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The future of the Earth is in our Hands.

CACC NEWS

JOHN AND CARRIE WALES
Center for Environmental and Social Justice

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Nuance should enter decision-making; bad-faith actors should exit

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Just after New Year's Day, news broke that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) was considering leasing 420 of 1,200 acres of a public trust parcel of land in Otsego County for a solar energy farm.

The acreage in question—a mix of harvestable forest, degraded land, and oil and gas wellheads—drew a strong response from, among others, Republican lawmakers, who called for MDNR firings and for the solar lease to be denied.

The Michigan Environmental Council—after spending time to study available documents, maps, studies and news updates—issued the following statement in response.

"The Michigan Environmental Council is concerned that the MDNR's announcement to lease land for solar has been harnessed by bad-faith actors to start an anti-solar firestorm.

"The lease announcement is the start of a process that will include ample opportunity for the public and stakeholders to weigh in. Furthermore, the decision has been painted as black and white: the state leases all the land in question and develops solar on all of it, or it doesn't. That is not the case. The project can be tailored and shaped by the public. They can weigh in to limit unintended consequences and to scale the design to the character of the parcel and the surrounding community.

"The Environmental Council underscores that we support leasing or selling marginal state land for solar and wind development. We do not support leasing or selling state land that is ecologically significant or significant for recreation and outdoor enjoyment. At first blush, the property in Gaylord appears to be a well-situated site for some level of solar development. Much of the land is already degraded, the habitat is fragmented by surrounding industrial and residential development, and there are oil and gas wells and transmission lines within the parcel. There is even clear-cutting already taking place on the property to harvest red pine. Anti-solar actors have expressed no concern for the trees around these deforestations; they only care now.

"However, clear cutting trees, while necessary in some instances, should be approached with caution and care. There are cases where clear cutting can be a climate and ecological benefit and where it is a climate and ecological harm. We call on the MDNR to conduct a robust climate analysis of this project and any future projects to assure the public that there will be reduced greenhouse gas pollution. We will actively engage in the project development process to ensure the best outcome for our land, water and beloved places."

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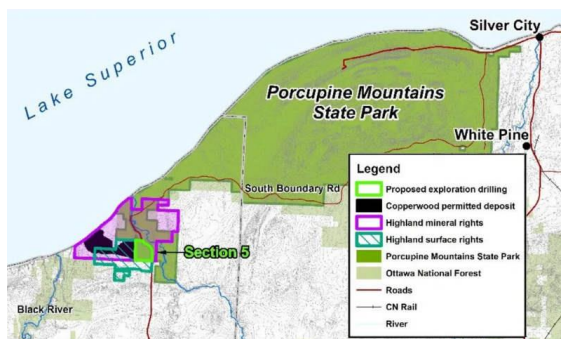
At our January 2025 board meeting John Witucki brought up an idea to offer a scholarship to honor Ann Hunt, All were in agreement and as a result the CACC board is proud to announce the offering of a yearly scholarship

“Ann E. Hunt Memorial Scholarship “

The amount of \$5,000 will be awarded to a third- or fourth-year college student majoring in the field of Environmental Studies at a Michigan College or University.

Ann E. Hunt (July 4, 1948 – April 29, 2023) worked with Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination as the Executive Director and later the treasurer for nearly 50 years. Together we feel that CACC's goal to be an environmental advocacy organization dedicated to the principles of social and environmental justice, pollution prevention, citizen empowerment, and protection of the Great Lakes Ecosystem can best be obtained by encouraging the next generation to follow the example set forth by Ann's determination and passion to provide a safe and clean environment for everyone's future. Details and application information to follow.

