

7 COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

According to the Flambeau Mining Company Communities Relations Plan, “Sustainable development is the vision based on achieving a better quality of life for the local communities today, while preserving and increasing the ability of future generations to achieve a higher quality of life for themselves.” In addition to its environmentally responsible mining practices and the guaranteed payments for economic development, the Flambeau Mining Company demonstrated in several other ways its intention to create positive sustainable development for the residents in the communities surrounding the mine.

This section shows the ways in which Flambeau was a good corporate citizen by its donations of money, time, and equipment. Corporate policy allowed a yearly budget for charitable contributions of approximately \$30,000 for each Kennecott subsidiary, such as Flambeau Mining Company. As is discussed, there were some years in which exceptions were made to that policy and how some contributions continue today. A list of all donation recipients is not available; however, major contributions and any ongoing contributions are included. By far the largest monetary community donation was for the Rusk County Community Library.

7.1 RUSK COUNTY COMMUNITY LIBRARY

In the summer of 1994, officials at Flambeau Mining Company proposed to make a large community contribution. They wanted to find a major project, which could be partially funded by the company, and that would have a lasting effect on the County and the municipalities surrounding the mine.

According to Flambeau officials, the project chosen for the donation needed to satisfy the following criteria:

- ❖ It must serve the greatest possible segment of the community.
- ❖ It must be seen as an immediate and fundamental need by the community.
- ❖ It must have a lasting impact on the community.
- ❖ It must contribute to the development of young people in the community.
- ❖ It must be a highly visible project, both physically and editorially.
- ❖ The elected representatives must be supportive and must commit a percentage of funding, both City and County.

After assessing the community needs, two projects stood out as meeting the above criteria, a community center and a new library. At the time, there was no community center and the library was old, extremely undersized, and lacking in user facilities, including books.

The 3,880 sq. ft. City-County Library was built in 1907 with help from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. It is located in downtown Ladysmith and considered a historically significant building. Due to the American Disability Act (ADA), the State of Wisconsin had mandated that all public buildings must be retrofitted for handicap access. To comply with the ADA requirements and State building codes, the City of Ladysmith was required to make modifications to the library. The cost to modify the building to meet code was estimated at \$200,000, including an elevator and a small building extension to accommodate handicap accessible restrooms. The library's location was also inadequate to allow much expansion.

A library consultant had been commissioned to do an analysis of the City-County Library early in 1994. As a result of the consultant's study, the need for an expanded library was indicated by the following results (16):

- ✓ The "turnover rate," a statistic frequently used as a measure of collection activity (total circulation divided by the number of circulating items held), was "four" in 1991. A turnover rate of about "two" is considered average in U.S. public libraries.
- ✓ The data suggested that there are not nearly enough volumes of material available to support the Community's library needs.
- ✓ The library was severely undersized given the size of the service population.
- ✓ The inaccessible nature of the building and the functional inefficiencies of being on two levels further taxed the library resources.
- ✓ The data suggested that the library was understaffed and not open enough hours.

The conclusion was that typically a community the size of Ladysmith and its surrounding area would have a library three times the size of the existing facility. Based on that information, it seemed apparent that the existing downtown structure was inadequate for the service population base, and, for that reason, did not warrant the \$200,000 upgrade. Unfortunately, there was insufficient funding to construct a new facility.

Flambeau Mining Company made the commitment to join Rusk County, the City of Ladysmith, and other businesses and individuals in the area to build a new facility, which would house the community library and provide activity/meeting rooms for community groups. To fund the construction of the proposed facility, Flambeau Mining Company pledged to match, up to a total of \$500,000, any other funds raised for this purpose. In addition, Flambeau offered to assist the County and City in raising the matching funds.

With Flambeau's \$500,000 and commitments of \$250,000 each of mining tax funds from Rusk County and the City of Ladysmith, combined with donations from other sources ranging from

\$0.25 to \$100,000, a new, much larger \$1.4 million library facility was built in the City of Ladysmith. Construction began in 1996, with completion in mid-1997. The 18,000 sq. ft. handicapped accessible facility includes a 9,000 sq. ft. library on the upper level and 9,000 sq. ft. of community/meeting rooms on the lower level. It is located in O.J. Falge Park on the shore of Corbett Lake, and overlooks the Corbett Lake Island covered bridge, waterfall, and pavilion.



