

**ADVERSE RECOMMENDATION ON MINING PROPOSAL
IN PORCUPINE MOUNTAINS STATE PARK, MICHIGAN**

This recommendation on an application from the Bear Creek Mining Company to lease uplands and submerged lands in Michigan's 58,000-acre Porcupine Mountains State Park for copper mining was made to Michigan Conservation Commission by Gerald E. Eddy, Director, Department of Conservation. Because of the force of Mr. Eddy's arguments against the lease application and their presentation in an objective and dispassionate manner, it is believed that this statement may serve as a helpful guide on other occasions. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

Since the request of the Bear Creek Mining Company was brought to the attention of the Commission at its May meeting, much has been written and many words have been spoken pro and con. Some of this has been highly emotional and some has been factual. I recognize the difficulty of distinguishing the two in matters having so much local, state, and national significance.

During the past two months I have received reports from Michigan State University on the value of the tourist and resort industry to the region and from the Department of Economic Development on the economy of this part of the Upper Peninsula and the effect upon these interests of a copper mining operation. Three public meetings or hearings have been held - one at Wakefield by an interim committee of the Legislature and two by the Commission. The Commission and the Department have received thousands of communications of all types. These have all been noted and their contents considered.

A summary of the actions by which the Porcupine Mountains State Park came into being and pertinent excerpts from the statutes and official actions of the Commission seem in order. These are:

1. The recommendation of the Conservation Commission to the State Planning Commission under date of December, 1943, wherein it states:

"The Porcupine Mountain area is outstanding in its scenic beauty. It includes the largest single block of virgin timber of the mixed hardwood-hemlock type in the Nation. Preservation of the timber is much to be desired for the express purpose of providing a virgin forest museum before our hardwood forest has shrunk to the size of the Hartwick Pines.

"Says Aldo Leopold of the Porcupine timber, 'It is more than timber; it is a symbol. It portrays a chapter in national history which we should not be allowed to forget. When we abolish the last sample of the Great Uncut, we are, in a sense, burning books.

"When to this purpose is added that of retaining the present outstanding scenic beauty of the area by keeping its hills and valleys tree-covered, and its lakes and streams bordered with virgin growth, then the need becomes paramount.

"The danger of clear cutting operations entering the area is now acute, and action should be no longer delayed.

"Recommendation is made, therefore, consistent with the resolution of the Conservation Commission, adopted at its meeting of October 6, that 'the Governor include in his call for the approaching session of the legislature the subject of providing funds for the purchase of an area of approximately 46,000 acres in the Porcupine Mountains as a state recreational area.'"

- 2. An excerpt from Governor Kelly's legislative message of January 31, 1944:

"Porcupine Mountain

"For some years there has been discussion of the proposal that the Porcupine Mountain area in the Upper Peninsula be purchased for preservation as a virgin forest museum.

"The time has now arrived when action can no longer be delayed if we are to save this wonderland of scenic beauty in its primeval state. Harvest of the timber at the fringes of the forest is under way and soon will reach the heart of the area.

"To hold this irreplaceable region in trust for future generations to enjoy is an obligation which can no longer be deferred."

- 3. The action of the Conservation Commission of April 16, 1946, naming the area:

"Naming of Project Areas

"The following memorandum was presented to the Commission:

March 25, 1946

Memorandum to the Director:

I am submitting herewith suggestions for the naming of some of the state parks and recreation areas which still have not been formally designated. It is imperative that we have this information in order to carry the proper designations on our signs, in correspondence, and in any folders which are issued for publicity purposes. Since there has been so much controversy in changing the names which were used in the establishment of the areas, it might be well to continue this terminology. They can always be changed at a later date if necessary or if new information is brought to light.

Porcupines Porcupine Mountains State Park

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"It was moved by Mr. Bengel, supported by Mr. Schulty, that the naming of areas as proposed in Mr. Elmer's communication be approved. The question being stated by the Chair, the motion prevailed unanimously."

- 4. Action by the Conservation Commission, under date of August 13, 1954, whereby the recommendations of the Michigan Natural Areas Council, relating to the establishment of

natural areas in the Porcupine Mountains State Park, were adopted. The specific recommendations that were adopted at that time follow:

"The following recommendations are submitted:

"1. That the virgin forest within the legislative boundary be permanently dedicated and maintained in its natural condition. There should be no retreat from the original purpose of this purchase by the State.

"2. That no campgrounds, picnic grounds, group camps, hotels, lodges, cabin-colonies, or other improvements for intensive use be developed or permitted within the legislative boundary, except west of the Presque Isle River Road and except picnicking facilities along state highway M-107. The latter should be concentrated in not more than two areas and be as inconspicuous as is consistent with the scene and with good sanitation and maintenance. However, we recommend that such improvements as foot trails, trail-side shelters and isolated cabins, as at present provided throughout the park, be considered necessary, appropriate and in harmony with the natural forest.

"3. That highways within the legislative boundary be limited to the present state highway M-107, the Presque Isle River (County) Road and the South Boundary Road through the southern part of Sections 19, 20, 21 and 22, T 50 N, R 44 W, and in the southern part of Sections 29 and 30, T 50 N, R 45 W; that the proposed south boundary road be kept out of the virgin timber; and that park drives within the legislative boundary be limited to providing access to the Escarpment.