March 22, 2025, CACC will be tabling an event at the 4th annual Great Lakes Environmental Festival and Environmental Expo. We will be at the Manistee High School - 525 12th St., Manistee MI from 9:00 am to 5:15 pm. If you are in the area, we encourage you to stop by and say hello. The event is being held on World Water Day and there will be several Keynote speakers and movies throughout the day focusing on the preservation of the Great Lakes. The movie “Bad River” is a documentary film chronicling the Wisconsin-based Bad River Band and its ongoing fight for sovereignty, a story which unfolds in a groundbreaking way through a series of shocking revelations, devastating losses, and a powerful legacy of defiance and resilience, which includes a David vs. Goliath battle to save Lake Superior, the largest freshwater resource in America. As Eldred Corbine, a Bad River Tribal Elder declares: “We gotta protect it... die for it, if we have to.”



(Continued on next page)

The proposed Copperwood Mine is a Canadian company's plan to mine next to and underneath the most beautiful section of Porcupine Mountains State Park, ship the copper out of country with no promise of return, board up shop in 10.7 years, and leave behind over 30 million tons of mine waste in the closest metallic sulfide waste facility to Lake Superior in history.

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Although billed as a "copper mine," in fact copper comprises only 1.45% of extracted material; the remaining 98.55% would be waste, containing mercury, arsenic, and other toxins, to be stored on-site in a 323-acre waste facility erected on topography sloping directly into Lake Superior, 10% of the world's surface freshwater.

Tailings disposal facilities are not invincible. In fact, serious tailings dam failures are actually increasing in frequency, and a dam rupture model by the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission shows that mine waste many meters in depth could surge into Lake Superior in as fast as 21 minutes, as well as into the State Park and the Presque Isle River. In this already alarming context, the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) has concluded that Michigan's Dam Safety Program is "extremely understaffed to perform the mission of dam safety as mandated by legislation, rules, and best practice".

Even assuming the dam holds, all copper sulfide mines contaminate water through other means. Such an operation in a water-rich environment in unprecedented proximity to the largest freshwater lake on Earth is not in keeping with Michigan's express goal of conserving 30% of land and water by 2030.

The proposed mine would be directly adjacent to both the North Country Trail — longest of all national hiking trails — and the Porcupine Mountains, largest mixed old growth forest in the Midwest, recently ranked as "most beautiful State Park in the country." An operating mine risks imposing noise pollution, light pollution, air and water pollution, subterranean blasting, and non-stop industrial traffic, all in the buffer zone of mainland Michigan's largest designated Wilderness Area. Outdoor recreation contributes over \$12 billion to Michigan's economy annually; mining, just \$1 billion — why allow the smaller boom-and-bust industry to endanger one that is strong, sustained, and does not jeopardize freshwater?

The only justification for such a disruptive operation next door to a freshwater sea, a sensitive old growth ecosystem, and a beloved eco-tourism zone can be summarized in a single word: "jobs." But the most comprehensive study ever conducted on the impact of mining on nonmetropolitan economies shows that mining led to positive outcomes in only 29% of cases, with most of those coming from before 1982. In areas dependent on outdoor recreation the impacts are especially pronounced; Harvard Professor James Stock, former advisor to President Obama, summarizes his research: "In 89% of cases, copper mining is negative for jobs and negative for incomes."

Five years ago the company projected 250 direct mining jobs, but now (and quite conveniently just before requesting a \$50 million grant from the State of Michigan...) their new tally is 380. Which number is to be trusted? Perhaps neither: Eagle Mine in Marquette County employs fewer than 100 individuals. And the text of the proposed Michigan grant states that a "new job" would be defined as "lasting for at least six months," with many going to "specialized non-residents." No quantity of jobs is sufficient to justify such a disruptive and potentially contaminating project, least of all a couple hundred boom-and-bust positions which would last, at most, 10.7 years.

Copper is not even a critical mineral; it is infinitely recyclable; and, again, the copper in question would be shipped to Canada. A cost-benefit analysis must conclude that the harms vastly outweigh the gains. The signers of this petition advocate for the immediate halting of the project's development and the permanent protection of the lands in question.

Signed,
WE THE PEOPLE

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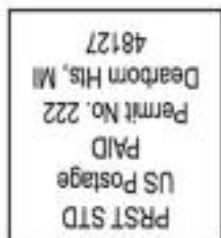
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