Figure 7.1 Rusk County Community Library

Without the key gift of \$500,000 from Flambeau Mining Company, the Rusk County Community Library may still be only a dream for the residents of the communities. Truly, the new library has become a cultural center for the area. Recently, the library hosted a traveling Smithsonian exhibit that was visited by nearly 2,500 people. Only six libraries in the state were given the privilege of hosting this exhibit.

The new library provides services to 15,000+ citizens of Rusk County in addition to the thousands of requests for information and materials from other libraries. According to the library director, usage has gone from an average of 90 patrons a day at the old library to 400 patrons a day at the new library.

Increased usage brings increased operating costs. According to the Ladysmith City Administrator, funding of the library is a high priority for the City and the County as it is by far the most popular service provided by these units of government. The Rusk County Community Library Foundation was established for the purpose of developing a permanent endowment to benefit the library and its needs. Although the library is primarily funded from County and City Funds, the Foundation helps to provide for projects, children's programs, new acquisitions, and emergency support.

An unexpected spin off benefit of the new library facility was the remodeling of the former library in downtown Ladysmith. It has been refurbished into a beautiful bed and breakfast establishment.

7.2 EDUCATIONAL

Flambeau Mining Company valued excellence in local education and made contributions in several different formats. This section discusses the ways that Flambeau supported, and continues to support, local students and schools.

Scholarships

Flambeau Mining Company initiated a college scholarship program to provide financial assistance to dependents of employees in the fall of 1994. First time or currently enrolled full time students of an accredited college were eligible for the program. Scholarship amounts ranged from \$1,000 to \$3,000 per student per year and were awarded to dependents of current or retired employees.

Scholarships were awarded for attendance at an accredited two or four year college or university or a technical or business school, which is approved by an appropriate governmental agency or state department of education or other reputable agency. The majority of students that received the scholarships had graduated from local high schools and were enrolled in schools in either Wisconsin or Minnesota. Scholastic merit was the primary basis of the award.

In 1998, Flambeau Mining Company established another scholarship program to support local students. Four annual grants of \$500 each are provided to Ladysmith High School, Bruce High School, Weyerhaeuser High School, and Flambeau High School for award to students advancing to college level education. Although Flambeau had no specific achievement threshold in mind, they prefer the candidate to be pursuing courses in science, engineering, environmental studies, or business related subjects. The annual awards are to continue for 20 years.

Mount Senario College, located along the Flambeau River opposite the Flambeau Mine site, started receiving contributions from the Flambeau Mining Company as early as 1988. Some of the contributions were in the form of gifts and others were to be used for scholarships. Since Mount Senario College closed its doors in 2002, only partial records could be found, thus, the total amount is not known, but is estimated to be over \$25,000.

Intern Program

Beginning in 1993 and continuing until the mine closed in 1997, Flambeau Mining Company hired summer interns that were children of Flambeau employees and through the University recruitment program for a total of 18 interns. Four of the 18 interns were children of employees and 12 were from the local area. Generally, the interns that were children of employees returned for subsequent summers. This was also true for some of the other students who lived locally. A couple of non-local interns had worked in previous years on other company properties such as Kennecott Utah Copper. Students were able to gain valuable experience as well as earn money towards their continuing education.

Interns at Flambeau worked in many different departments and areas of the company depending on their educational interests. Job responsibilities included: Assist Controller, Assist HR/Safety, Assist Mine Planning, Lab Technicians, Assist Environmental Department, General Site Maintenance, Research Lab/Technical, Visitor Center Attendant, and Assist Geology/Pit Control. Intern wages were based upon job responsibility, company standard wages for corresponding job responsibilities, and the completion of their degree. Annual salaries were in the range of \$15,000 to \$30,000.

Further job opportunities were available for these local students/interns, if they were interested in taking advantage of them. For example, one summer intern, a local geology major, became a full time employee of Flambeau Mining Company after college graduation. After the Flambeau Mine closed, the past intern now Flambeau employee was given other employment opportunities within Kennecott. She went to work at the Greens Creek Mine, located on Admiralty Island near Juneau, Alaska.

Other Educational Donations

The Flambeau Mining Company made several donations to local schools, some of which included money for recreational equipment. In 1996, the City of Ladysmith applied to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for aid in the acquisition and development of local parks. A contribution of \$25,000 by Flambeau Mining Company was used as part of the match for this grant application. Playground equipment was purchased with the funds for use at the Ladysmith Elementary School. Additionally, in 1997, Flambeau donated \$8,000 for playground equipment for the Bruce Elementary School.

