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## Marquette to host regional conference this summer

January 3, 2013

By KYLE WHITNEY - Journal Staff Writer (kwhitney@miningjournal.net) | The Mining Journal

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MARQUETTE - Marquette will play host this summer to a major conference orchestrated by a regional coalition of cities with ties to the Great Lakes.

A non-profit coalition, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative works to advance the protection and restoration efforts related to the St. Lawrence River and the five Great Lakes. The organization, founded in 2003 and headquartered in Chicago, has 95 member municipalities located in eight Great Lakes states, as well as Quebec and Ontario.

"It's the fourth largest economy in the world," GLSLCI Executive Director David Ullrich said of the area, which represents about 16 million people. "We're trying to build the concept of this region, not only as a self-sustaining and very sustainable example for the entire planet, but as a much more attractive area for the rest of the world."

### Article Photos



(Journal photo by Matt Keiser)

Ullrich was in Marquette this week in preparation for the GLSLCI annual conference, which will be held in the city in June. The three-day event brings together mayors and city officials from municipalities around the region.

The conference - which has been held in previous years in Chicago, Grand Rapids, Toronto, Milwaukee and Niagara Falls, among other locations - is the organization's big event each year. Typically between 50 and 60 cities are represented at the event, which draws up to 200 people.

The conference is divided into a day-long business portion that will involve meetings of the initiative's board of directors and a day of what Ullrich referred to as "thematic plenary sessions" that focus largely on economic development within the framework of sustainability.

"There's a real good synergy that develops (among municipal representatives)," Ullrich said. "In one sense, they are very competitive. They all want to be the best city. In another sense, they really want to talk about the best things that they've done, and other cities pick up on that."

Ullrich said the backdrop provided by Marquette should allow for discussion of a number of topics, from the need to focus on attracting small companies to the ecological and economic impacts of mining.

"Clearly with Rio Tinto and the mining here, that's a big issue, particularly in the Lake Superior basin - both in terms of the economic significance and in terms of the possible environmental implications," he said. "We try not to be afraid of any issue, even if it's particularly divisive."

Additionally, he said, the Upper Peninsula lends itself to marketing as a tourism destination.

"I think tourism, and more specifically adventure tourism and eco-tourism, are becoming bigger and bigger things all the time," Ullrich said. "The potential here is fabulous."

The GLSLCI conference is scheduled to run from June 19 to June 21 and should be centered in downtown Marquette. Ullrich said the group is looking for keynote speakers, adding that invitations have been sent out to Gov. Rick Snyder and U.S. Rep. Dan Benishek, R-Crystal Falls, as well as Sens. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, and Carl Levin, D-Detroit.

The Superior Watershed Partnership is hosting the event, partnering with the city of Marquette, the Marquette Downtown Development Authority, the city's Arts and Culture Center and the Marquette County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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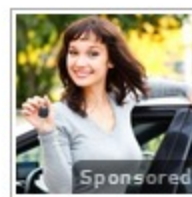
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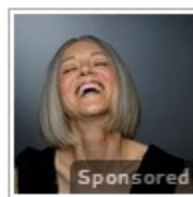
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