair and remediation so costly as to be virtually impossible.

Some important determinations were made as a result of this process. Sedimentation is a big issue in this watershed. While many of the big problems of past decades seem to have been solved, several issues remain, and the prognosis seems to point to continued sedimentation issues for the Otter River, and its destination Otter Lake.

It is hard to gauge the impact the Rapid Watershed Assessment has had on the community. If it has the residents thinking about cause and effect of their actions in their watershed, then it has been successful. Even in this thinly populated section of the UP of Michigan, we're learning that actions have long term consequences. One can hope we'll learn these lessons before it is too late. 🌍

Editor's note: Some have questioned the bylines for articles in the newsletters. Unless otherwise noted, all articles are written by the editor.

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