Flambeau Mining Company made a donation of a greenhouse to the Flambeau High School Greenhouse Project in 1997 at a cost of \$3,800. Students at the school raised over 2,000 plants that year, which included many native grasses and wildflowers that were later transplanted by the students to the reclaimed mine site. Since that time, Flambeau High School students have participated in the reclamation of the Flambeau Mine on an annual basis. Students have gathered

native seed in the local area, raised native plants in the greenhouse, and planted native plants on the reclaimed mine site and adjoining reclaimed gravel quarries.

In an effort to continue to provide opportunities to local high school students to learn about reclamation, native plant diversity, and horticultural techniques of native plant species, the Flambeau Mining Company expressed an interest in establishing a similar relationship with Bruce High School and their greenhouse project. During 2000, Flambeau Mining Company donated \$500 towards the Bruce High School Greenhouse project. Production was scheduled to begin for the 2002 growing season and the students involved in the Bruce High School Greenhouse Project were looking forward to also becoming involved in the reclamation of the Flambeau Mine site.

Each year the mine was in operation, the Flambeau Mining Company made a contribution to the local Junior Achievement program in Rusk County. Over \$20,000 was donated to help hundreds of area students receive a unique learning experience regarding the U.S. free enterprise economy.

In 1999, a University of Wisconsin-Madison geophysical professor and students conducted geophysical measurements over the top of the backfilled pit to gain experience with their testing equipment and interpretation of results. Flambeau Mining Company paid for the hotel costs for the group. As a result of the successful experience with the geophysical students and professor, Flambeau initiated communication with the local college, state universities, and other educational facilities to encourage the use of the Flambeau Reclaimed Mine site as an educational facility.

As a result, groups of students from many areas of the State visited the mine site. For example, University of Wisconsin-Platteville reclamation students toured the reclaimed mine site at least annually and in 2001, University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate students conducted a study of depth readings over the backfilled pit as part of their thesis work.

Many other smaller contributions were made to local area schools for numerous projects, events, and fundraisers, such as graduation, prom, yearbook, field trips, computer equipment, and books.

In addition, Flambeau provided, and still provides, educational materials upon request to members of the surrounding communities, such as mineral samples, videos, brochures, etc.

7.3 OTHER COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Flambeau Mine Visitor's Center

Management at Flambeau Mining Company felt it was their responsibility to keep the people of Rusk County fully informed about the mine project from the time they began studying the site, throughout the permit process, during construction when they gave site tours to about 1,200 people, and while the mine was in operation. To that end, in the spring of 1993, the Flambeau Mining Company opened a Visitor's Center at the Flambeau Mine site. The Center rested atop the topsoil storage area and provided a panoramic view of the open pit mining operations. It was designed to introduce the Flambeau Mine project to people in the local and statewide communities who had little or no firsthand information about how mines operate and/or who may have had misinformation about mining in general, in particular the Flambeau Mine and Wisconsin's mining regulations. It served to show visitors how the Flambeau Mine is environmentally responsible, economically beneficial, and community oriented. Furthermore, information and exhibits were provided to help visitors understand that mining is an essential activity because minerals are a vital component of our society today.

Displays told the story of mining, including its history, why mining is done, and introduced the visitor to modern mining operations. A brief summary of the history of the Flambeau Mine project from discovery to permitting was shown, as well as an explanation of its philosophy to commit to safe and responsible mining as the first mine to earn permits under Wisconsin's stringent new mining regulations. Other exhibits show the details of the mining process, the size of the pit, and how much ore is produced daily, monthly, and throughout the life of the mine.

An open house was held at the mine every year for all residents of the local communities. In addition, site tours for groups were given at any time upon request. Many classes from local elementary, junior high and high schools came on field trips to tour the mine site. Upon request,

teachers were provided with an “*Out of the Rock*” kit containing a book, video, several posters, and a tote bag. Over 90 ready to use, hands-on integrated learning activities on topics such as rocks, minerals, mining, geology, the environment, and economics formed the 544 page volume for K-12 that was part of the kit.

