

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Baraga Lakeside Inn – January 18, 2008

IN ATTENDANCE: Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Don Keith-Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Sam Raymond-Keweenaw Co Parks & Rec; Aaron Rogers-Copper Harbors Trails Club; Don Kauppi-Keweenaw Trails; Steve Albee & Gina Nicholas-Houghton/Keweenaw CD; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; David Osmak-BIA; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; Ken Marshall-WUPPDR; Ralph Miller-Ottawa National Forest; Dave and Marcy Cella-Lake Superior's Huron River Restoration; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D

The meeting was called to order by chairman Bob Larson at 10:05 am. The agenda was approved with the addition of MARCD under business items and moving the new project measures to the top of agenda so Gina Nicholas could participate in that discussion by teleconference (Menge/Black).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved (Black/Albee) as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Darcy Rutkowski presented the Treasurer's Report, which was approved (Albee/Miller). As of 12/31/07 the balance is \$473.87. Activity in the past three months consisted of interest payments totaling \$1.22, and reversal of bank maintenance fees totaling \$10.12. The Western Treasurer, Frank Wardynski, has not been able to attend our meetings for quite some time, so Darcy will contact him to see if he is still interested in serving in that capacity.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Western Council Dues for 2008: Darcy reported that the Western Council made a decision last year not to request \$25 dues from each Conservation District for 2007 due to the uncertainty of funding for the districts. A motion passed (Albee/Menge) to mail invoices to all conservation districts in the Western Region of the UP RC&D Council and request \$25 dues for 2008. This money will go into the Western treasury and may be used to support projects or social gatherings for the Western Region.

Dues statements will also be mailed to counties in the near future. Members requested that commissioners that represent their counties at RC&D meetings be informed when invoices go to their county clerks, so that they may follow up on payments.

Update of Five Year Area Plan: Marilyn reported that the UP RC&D Council five year Area Plan (2008-2012) has been approved by NRCS and signed by the State Conservationist. The plan incorporates input from all conservation districts, the three regional RC&D councils in the UP, and several other partners and members of the public. She noted that this document will guide the UP RC&D Council in their work during the next 5 years, however, new ideas and specific projects that are not in this plan, but are compatible with the goals stated in the Area Plan can also be supported by the Council. Darcy reported that Marilyn deserves much credit for her work in assisting the Council in the development of this new Area Plan. Alan Herceg who oversees the RC&D Programs in Michigan stated that this is one of the best Area Plans he has seen and requested permission to use it as a model for other RC&D areas in the state. Congratulations Marilyn!

MARCDC Update: Darcy reported on the strategic planning process that was recently undertaken by the Michigan Association of RC&D Councils to help make that organization more functional and supportive to the needs of the individual RC&D Councils in Michigan. The UP Council took on the responsibility for several tasks related to communications and website development. Bob Larson was elected Secretary/Treasurer of that group.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Counties: Bruce Petersen reported on the progress that has been made on several projects in these counties. Progress is being made on the KBIC aquaculture pond project – a contractor has been chosen and the work should be completed in the spring. He is still working to secure funding for the Chassell Flood Protection (Hamar Creek) and has applied for a second grant. Houghton Keweenaw CD will be deeded a parcel from Louisiana Pacific Corp. Foundation for the Seneca #3 site. This foundation assists conservation interests and paid \$6000 for the hazardous waste cleanup at the site. Bruce wanted to draw attention to a tax incentive that exists right now related to the charitable donation of conservation easements. There is hope that this incentive will be extended by Congress and there is information available on the website of the Land Trust Alliance (www.landtrustalliance.org).

Marcy and Dave Cella informed everyone of an upcoming meeting on February 21 in Alberta to inform people about what the DNR plans are for study in the Huron River watershed. George Madison from the DNR will be hosting the meeting and talk about the river survey being conducted in 2008. Several partners are interested in this work (Mqt and Copper Country TU, KBIC). She reported that they received a \$2000 grant from Plum Creek.

