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## Mining Seen as Serious Threat To U.P. Resources

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**STEPHENSON-** A group based in Lake Township has long expressed its concerns about the effects of exploration for metallic sulfide mineral mine along the Menominee River in the township.

The group, known as Front 40, invited a speaker to its Wednesday meeting to lay out problems that have stricken other areas with mines.

The speaker, Alexis Raney of Save The Wild U.P., kept the audience of close to 40 spellbound for almost an hour with graphic photographs of landscape damaged by acid mine drainage.

“It was founded specifically in an effort to address some of the threats seen by acid mine drainage,” Raney said of her group.

Save The Wild U.P., a non-profit organization has done much of its speaking out in Marquette County, and Raney said much of what has been learned there can be used in the Menominee County fight.

“The mining is a serious threat to some of the world’s most incredible resources here in the Upper Peninsula,” Raney said. “The mining industry in general has a terrible track record, and no company has ever truly succeeded in operating a clean mine.”

Companies have operated within allowable limits, but that does not necessarily mean pollutants are not being released into the environment, she said.

Raney also detailed the processes that occur when substances are released into the environment and their aftereffects.

“Acid mine drainage is currently the main pollutant in the Mid-Atlantic region,” said Raney referring to an area just East of here. “Acid mine drainage is formed when sulfides are exposed to air and water.”

A misconception exists that the companies in the Upper Peninsula are mining sulfide, Raney said, but they are instead looking for metals that are contained in rocks that have high levels of sulfur.

The acid mine drainage contaminates drinking water, has corrosive effect on bridges, and disrupts the growth and reproduction cycles of animals, she noted.

“It’s not only an ecological concern but an economic concern as well,” she said.

The damage from the drainage extends to a decline in recreational fish species and outdoor recreational value and tourism, reported Raney. An increase in the acidity of the water would cause lethal stress on the aquatic life, she added.

And, many of the problems are seen well after a mining company has left the site.

Raney also commended the Front 40 for doing what is necessary to alert the public about the proposed mining in Lake Township. She called on them to write legislators with an explanation of their concerns without composing attack letters; to attend public meetings; and to teach fellow citizens about the hazards of the mining process.