

Keep Cooks Run Ours

The 121.56-acre Cooks Run parcel — a wild brook trout stream, and the 1930s fish station built beside it — can stay in county hands — not just open to the public, but owned by the public — under a citizens’ partnership now before the Board. Here is the plan, and how to be heard.



The station cabin, built by Civil Works Administration (CWA) relief crews in 1933–35 — listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Herman Turpa, the station’s caretaker, with his feeding bucket in the stone-lined race — July 1935. (Photo: A.L. Wilson, Fish Division)

Long before anyone built anything at Cooks Run, the place was a trout engine — a machine with no motor: cold spring water, and the fall of the land to carry it. Depression-era crews gave that engine form — log buildings, a stone hearth, timber dams and a hand-dug diversion channel, worked from the fieldstone and timber of the ground itself. Nine decades on, the buildings still stand, the stream still runs cold, and the land still belongs to every family in Iron County.

THE PROPOSAL IN BRIEF

The county will keep the land. Owned by every family in Iron County — access yours by right, not by permission.

A three-year, renewable partnership — at no cost to the county. The new Friends of Cooks Run will restore and maintain the site — trails, the National Register cabin, signage telling the Depression-era story — with volunteer labor and private funds. At the end of the first three years, after a review of progress at the site, the county will have the option to renew the partnership as it sees fit.

The stream will be protected; the timber program continues. A mapped conservation zone will guard the stream corridor. Outside it, the county’s forestry program goes on unchanged.

Schools will be partners from year one. The site will become a living outdoor classroom for stream science, forestry, and local history — at no cost to the districts.

It grows the county’s economy. Visitors to the western U.P. spend about \$101 per day trip on food, fuel, and lodging (UMich Economic Growth Institute, 2024) — a restored Cooks Run on US-2 will put that spending in front of Iron County businesses, season after season.

It delivers plans already on the books. The county’s own Recreation Plan names the Cooks Run Historical Site for recreational development — this proposal will deliver them without spending county money.

The county will keep the land, keep its timber program, and gain a restored historic site, an outdoor classroom, and a protected trout stream — at no cost.

Come — and be heard.

Tuesday, September 8 · 4:00 p.m.

Board of Commissioners Room, 2 South Sixth St., Crystal Falls

Public comment comes early — arrive by 3:45. You get three minutes, and you don’t need notes: just say what Cooks Run means to you. Or simply come and fill a seat — a full room speaks for itself. Can’t attend? Send your commissioner one line: **keep Cooks Run ours.**

Cooks Run Steering Committee — a coalition of Iron County conservation, recreation, and historic organizations

Paid for on behalf of the Cooks Run Steering Committee. Historic photographs: Michigan Department of Conservation, Fish Division.