Bob Larson reported that Baraga County has started rezoning.

Iron County: Bob Black reported that the state of Michigan is clear-cutting an area south of Crystal Falls to control jack pine bud worm and that the adjacent county property will be considered for early cutting also. Damaged/dead trees are creating a fire hazard. Crystal Falls is also working on a non-motorized trail to connect with some of the other existing trails (using an MDOT grant).

Keweenaw County: Don Keith reported on the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners support for the new project (see new projects) that is co-sponsored by Keweenaw Co and Grant Twp. The commissioners have a good working relationship with members of the public working to build, maintain and secure access for trails in the Keweenaw.

Gogebic County: Dennis Jacobson sent a written report because he was not able to attend the meeting. He reported that the 2008 budget for \$5,878,757 was approved (public hearing held 12/26/07 and there were no comments). The County Forestry and MSUE relocated to the Bessemer Ranger Station which was acquired by the county. The Ottawa NF received a plan of operations from a Canadian firm for mineral exploration in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties and they are accepting comments from the public. Also, Gogebic County Townships continue to pursue the development of multi-use trails.

WUPPDR: Ken Marshall reported that each county will have internet web mapping (some of the data is there now) and can be accessed from the WUPPDR website. He just finished the GPS of all motorized trails in Houghton County (Keweenaw Co. is using the motorized trail maps that he had already completed). Ken also gave an update on his work on the KBIC Rapid Watershed Assessment (RWA). A technical committee has been created and work is scheduled to be completed later in 2008.

USFS: Ralph Miller reported that the FS will host the final public meeting regarding their ATV policy tonight and then finalize the plan. He clarified that the USFS does not own all the mineral rights within the forest. He will be retiring in February (Congratulations Ralph!) and Darla Lenz (Ranger in Ontonagon) will begin to attend RC&D meetings in his place.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn reported on the BURN-UP project which is a UP-wide RC&D project focusing on the utilization of woody biomass for heating schools. This project is scheduled for completion mid-way through the year and she is working on additional funding to continue the work started in this project. She is also working on a UP-wide Invasive Species project and trying to secure funding.

NEW MEASURES: Sam Raymond, Aaron Rogers, Don Kauppi and Don Keith all provided input on the project “Copper Harbor Human-powered Trails, Land Acquisition”. The project goal is to purchase 530 acres of land which is the “missing piece” within the existing contiguous block of land in and around the village of Copper Harbor which is currently accessible to the public and contains developed non-motorized trails. This desired land has changed hands several times in the past decade and the current owner (GMO) of a large portion of the desired land has indicated they are willing to sell it to the county. Acquisition of this property will help ensure continued public access and economic stability to the entire county which is heavily dependent on tourism. They have broad-based support from the county, the community and existing trails/recreation groups and are requesting assistance with planning, research of funding sources and grant-writing assistance. The project was approved (Keith/Albee).

PROJECT UPDATES: All project updates were done during partner reports above.

NEXT MEETING: Tentatively scheduled for Thursday, April 17, 2008 at 10 am—at the USFS office in Kenton. However, if this date conflicts with the annual Sustainable Forestry Conference in northern Wisconsin, the date of our meeting will be moved back one week to Thursday, April 24th at the same location.

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
UPPCO Bldg., Houghton – April 24, 2008

IN ATTENDANCE: Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Don Keith-Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Gina Nicholas-Houghton/Keweenaw CD; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; Lori Hauswirth-WUPPDR; John Pelkola-Ontonagon Co Bd of Comm; David Harmon & Marvin LaGrew-Gogebic CD; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D

The meeting was called to order by chairman Bob Larson at 10:05 am. The agenda was approved with the addition of “County Dues Update” under business items (Black/Pelkola).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved (Black/Menge) as written.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Darcy Rutkowski presented the Treasurer’s Report, which was approved (Menge/Pelkola). As of 4/24/08 the balance is \$459.96. Activity in the past three months consisted of interest payments totaling \$1.09 and payment of \$15 for room use/coffee at the Baraga Lakeside Inn.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

County Dues Update: Darcy reported that all the counties in the Western Region have paid their \$300 dues except Houghton and Ontonagon. She does not anticipate a problem in collecting the dues, but will send a reminder to any counties that do not send them to the office.