Many college professors, particularly in geology, from all over the state and out state brought their classes to the mine for an educational experience. Additionally, professional geological organizations, Department of Natural Resources personnel, and many other types of professional groups toured the mine and/or visited the Visitor’s Center. Groups interested in revegetation and environmental issues continue to make site visits.

The Flambeau Mine Visitor’s Center drew over 2,000 sightseers to the mine site during the first two weeks it was open in 1993. Visitors to the Center came from as far away as Venezuela and from as near as one of the homes next door to the mine site. Open seven days a week during the summer, it became the top tourist attraction in the area and drew over 120,000 visitors to its educational center and scenic overlook above the mine.

While the Flambeau Visitor’s Center was open at the mine site, it drew more visitors than the City/County Visitors Center in Ladysmith. In 1998, the Flambeau Mine Visitor’s Center was donated to the Rusk County Historical Society and relocated to its museum grounds, where it continues to tell the Flambeau Mine story.

Donations of Land

Before mining began, Flambeau owned approximately 2,700 acres in Rusk County. In the mid 1990s, Flambeau Mining Company gave 80 acres of land to the City of Ladysmith and Rusk County. The parcel was immediately west of the existing Ladysmith Industrial Park and just opposite the Wisconsin Central railroad tracks. Two sites have been sold and one site was used for construction of its own building (the ADF Building mentioned in Section 6). Of the 80 acres, 65 acres are left and 15 acres have been sold; however, 5 to 10 acres are unusable wetlands.

Another parcel of land amounting to 58 acres was given by Flambeau Mining Company to the Town of Grant. An additional 22 acres was bought by the Town of Grant from Flambeau bringing the contiguous parcels up to 80 acres in total. The 80-acre parcel named the Grant Business Park, is located south of the mine site along Highway 27. Prior to the tornado in September 2002 that struck the downtown area of Ladysmith, only one business, N. Machine, was located in the Grant Business Park. After the tornado, several businesses from Ladysmith relocated to the Town's property rather than rebuild in downtown Ladysmith.

In 2002, the Flambeau Mining Company donated a six acre parcel of land along the Flambeau River valued at \$15,700 to the City of Ladysmith to be used for construction of the City's Riverview Trail System. Also in 2002, Ladysmith received a DNR matching grant to complete the Riverview Trail. The Trail was built in 2004 in the City's buffer zone between the Ladysmith Industrial Park and the Flambeau River. The trail through the buffer area should provide a safer, as well as a more scenic option, to a route presently used by walkers, joggers, and bikers. The trail will eventually connect with the four miles of trails on the reclaimed mine site.

Miscellaneous Contributions

During the construction period of the mine, a tanker truck, originally bought by Flambeau Mining to be used in dust suppression, was given to the City of Ladysmith. Since the City does not have tankers, it gave the truck to a rural community fire department outside the City. The value of the tanker truck at the time was \$55,000.

In early 1997, Flambeau Mining Company made a \$10,000 contribution to the Time-Out Program. It is a domestic abuse and direct service program for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. At the time, the program served five area counties, including Rusk County.

After the mine closed and reclamation began, the Flambeau Mining Company continued to make charitable contributions to groups in local communities and to the local units of government. Following is a list of several donations not previously mentioned:

- In 2001, Flambeau Mining donated \$2,500 to the Rusk County Historical Society toward the construction of a reception/display building with restrooms at the entrance of the museum grounds.
- In 2001, Flambeau donated a high capacity portable pump previously used on the mine site to the Bruce Community Volunteer Fire Department and \$500 to the Rural Community Fire Department towards the purchase of a new fire truck.
- After a devastating tornado hit the City of Ladysmith in 2002, Flambeau donated \$5,000 to the Ladysmith Tornado Relief Fund. In addition, the company donated several pieces of equipment and over 60 man hours to the cleanup effort.
- Many other local community and charitable contributions too numerous to mention individually were made by Flambeau, including children's sporting organizations like hockey and little league, fundraisers for local residents or families in need, the local Jaycees' and Kiwanis' organizations, environmental fundraisers, emergency and fire equipment improvements, and local art organizations.
- Although not a monetary contribution, the Flambeau Mining Company continued its open door policy for several years after closure and reclamation. Mine personnel conducted numerous tours of the mine site and made presentations for schools, career fairs, and assorted groups in the communities. In addition, Flambeau Mining Company continues to provide educational materials upon request to members of the surrounding communities, such as mineral samples, videos, brochures, etc.