

Center for State of the Parks



KEWEENAW NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

SNAPSHOT

Keweenaw National Historical Park is composed of two units—Quincy and Calumet—that are separated by 12 miles. The park's Calumet Unit, which covers about 750 acres in Calumet, Michigan, includes administrative buildings, mine structures, and the associated landscape of the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company. The Quincy Unit, which covers about 1,120 acres just northeast of Hancock, Michigan, focuses on the Quincy Mining Company. Most of the unit is owned and interpreted by the non-profit Quincy Mine Hoist Association. According to estimates, the park and cooperating Keweenaw Heritage Sites draw more than 350,000 visitors each year.

HISTORY

The Keweenaw Peninsula is a finger of land in northern Michigan that is surrounded by the waters of Lake Superior. The peninsula's geological distinction is its location on what many consider to be the world's largest lava flow, which resulted in the largest concentration of pure copper in the world. People have long known about the mineral wealth of the Keweenaw Peninsula; for 7,000 years different groups mined its copper. Native peoples used the ore to make tools, weapons, and decorative items, which were widely traded and have



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The Quincy Mining Company operated continuously from 1856 to 1931 and then again from 1937 to 1945.

been found in many places across North America.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, Euro-American settlers created a copper industry of national and international importance. Two mining companies in particular rose to prominence. The Quincy Mining Company mined continuously from 1856 to 1931 and then again from 1937 to 1945, while the

Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, established in 1871, became one of the nation's most significant copper producers. It was also the backbone of the region's economy, providing employment for thousands of people, most of whom were immigrants drawn to the Keweenaw to work in the mines and related sectors.

When Calumet and Hecla closed in 1969, severe economic and social hardships followed in the Keweenaw region. Some mining structures were sold, to be torn down and scrapped, while others were lost through neglect. Some community members recognized the significance of the region's mining history, however, and they worked to preserve the area's heritage.

In 1992, the federal government formally recognized the importance of Keweenaw copper mining to our nation's heritage and established Keweenaw National Historical Park to tell the story of copper production along Lake Superior's shores. Both the organization and administration of the park are unique within the National Park System. Although the park's boundary includes 1,869 acres, just 134 are actually owned by the Park Service. Other lands are owned and operated by local and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities. When the park was created, Congress directed the Park Service to work in partnership with these other entities to preserve and interpret copper mining history. The Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission



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administers a program of Keweenaw Heritage Sites, which are private, non-federal places that contribute to telling the full copper mining story and are open to the public.

THREATS

- Historic structures are key resources that make it possible for Keweenaw National Historical Park to interpret the region's mining history. Work has been done to rehabilitate exteriors of two of the park's historic structures and to stabilize several historic ruins, but additional funds are needed for interior rehabilitation and routine maintenance. At current funding levels, the park's maintenance staff are only able to react to problems once they have been identified, rather than to give structures the routine care needed to prevent the problems. The cost of the park's deferred maintenance and rehabilitation needs tops \$12.5 million.
- Keweenaw National Historical Park lacks a visitor center. Establishing one would allow the park to provide additional visitor services, such as an orientation film, year-round access to information and rangers, focused overview of the Keweenaw Heritage Sites, a history association sales outlet, and exhibits that interpret the park's primary themes and significance. There would also be space for exhibits that display museum objects. Currently, the Park Service relies on outside partners to interpret many facets of the copper mining story.
- Very little archaeological research has been done at Keweenaw, and understanding resources is complicated by the Park Service's limited land ownership within park borders. Staff are monitoring these acres now, but effectively identifying and protecting archaeological resources on nonfederal lands is difficult, which leaves

these resources vulnerable to threats such as development and looters.

- The Park Service is charged with protecting cultural landscapes, yet few are within federal ownership. As a result, preserving the integrity of cultural landscapes proves challenging, and it is complicated by the lack of guidelines, regulations, and land use planning on the part of local governments.
- An ethnographic overview and assessment is needed to determine connections to traditionally associated peoples and identify important ethnographic resources within the park. Such work could also lead to increased interpretation of American Indian history, which currently does not receive much attention.

WHAT'S BEING DONE

- The Park Service has rehabilitated the exteriors of the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company General Office Building and the Union Building, and it has stabilized the ruins of several other structures.
- It has been nearly 40 years since Calumet and Hecla ceased operations, but many of their former employees, as well employees of other copper companies, still reside in the area and represent important resources. An active oral history program is collecting and transcribing interviews in order to enhance the understanding of historic resources and ensure that these stories are not lost.
- Cooperation between Keweenaw National Historical Park and a host of heritage sites has drawn tourists to the region and has helped ensure that all aspects of the region's mining history are preserved and interpreted.
- Park staff provide training and technical assistance to partner groups in museum management and interpre-

tation, which helps ensure the story of copper mining is more comprehensively protected and shared.

ABOUT NPCA AND CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks® program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policy-makers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

CONTACT US

For a copy of the full report on Keweenaw National Historical Park published by NPCA's Center for State of the Parks, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about Center for State of the Parks, visit www.npca.org/stateoftheparks or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for Center for State of the Parks, at jnations@npca.org.

For more information on Keweenaw National Historical Park, contact NPCA's Midwest Regional Director, Lynn McClure, at 312.343.7216 or lmclure@npca.org, or visit the park online at www.nps.gov/kewe. For media inquiries, please contact Tracey McIntire, NPCA media relations manager, at 202.454.3311 or tmcintire@npca.org. To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit www.npca.org/take_action.