Election of Western Rep to UP Council/Steve Albee’s Resignation: Steve Albee submitted a letter of resignation to Bob Larson, chairman of the UP Council and Darcy read the letter to those in attendance. A motion was approved (Pelkola/Nicholas) to send Steve a letter on behalf of the Western Regional Council thanking him for his many years of service to the RC&D program in the UP and recognizing his many contributions. Bob Black was elected to represent the Western Region on the UP RC&D Council. The Western Region is also currently represented on the UP Council by Bob Larson and Sandy Lahtinen.

Annual Plan of Work: The 2008 Annual Plan of Work was recently approved by the UP Council and was distributed. Marilyn had added comments/updates for various projects. New projects can be added to the Annual Plan as they are approved. It was suggested that the Twin Lakes Berm Project should be added.

Legislative Update: Darcy reported that UP council has been in contact with the Upper Peninsula legislative aides for Senators Levin and Stabenow and Congressman Stupak, and that all three of these aides attended the last UP council meeting in early April. Since the President’s budget request for FY2009 included no funding for the RC&D program, the UP Council members had sent letters requesting support for level funding (at a minimum) from all these legislators on our behalf. They have been very supportive and they informed us that they will do everything they can to restore funding. At their request, Darcy will forward the letter that the UP Council sent to these legislators to all county commissioners that are appointed to the UP RC&D Council and all conservation districts so that any of these partners that wish to do so may also send letters of support to legislators.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Counties: Bruce Petersen reported on the progress that has been made on several projects in these counties. Progress is being made on the KBIC aquaculture pond project – a contractor has been chosen and the work will begin 5/5/08 and should be completed this year. The KBIC received a \$75,000 grant and will need to show progress on this project. Folks working on the Chassell Flood Protection project (Hamar Creek) are still waiting to hear if grants they

have applied for will be awarded. Local partners on this project are meeting with DEQ and have committed financial support. Work on the KBIC RWA being done by WUPPDR is progressing. These RWA projects are intended to be completed in 12-18 months and utilize GIS to create a largely digital product. WUPPDR will be using some of the grant funds they are receiving for this project to purchase a camera that will digitally catalog the photo and save a great amount of time in surveying the road crossings in the watershed. Bruce also reported that there are 7-8 Wetland Reserve Program contracts that might well be permitted/designed this year and this will take a great deal of staff time. He reminded members that it is possible to use the WHIP program to fund "fish passage" problems and currently is working with the Baraga Co. Road Commission on three culvert replacements. Also- the USGS is starting a 2 year study of the geology and hydrology of the Huron River. The DNR will also be working with local volunteers to do work on that river. The Otter River has been suggested for a RWA if funding is available. This unique river was once a good cold-water fishery and the last place that grayling were found in the state.

Gina Nicholas reported that the Houghton Keweenaw CD is administering a grant to remediate the stamp sand problem at the Winona site where copper is impacting the Sleepy River. In partnership with NRCS, the Central Mine stamp sand site will be remediated in 2009.

Iron County: Bob Black reported that Bessemer voted to deny the Ottawa NF permission to use beetles as a biological control for purple loosestrife on city property. Local farmers were concerned that not enough was known about the long-term effects on non-targeted plant species. The County Board was offered a deal from International Paper as a settlement for the transfer taxes the county did not receive from a land sale. Several other counties were offered similar deals with the amount being different in each county depending on the amount of land sold. Iron County did not accept the deal as they felt the amount offered was insufficient. They are concerned about the lack of progress on invasive species problems by the DEQ and have requested that the DEQ either act on the problems or give counties the funds to act on the problems themselves. They have been working with Dickinson County on some local solutions. The county is working to get better policies for waste disposal and recycling for residents. Pine River Hardwoods is moving some of their operation to Amasa and the fact that there was rail service there was a critical part of their decision. Bob attended the Sustainable Forestry Conference and heard a lot of good information on biomass utilization.

