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### Long lists of threats to Superior: U.S. groups

By Carl Clutchey - The Chronicle-Journal

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The Great Lakes continue to be threatened by airborne pollution, aging sewage treatment plants and bigger ships that could bring in more exotic fish species, environmentalists warn.

But the American groups sounding the alarm about Lake Superior say the biggest threat may be a lackadaisical attitude among people who live near the lakes.

"We have to get more citizens involved in protecting the (Superior) basin, because people seem to be defaulting to the idea that the job's been done," Bog Olsgard, a spokesman for The Lake Superior Alliance, said last night at an information forum in Marathon.

"We seem to continually find sites that have been contaminated (by industrial pollution), and examples of bad planning when it comes to shoreline development projects," Olsgard added.

The group's travelling forum, which attracted only a handful of listeners last night, had a better turnout Monday in Thunder Bay when about 30 people showed up.

The alliance and Buffalo, N.Y.-based Great Lakes United, are concerned by a \$20-million US navigation study by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers that could recommend extending the shipping season into winter through widening and deepening of channels.

Great Lakes United spokesman Reg Gilbert said last night the study is set to go ahead with no guarantee the move will increase business at ports, and at the cost of allowing bigger ships to release competing fish into the lakes through bilge.

Gilbert said he doubted an environmental assessment into the navigation proposal will provide meaningful safeguards, claiming environmental concerns take a backseat when there are potential economic gains.

If environmental measures result in people losing jobs, then governments should look at providing "transitional" employment to help them get alternative work, Gilbert said.

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"We can't be paralysed from (making environmental improvements) on the basis that we must protect jobs," he said.

Gilbert said Canada, which would be required to pay for half of the navigation study, could kill the project by declining to participate.

While paper mills are releasing significantly less toxic chemicals into the Great Lakes, emissions from coal-fired power plants in the U.S. continue to dump mercury into Lake Superior, Olsgard said.

The forums continue today at Wawa's community centre at 7 p.m., and Thursday at Sault Ste. Marie's Clean North Office at 7 p.m.

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