"4. That, insofar as possible, all improvements, operations and maintenance be so accomplished as to preserve the natural beauty of all scenic features and to preserve and strengthen the wilderness aspect of the park as a whole.

"5. That any future harvesting of timber be confined to areas outside of the mountains proper and well removed from streams, lakes and other scenic features, and then limited to selective cutting that would not detract a year or two after the cutting from the natural appearance of the forest. The exception to this is the salvaging of wind-thrown timber between south boundary and Mirror Lake. Such logging roads as it has been necessary to construct should be barred from future access except for fire control or, better yet, obliterated.

"6. That a Nature Reservation and Scenic Sites be dedicated and that recommendations for Natural Area Preserves and Nature Study Preserves be kept in mind, although deferred until more detailed studies can be completed.

"The recommended Nature Reservation includes the entire area within the legislative boundary, except a strip measured 500 feet on each side of the center line of present State Highway M-107 and except that part west of the Presque Isle River Road (extended to Lake Superior).

"Included within the Nature Reservation are two Scenic Sites:

- "a. Presque Isle River Scenic Site – including an area bounded on the west by the Presque Isle River Road (extended to Lake Superior) and on the east by a line connecting points one-quarter mile easterly of the Presque Isle River, measured at right angles from the east bank at the extreme easterly limits of major river bends.
- "b. Escarpment Scenic Site – including an area bounded on the east by the east line of Sec. 13, T 51 N, R 43 W; on the north by a line 500 feet south of State Highway M-107, thence southwesterly along the Escarpment Overlook Road and thence to the center of Sec. 20, T 51 N, R 43 W; on the west by a line running south from the center of said Sec. 20 to the Carp River; and on the south by the Carp River, Carp Lake, and the south line of Sec. 13, T 51 N, R 43 W."

To make an intelligent recommendation to the Commission, analysis of five principal aspects of the Company's application is necessary. These aspects are:

1. The effect of a mine upon both the immediate and future economy of the region.
2. The effect of a mine upon tourism.
3. The compatibility of a mining operation with the wilderness concept of the remainder of the park.
4. The establishing of a precedent which would open the door to similar encroachment upon this park, other state parks, or dedicated lands.
5. The relationship of this controversy to the national picture, i.e., the competing demand for land and its natural resources.

1. Effect of a Mine upon the Immediate and the Long-range Future of the Economy of the Region.

Those who have favored the lease have dwelt at length upon the effect of an exploration and subsequent mine upon the current unemployment and the feeling of pessimism which apparently exists in many parts of the Porcupine Mountain area. I believe that, with a background of many years of experience in mining geology and mine appraisals, I can quite accurately appraise this argument. The Bear Creek Mining Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Kennecott Copper Corporation, is certainly interested in a long-time reserve – an inventory of the copper goods upon its shelves.

This company has active operations and reserves in the United States and in South America and is known to be interested in similar developments in Alaska. Any company of such size, in order to maintain a competitive position in the industry, must maintain adequate reserves for the foreseeable future. These will lie both within the boundaries of this country and in foreign lands. In maintaining these reserves, the Company must anticipate and plan for changing international relations with the possibility of the cutting off of foreign ores, the changing patterns with respect to copper tariffs, domestic subsidies or stockpiling programs,

and comparative mining costs.

Specifically, with respect to the Porcupine Mountain area this means that, in my opinion, there is no assurance of a substantial payroll sooner than at the end of a three- to five-year exploration period with the definite possibility that no ore may be mined within fifteen to twenty or twenty-five years. Therefore, it would have no measurable effect upon immediate unemployment problems. It would, of course, have a bearing upon the feeling of pessimism which exists in some areas but should not weigh heavily in consideration of other values which are at stake.

Current refined copper in stockpiles, based on unofficial reports, is sufficient to provide domestic needs for a few years at the present rate of production and consumption. This means that at this time there is no critical need for new copper producing capacity.

2. Effect of a Mine upon Tourism.

Tourism is a broad term and it encompasses many types of people and the industries that serve them. The habits and likes of tourists range from those who insist upon the most elaborate facilities and accommodations to those who love to commune with nature in the utmost solitude with only a minimum of man-made conveniences. Michigan State University has estimated this industry in Ontonagon and Gogebic counties will grow to \$28 million by 1970 and to \$56 million by 2007. These are gross figures and only a part will find its way into the income of the local tourist and resort industry.

With the restrictions upon the mining operation that would be imposed should a lease be granted, I consider the effect upon tourism would be negligible. In fact, it might provide an attraction to many tourists as is evidenced by their current interest in the history and lore of copper mining in Houghton and Keweenaw counties. To many, abandoned shafts, rock piles, and mining locations have an appeal. The twin shafts and large steam hoist at the Ahmeek mine are visited by thousands every year.

