Battle, Jean M LRE

From: Battle, Jean M LRE
Sent: Monday, April 09, 2012 4:20 PM
To: 'Melanie Haveman'; 'Pennala, Virginia (DEQ)'
Subject: FW: 595 Wetlands Permit Application (UNCLASSIFIED)
Attachments: USACE 595 commnets 4-9-12.docx

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Caveats: NONE

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-----Original Message-----
From: Gene [mailto: Ex. 6 - Personal Privacy
Sent: Monday, April 09, 2012 3:57 PM
To: Battle, Jean M LRE
Subject: 595 Wetlands Permit Application

Ms. Battle,
Attached and below are my comments regarding the marquette County Road Commission's Wetlands permit Application.

I stand opposed to the granting of a permit to the Marquette County Road Commission for the construction of County Road 595 for a wide variety of reasons. Other than a change of applicant and a few feet of deviation, this application is a mirrored duplicate of the Woodland Road application that was withdrawn after concerns were raised by three federal agencies (US Fish and Wildlife, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Environmental Protection Agency). Although many of these agency objections were raised by legitimate concerns over the introduction of invasive species and watershed/eco region fragmentation, they were quick to point out that the proposed Woodland Road was nothing more than a haul road for Kennecott Minerals.

That the proposed County Road 595 is nothing more than a haul road for Kennecott is valid and should actually turned over to a prosecutor with some integrity to pursue charges of fraud. But not for Kennecott, there would have been no Woodland Road application. But not for Kennecott, there would be no application for County Road 595. There is nothing in a Marquette County or a Marquette County Road Commission 5 year/5 month/5 week plan for this road. The MCRC, through the persuasive powers of the Marquette County Board, would have us believe that they collectively woke up with a “Eureka Moment” one morning and felt an overwhelming desire to promote economic growth and industrialization in this pristine and wild area. The idea of a County Road through undeveloped area never surfaced until the Woodland Road permit application was withdrawn. No matter how much this permit is dressed up in well-intentioned sounding phrases and perfumed with saving the public from itself, the intention and result of this permit is a haul road for Kennecott Minerals. If it walks like a skunk, and acts like a skunk, and even smells like a skunk; there is a pretty good chance it IS A SKUNK!

There are very few beneficiaries of this project and plenty of losers. Winners will include a few companies and a few temporary jobs. The losers will include the vast majority of the public for whom will be lost the unique experience of this remote area that will never be regained once it is lost. Many small businesses will be hurt through the granting of this permit because of the rich recreational opportunities it provides for those willing to travel far and wide to such a rich and unique environment. The recreational experience and the peace and solitude the local population enjoys in this area will be lost to present and future generations forever.

Through a Michigan DNR INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION, dated April 15, 2009, Jessica Mistak, Senior Fisheries Biologist, Fisheries Division and George Madison, Unit Manager, Fisheries Division, both of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources did not support Kennecott's Land Transaction Application. Their concerns were addressed to Bill Brondyke, Unit Manager, Forest, Mineral, and Fire Management Division of the Michigan DNR. Mistak and Madison listed several concerns that are relevant to the current County Road 595 application and that I also share. Some of their objections were, with sources cited in their letter and available through the DNR are:

• Habitat fragmentation (Saunders et al., 2002), (Wheeler et al, 2005). The moose herd that is concentrated in this area will suffer from fragmentation. This is a 'deep snow' area and a road through will attract moose in the wintertime escaping the rigors of deep snow travel. This will lead to unnecessary loss of life to moose and possibly humans via vehicle/moose collisions.

• The unsuccessful history of attempted mitigation "due to the multitude of factors by which aquatic organisms are affected." (Trombulak and Frissel, 2000), (Gucinski et al., 2001)

• Adequate infrastructure already exists

Further objections that I have include:
• The rejection of any alternative roads was done mostly as being "too costly' or inconvenient for Kennecott Minerals. As an example the Pesheeke Grade, was rejected because it involved too many private landowners and thus would prove burdensome for the applicant (read Kennecott).

• Funding for construction and for maintenance has not been identified. This will put undue hardship on taxpayers to provide for a primary private beneficiary (Kennecott). The Road Commission is struggling mightily to maintain the roads that it currently is mandated to. How will County Road 550 be maintained for the local population if the MCRC is forced to maintain CR 595? There needs to be a plan that includes identified sources of revenue, both for building and for maintaining CR 595 before any permit is considered.

• The government should not be picking winners and losers. This smacks of corporate welfare where the profits are privatized and the costs are socialized.

• The two reasons why I have remained in Big Bay for 40 years, when I could be making 1/3-1/2 more money downstate or elsewhere for the work I perform, is the presence and public use of such wild and pristine areas, such as the Yellow Dog Plains and the Mulligan Plains. The second reason is Lake Superior. The fragmenting of this remote area that is physically, mentally, and spiritually soothing for the soul will last forever. It will be lost to future generations for the profit of a few. Any Yooper worth their salt realizes this. The area is currently economically and socially sustainable. It will become non-sustainable if fragmentation is allowed to occur.

• The introduction of invasive species is mostly likely to occur through the use of road building equipment. This area has an abundance of rare and native species of fauna and flora not found in a lot of places. The introduction of non-native invasive species will have a significant impact upon the flora and fauna of this area.

Respectfully,

Gene Champagne

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CITED RESOURCES

Gucinski, H., M.Furniss, R. Zeimer, M. Brookes. (2001). Forest roads: a synthesis of scientific information. U. S. Forest Service General Technical Report PNW-GTR-509.
Saunders, S. C., M. R. Mislivits, J. Chen, and D. T. Cleland. 2002. Effects of roads on landscape structure within nested ecological units of the Northern Great Lakes Region, USA. Biological Conservation 103:209-225
Trombulak, S.C., and C. A. Frissel. 2000. Review of ecological effects of roads on terrestrial and aquatic communities. Conservation Biology 14:18-30.
Wheeler, A. P., P. A. Angermeier, and A. E. Rosenberger. 2005. Impacts of new highways and subsequent landscape urbanization on stream habitat and biota. Reviews in Fisheries Services 13: 141-164.

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Caveats: NONE