Keweenaw County: Don Keith reported that the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners accepted the deal from International Paper and was paid \$108,640 in lieu of the transfer taxes on land changing hands in their county. They felt this was the best option for the county. They also received a \$200,000 brownfield grant which will be used at Mt. Horace Greeley. Don and State Representative Mike Lahti made a presentation to the DNR Trust Fund Committee regarding the Copper Harbor Trails Land Acquisition project. They will submit an application for funds in the future.

Gogebic County: Dennis Jacobson sent a written report because he was not able to attend the meeting. He reported that the Ottawa NF is using biological controls to attack the purple loosestrife on the National Forest lands; the county board is supporting a Wilderness Lakes Trail which is approximately 40 miles long (non-motorized) and connects Land O'Lakes Wisconsin with Watersmeet Twp. and passes through the Sylvania Wilderness. The county was awarded \$17,561 from a lawsuit filed against International Paper in lieu of transfer taxes and they are very supportive of the RC&D and the Ottawa National Forest. Dave Harmon and Marvin LaGrew attended the meeting representing the Gogebic CD. They reported that the tree sale is now going on and they are finding that the new Walmart in the area is taking away from sales. The Black Creek Narrows project currently has no funding, but is one of the main revers in the county and is a CD priority. Volunteers have been removing some of the blockages and beaver dams and the fish population at the Black River Dam is doing quite well. They reported that NRCS is working on an aquaculture pond with the tribe.

Ontonagon County: John Pelkola reported that the tree sale is next week. Smurfit Stone is also using rail service to Green Bay and then trucking product from there. Development is taking place at Bond Lake (residential with shoreline public access) – 24 lots are being developed. There is also new development from 14 Mile Pt to Misery Bay. The taxable valuation in the county increased by \$22 million.

WUPPDR: Lori Hauswirth reported that Ken Marshall asked her to let folks know that each county now has their own site on the WUPPDR website and is available by a link on the site. Also – the International Mt. Bike Association (IMBA) will be in Copper Harbor August 2 and 3 to demonstrate sustainable trail building techniques. These techniques are for all types of trails (biking, hiking, etc). This is the same weekend as the triathlon, so they will be working around that schedule. There is information on the IMBA website and will be information on the Copper Harbor Trails website soon. She reported that she is putting together estimates for the needed funding for portions of the Iron County Bike Trail and will have that soon. MDOT is showing a lot of interest in bicycle trail plans for the entire state – looking at the needs for individual communities. All 3 Planning and Development Regions in the UP will follow the same format in gathering this information and feed the data into a single document.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn reported on the BURN-UP project – three school tours are scheduled (North Dickinson yesterday, CLK schools today following this meeting, and Whitefish Twp. School next week). These schools already utilize woody biomass energy systems. Two harvest demonstrations will be taking place in early summer. RFP's were sent to engineering firms to do pre-feasibility studies at a minimum of three schools and the successful engineering firm will be chosen by mid-May. Additional funding has been applied for to take the project to the next phase and possibly provide some funds for one or more schools to actually implement a new woody biomass system. The website is now available and can be viewed at www.upwoodybiomass.org. A \$10,000 DEQ grant was received to fund the Central UP Scrap Tire Recycling project (will run through the Delta CD). 3500 tires will be removed from one Menominee County farm. The Alger CD should hear by next week if they have been awarded funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for remediation of two more road crossings and additional outreach in the Munising Bay Watershed. They have received favorable comments so far.

