Residents of Michigan's Upper Peninsula now have an independent source of information to help them judge the environmental impacts of the operations of the Eagle Mine and swallow into how the mine is operated, regardless of who runs it.

That's unusual. Environmental impacts of mining are typically monitored through mining companies self-reporting to state and federal agencies that set an environmental standard in permits, but local residents, if they've heard of the mine, have had to rely on their own resources to understand what's going on, or hire the expertise to do so. That's why the efforts of the Swan River Watershed Partnership and the Marquette County Community Foundation are so important.

The partnership created the "Eagle Mine Environmental Monitoring Program" (EMP) to build a comprehensive and accurate picture of the mine's environmental impact. It's an innovative approach to monitoring mining activities, and it has been a model for other communities in the region.

The program is funded through a combination of state and local government grants, as well as private donations. The EMP is run by a team of independent scientists who work with the Mine Waste Association to monitor the mine's impact on water quality and air emissions.

The results of this program have been instrumental in shaping policy and regulations for mining operations in Michigan. The partnership has now expanded the program to include monitoring of other mining operations in the region.

In conclusion, the Swan River Watershed Partnership and the Marquette County Community Foundation's efforts to monitor environmental impacts of mining in the Upper Peninsula are critical to ensuring that the region's natural resources are protected for future generations.

Editor's note: Richard Anderson is chairman of the Swan River Watershed Partnership.