

Protestors meet at Mole Lake to gain support, build community, battle Exxon mines at Protect the Earth

By Stephanie Catlin
HONOR intern

In efforts to gather together and build support, various Indian and non-Indian people joined together at the Mole Lake Sokaogon reservation on July 21-23 for the tenth Protect the Earth (PTE) gathering, resisting Exxon's proposed mines both in the Mole Lake area and throughout northern Wisconsin.

"These are not special interests. These are the most important issues there are. If you can't breathe and drink, you're dead," said Annette Rasch, representative of the Clean Water Action Council and Wis. Greens, also Oneida nation environmental resources board coordinator.

Emcee and PTE co-founder Walter Bresette said there were less people than other years, and he was disappointed with the Indian turnout. "I think Mole Lake has made a strong commitment because they're threatened, but others who are also responsible for protecting the earth are noticeably absent."

Throughout the three-day event, along with enjoying entertainment from Skip Jones, Mitch Walking Elk, Larry Long, Frank

Montano, and others, the activists held meetings to discuss ideas about gaining better communication between themselves and taking action toward political opposition.

"We must remind our legislators of who they represent, and a really good start would be if everyone collectively called for Governor Thompson's impeachment and an investigation into his internal affairs. He has become the most unrepresentative dictator this state has seen," Rasch said.

On Sunday, after the sacred medicines had been carried to waters near the proposed mine site, participants walked toward the site in protest of the proposed Crandon mine, watched by various media personnel.

The participants then stopped at the Nii-Win house where they discussed the sovereignty of the Indian nation, racial unity, and spiritual reasons for stopping the proposed mine.

"We're not just talking about what we're against, we're talking about bringing communities together," said participant Zolton Grossman, board member of the Midwest Treaty Network. He said that he believes the PTE



Menominee tribal elder, Hilary Waukau leads the Protect the Earth protest march to the proposed mine site on July 23. (Photo by Amoose)

gathering has solidified the link between Indians, environmentalists and sport fishermen.

The Protect the Earth staff was equipped with new eagle feathers and passed from Menominee tribal elder Hilary Waukau, who carried it last year, to Forest County Potawatomi Billy Daniels to be carried this year.

After returning to the site, a water ceremony was held where participants gathered together water they brought from their favorite watersheds, and they prayed for the health and restoration of waters everywhere.

When the gathering had ended, Rasch said people left rejuvenated from the burnout that can come from working hard in this fight all year long.

Rasch said, "We are kind of a big family. We all go off in our different directions at the end of these gatherings, and fight. We're all coming together here to stop this Exxon mine, and within this circle there is a solid understanding that we have to stop the destruction of northern Wisconsin. We're talking about many mines, not just one, she concluded." □



Billy Daniels, Forest County Potawatomi accepts the Protect the Earth staff from Hilary Waukau, Menominee. (Photo by Amoose)

Copper sulphide mining impact topic of new GLIFWC book

By Sue Erickson, Staff Writer

Odanah, Wis.-Designed for use by policy makers, a twenty-eight page booklet on copper sulphide mining is due to be completed this fall, according to Ann McCammon-Soltis, GLIFWC policy analyst.

Soltis is in the process of completing the booklet under a Joyce Foundation grant. The purpose is to provide policy makers with information necessary to make informed decisions during the permitting process for copper sulphide mines, she states.

The book will include a description of how copper sulphide mining is performed and document potential threats it may pose to the ecosystem.

Specifically, the booklet will consider how those potential effects might impact natural resources upon which the Chippewa people depend, she said.

Another portion of the book will look at how the state of Wisconsin has dealt with threats to the ecosystem by reviewing the changes in mining laws over time.

Soltis feels the publication is timely as the issues relating to the proposed copper sulphide mine near Crandon are currently being considered by state and federal permiters. Beyond that, she says, there have been concerns that northern Wisconsin may be targeted as a potential mining district.

"Certainly, the impact of either one or several mines needs to be a primary concern for decision-makers when permit applications are being reviewed," Soltis states.

Limited copies of the publication will be available later this fall. Interested persons should contact GLIFWC at (715) 682-6619.



Ann McCammon-Soltis.