Marilyn reported on two conferences that she attended last month – the North Central RC&D Conference in Rochester, MN (also attended by Bob Larson and Sandy Lahtinen) which focused on alternative energy. It was clear that Minnesota is way ahead of Michigan in developing alternative energy sources. She and Bob Larson also attended the Michigan Association of RC&D Councils spring meeting. They heard several great presentations on endowments, planned giving, and incorporation which were very helpful.

NEW MEASURES: None

PROJECT UPDATES: All project updates were done during partner reports above.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, July 24, 2008 at 10 am—at the USFS office in Kenton.

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
USFS Kenton Ranger District Office – July 24, 2008

IN ATTENDANCE: Todd Larson-NRCS; Don Keith-Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; Ken Marshall-WUPPDR; John Pelkola-Ontonagon Co Bd of Comm; David Harmon-Gogebic CD; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Bd of Comm; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D

The meeting was called to order by chairman Bob Larson at 10:05 am. The agenda was approved with no changes or additions (Pelkola/Jacobson).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved (Black/Jacobson) as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Darcy Rutkowski presented the Treasurer's Report, which was approved (Black/Jacobson). As of 6/30/08 the balance is \$460.53. Activity in the past three months consisted of interest payments totaling \$.57.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Legislative Update: Darcy reported that both the Senate Appropriations and the House Appropriations sub-committees have recommended a similar amount of funding for the RC&D program for FY2009 – about \$50.7 million dollars. The National Assoc. of RC&D Councils was hoping for about \$53 million, but this is much better than the President's budget which zeroed out funding for the RC&D program.

Western Region Dues Update: Dues statements have not been sent to Western UP Region Conservation Districts. Darcy sent a sample letter to Frank Wardynski asking him to approve it but did not hear back from him. John Pelkola will contact Frank to see if he wants to continue as treasurer for this group. He has not been able to attend any RC&D meetings in quite some time. The agenda for the next meeting will include election of treasurer.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Counties: Todd Larson presented a report that Bruce Petersen had prepared for the meeting. Included were reports on the new project proposal "Marsin Nature Retreat Center" (see new projects below), and the Otter River RWA-two technical committee meetings held so far and the project is scheduled to be completed by October 1. UP RC&D will publish a newsletter and sponsor a public meeting for watershed residents. Some members of the technical committee have borrowed a camera with GPS capabilities from WUPPDR to inventory sites within the watershed. The report also included an update of the KBIC Aquaculture Ponds – silt and woody debris removal and sand replacement (approx. 4000 cu. yds.) is being completed. The Chassell Flood Protection Project on Hamar Creek has not had any success in obtaining grant funds, but two other grant opportunities may be investigated. The Service Center staff have been involved in the completion of seven WHIP contracts involving tree/shrub establishment, conservation cover, invasive species removal, timber stand improvement, etc. (3 in Houghton Co, 2 in Baraga Co. and 1 in Ontonagon Co). There is still one medium gated bat closure proposed for Keweenaw Co. On the Inland Stamp Sands Project – designs have been completed for the Winona Stamp Sand Site and a contractor has been selected to do the channel remediation work. Survey work has been completed at the Central Sands in Keweenaw Co. and the design for that remediation will be completed this winter with construction occurring during summer 2009.

Bob Larson reported on a project that MTU is involved with to look at the effects of global warming on a swamp that is in close proximity to his residence. They are heating the swamp 2 degrees to look at the effects.

Gogebic County: Dave Harmon said that progress is being made on the Black River project and that MacDonald Lake has been warming up over time and this has had a negative effect on the trout population. He reported that Marvin LaGrew from the Conservation District has been involved with the BURN UP project and made a presentation regarding the Ironwood Industrial Park to that steering committee. The CD is looking for a forester that has strong ecology qualifications and diverse skills but funding for the position has been a continual problem.

Dennis Jacobson reported that the Gogebic Co. CD office will be moved to the County Natural Resource Center this fall (subject to board approval). Gogebic Co. is not in favor of raising the snowmobile permit fee (DNR) from \$25 to \$35, but further study is being conducted, and the USDA Ottawa National Forest presented the board with their 5 year recreational plan which was very informative and professionally done.

