

Great Lakes protection plan discussed

By CHRISTOPHER DIEM
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MARQUETTE — The lieutenant governor's office, the Office of the Great Lakes, the Superior Watershed Partnership and Northern Initiatives unveiled a plan to help protect the Great Lakes on Monday at Northern Michigan University.

Monday's meeting was the first of eight around Michigan, and officials are seeking the public's input on what are the challenges to the Great Lakes.

Marquette resident Bruce Ventura said he was concerned with mercury deposits coming from power plants and other coal-burning power generation units.

"Here in Marquette the (Wisconsin Energy) plant is a huge mercury source. It has had some reduction equipment installed, but I haven't seen any results on that other than the preliminary testing they did," he said.

Gabriel Caplett of Skandia said he was concerned with the possibility of sulfide mining near the Salmon Trout River in northern Marquette County.

He said a management plan for the Salmon Trout River, drafted by the Superior Watershed Partnership, discourages sulfide mining near the headwaters of the river.

"That Salmon Trout River management plan could have better support from the state and federal levels," he said.

The protection and restoration initiative identifies eight key areas of concern, including the prevention of aquatic invasive species, protecting the natural habitats and indigenous species of the region, identifying and

cleaning up areas with contaminated sediments, cleaning up areas polluted by toxic substances and developing areas of lakeshore for sustainable human enjoyment.

"This is a national treasure," said Ken DeBeaussaert, director of the Office of the Great Lakes.

"The Great Lakes are key to the nation's well being and produce a great deal of economic activity as well that is important to the nation."

Roger Eberhardt, environmental quality specialist with the Office of the Great Lakes, said the plan stresses that the health of the Great Lakes depends on the quality of the waters that feed the lakes as well as the near shore areas that buffer the lakes.

The plan is expected to be completed in December with a final report available next year. For more information about the plan, visit www.michigan.gov/deqgreatlakes.

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