3. Compatibility of a Mining Operation with the Wilderness Concept of the Remainder of the Park.

This aspect is the one which is probably the most difficult to analyze because in spite of all studies which have been made there are still unknowns. I asked the Lands and Geological Survey divisions to list restrictions which would be imposed. They recommend that within the area of the park there be no smelter, no power plant, no townsite, and no tailing disposal areas. Their recommendation further provides that the position of roads, railroads, and power lines shall be arrived at by mutual agreement between the Company and the Department. The disposal of tailings, if Lake Superior is used, can only be carried out in Lake Superior if the Company could show to the satisfaction of both the Water Resources Commission and the Conservation Department that such could be done without causing damage to other natural resources. This to my mind is fraught with uncertainties.

What little information is available regarding deep currents indicates that there is a persistent current in a northeasterly direction with velocities ranging from a half-mile per hour at the surface to about a quarter of that at a depth of 250 feet. Recovery of drift bottles has indicated that this current may persist all the way around the Keweenaw Point and as far east as Munising. These bottles also indicate an onshore set to the current. The Fish and Wildlife thermograph records at Freda have also indicated that there is a periodic upwelling of water from the depths which takes place on the average of twice a month from April through October.

Further, the fineness of subdivision of the tailings would be very slow. This raises potential problems of contamination near shore if a disposal method similar to that which has been used for a hundred years in the remainder of the Copper Country is followed. To those who view the Porcupine Mountain area from pleasure crafts cruising on the lake, the position of a shaft house, mill building, and necessary shops would certainly break up the present completely natural and undeveloped shore line, and in my opinion would materially affect wilderness values.

The position of a road, whether it came in from the east or the west or in the vicinity of the present county road to the mouth of the Presque Isle River, would affect the wilderness aspects of the park more than the mine itself. Even though the road, railroad, and power line could be brought in in such a way that they could be screened from view, with the possible exception of the towers bearing the power lines, at certain points this development would be in conflict with the untouched nature of large parts of the park. If it were to be constructed in from the east it definitely would interfere with long-range master plan development which contemplates a campground near the eastern end. Further, the noise of transporting concentrates from the mill to a smelter outside the area, whether it be by truck or by railroad, would characterize a fairly large area in the vicinity. To many nature enthusiasts and to those hikers who use the trails to get to the more remote areas the knowledge that somewhere out of view there is an active mining operation would be incompatible.

4. The Establishment of a Precedent which May Be Set for Similar Encroachments upon Both the Porcupine Mountains State Park and Other State Parks and Dedicated State Lands.

To those who have followed the national conservation movements and programs of conservation agencies on both the federal and state levels, the most challenging problem facing those agencies is the demand for land. Our accelerating population and the growth of industry to feed, clothe, and transport that population, the rural fringe development, and the expansion of many elements of the military have put a premium upon all land, be it privately or publicly held.

As a residual - and I have purposely left it as such - this puts an even higher premium upon lands for recreational uses of all degrees. It is not necessary to repeat here in-

stances of conflicts of interest between these various elements as I am sure the Commissioners have had them brought to their attention many times. Since, as has been pointed out by those familiar with the national wilderness preservation program, there are only about a dozen areas in state ownership which can be classified as wilderness areas, I am of the firm conviction that the Conservation Commission should do all in its power to preserve and protect Michigan's wilderness areas, of which, of course, the Porcupine Mountains State Park is outstanding. Encroachments upon these areas are ones of degree. They are not all black nor are they all white, but instead are varying shades of grey, and their respective colors are different to people with different philosophies.

I think that today and in the future a threat equal to that of the mining operation exists in the Porcupine Mountains Park area. There will be demands for more and more accommodations, trails, and roads from the tourist and resort industry itself, which may have a much more immediate effect upon the natural area of the park than the mining operation under consideration. It will be well that the Department people responsible for park policy and the Commission itself be cognizant of these pending pressures.

5. Relationship of this Controversy to the National Picture.

For many years—and I am sure it is true today—I believe the Michigan Conservation Commission and the Department have enjoyed an excellent national reputation in the eyes of both the technical and nontechnical conservation workers and conservation organizations. Their policies of defending the resources of this state and their energetic programs based upon sound, modern conservation management philosophies are also well known. I am sure it would be breaking faith with many of these groups and organizations, whose views support my convictions, if we were to consider favorably at this time a development in which a comparative few, rather than the majority, of our citizens would benefit.

After carefully considering the above it is my opinion that the arguments against granting the lease outweigh those for the lease. For that reason I strongly recommend that the application for a lease be denied.

I am not alone in this recommendation. The decision on whether or not to lease was reviewed by me with the staff at considerable length. After extended discussion upon the five points listed above, it was their recommendation that the lease be denied. It should be pointed out, however, that this was not a unanimous decision, and rightfully so, since the legislative duties and responsibilities of the various staff members differ. However, it is the responsibility of the Director to weigh all values and to make a decision which he believes will be in the best public interest. This in all sincerity I have done.

I further recommend that a program be set up to provide for the early acquisition of mineral rights lying within the park boundaries in order to protect, insofar as is possible,

the area from mineral development in those locations which today have no apparent mineral value. This will be a difficult and time-consuming process, but I am sure it is something which should be started without further delay.

December 11, 1958

GERALD E. EDDY
Director

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