Iron County: Bob Black reported that the CD has re-hired Robert Gussert on a part-time basis. The County Board was offered a deal from International Paper as a settlement for the transfer taxes and the county has now accepted the offer. They are still concerned about the lack of progress on invasive species problems by the DEQ and have requested that the DEQ either act on the problems or give counties the funds to act on the problems themselves. They are looking at raising funds through a required sticker fee. The county may cut timber on some land they manage near the airport to help control Jackpine budworm. Water levels are low in Indian Lake and they are looking at applying for DEQ permits to drill a well to re-fill the lake. The recreation plan for the Iron Co. Heritage Bike Trail was recently approved. Bob also reported that the UP volunteer firefighters are meeting in Houghton this weekend with lots of great activities planned.

Keweenaw County: Don Keith shared his concern about the lack of uniformity in ORV regulations across the region (this issue is important to many members present and someone reported that last week the governor signed an ORV bill allowing ORV's on county roads and apparently the Michigan attorney general has ruled that individual county ordinances are not valid). In Keweenaw County voters rejected an ORV trail millage a few years ago. Don feels that it is in the best interest of all counties if the ordinances are uniform, however he acknowledged that enforcement is a nightmare. Some residents are concerned that these new motorized vehicles using the roadways should have insurance. Don would like copies of the ORV ordinances from the other counties for comparison. The county formed a brownfield authority to utilize funding and now can apply for federal grants. Don also reported that due to budget shortfalls, the county is finding it difficult to cover the costs of commissioners attending meetings (such as RC&D meetings) on the county's behalf. Members present reiterated the importance of having representatives from all counties attend the RC&D meetings to share information and ideas and network with each other. Regular attendance at meetings also is critical when local projects from the commissioners county come before the RC&D Council and a local person is there to support the project and answer questions.

Ontonagon County: John Pelkola attended the meeting to represent Ontonagon County, but no one from the conservation district was present to make a report.

WUPPDR: Ken Marshall reported that WUPPDR just finished a Western UP ATV trail map and that representatives from the DNR and USFS were consulted to ensure that it was accurate. This was done for a private company and WUPPDR is not responsible for distribution. Ken also made a great powerpoint presentation on the KBIC RWA project. They purchased a camera with GPS capabilities and used that to survey 92 culverts and bridges in conjunction with the Baraga County Road Commission which has provided lots of in-kind work on this project. They found several perched culverts and Ken had some nice pictures of these sites. They feel like the data they have collected will be very useful in securing grant funding for remediation in the future (possibly WHIP or USFWS funds). Ken made a presentation to the KBIC Tribal Council recently and they were very interested in

the project. More than 700 newsletters were printed and distributed to watershed residents and Ken and other members of the technical committee will be making presentations during a public meeting that has been scheduled for watershed stakeholders on August 12th at 7 pm at the Ojibwa Casino.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn distributed an updated Annual Plan of Work which reported progress on several UP RC&D projects. She also reported on projects later in the meeting under “Project Updates”.

NEW MEASURES:

Otter River Rapid Watershed Assessment – The GIS work for this project is being done by the NRCS State Office. The UP RC&D Council and the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District will each be receiving a small amount of money to publish a newsletter and sponsor a public meeting for watershed residents and stakeholders. The public meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 26th (location to be determined). Members of the technical committee include Bruce Petersen & Marilyn Shy(NRCS), Gina Nicholas and Sue Haralson (Houghton/Keweenaw CD), Dave Rulison & Connie Sherry (FOLK), Phil Musser (Economic Development in Houghton Co), Chad Kotke and Lindsey Ringuette (DEQ).

Marsin Nature Retreat Center- This project proposal came from the Keweenaw Land Trust. They have been given 16 acres (900 ft of frontage) on the Portage Canal which includes a residence and boathouse with guest apartment which they intend to convert to a retreat center. It is adjacent to the 40 acre Marsin Preserve and they have already established an Advisory Committee which is overseeing the retreat operations and endowment fund. The endowment funds are insufficient to cover all the long term maintenance costs and upgrades that the facility requires – and they are seeking RC&D assistance with planning, fund raising, and engineering assistance for trail, shoreline and vehicular access.

Both projects were approved unanimously (Keith/Black).

PROJECT UPDATES: Some project updates were done during partner reports above. Marilyn reported on the BURN-UP project – 4 prefeasibility engineering site visits have been completed by Integrated Designs and reports are being finalized for the school districts (Stanton Twp, St. Ignace, Manistique, Munising) and the steering committee decided to fund a fifth assessment at the Tahquamenon School District. Two harvest demonstrations have been scheduled for September, and members of the steering committee have been working with the Michigan DNR on sustainable biomass harvesting guidelines for the state.

NEXT MEETING: October 23, 2008 at 10 am—at the Keweenaw Mt. Lodge. Members approved using council funds for lunch (Black/Harmon) which will follow the meeting. Steve Albee will be honored for his many years of service to both the Western Region RC&D and the UP RC&D Councils.

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Keweenaw Mt. Lodge – October 23, 2008

IN ATTENDANCE: Don Keith, Frank Stubenrauch, Steve Danis & Don Kauppi -Keweenaw Co; Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; Ken Marshall-WUPPDR; Frank Wardynski-Ontonagon Co/MSUE; David Harmon & Dan Perotti-Gogebic CD; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa National Forest; Gina Nicholas-Houghton/Keweenaw CD; Becky Otto-Acting UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:05 am. Becky Otto, the Acting RC&D Coordinator while Marilyn Shy is on temporary assignment in Washington, was introduced. The agenda was approved with no changes or additions (Keith/Black).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved (Black/Keith) as written.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Darcy Rutkowski presented the Treasurer’s Report, which was accepted (Keith/Wardynski). As of 9/30/08 the balance is \$461.11. Activity in the past three months consisted of interest payments totaling \$.58.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Honor Steve Albee: Steve Albee, who resigned from the UP RC&D Council earlier this year after many years of volunteer service, was honored at the meeting. Chairman Bob Larson thanked Steve for his many years of service to both the Western UP RC&D Council and the UP RC&D Council. Steve had served on the Western Council since sometime in the 1970’s and was elected by the Western Council to represent them on the UP Council in 2001. Thanks Steve!

New Policy for Submitting Project Applications: The UP RC&D Council approved a new policy for the submission of new project applications. All new project applications must be received at the Council office a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the regional meeting at which they are being considered for approval.

County Dues: Darcy reported that the UP Council made a decision at their meeting on October 9, 2008 to request \$300 in dues from each county for 2009. Letters were sent to all county clerks informing them of the dues amount for 2009 for their budgeting purposes. Invoices will be sent to all counties in January 2009. The dues have not increased since 2002.

Western Region Election of Officers: Election of officers for the Western Regional UP RC&D Council will be held in January, 2009.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Counties: Bruce Petersen reported that EAB has been confirmed in a number of new places in the UP and movement of wood from Level 2 areas is restricted. Gina Nicholas reported that MDA is regulating timber movement and it may be moved from one area to another if it is “sawed on all sides”. There is an informational program at MTU tonight. The contact persons for questions are Dave White and John Diddams (228-9998). Bruce mentioned that the tribes are putting ash seed in a repository for future re-planting. Bruce also reported that the Otter River RWA is now completed and available on the Michigan NRCS website. The KBIC Walleye Rearing Pond is now completed and will be used next spring to rear walleye. They have the ability to dry out (liners chemically molded) so the container can be disinfected with UV light. The Chassel Flood Protection Project is on hold for now (two grant applications did not receive funding). Don Keith reported that he attended a meeting at MTU where this plugged culvert was addressed by MDOT officials who assured the participants that US 41 was in no danger. The Winona Stamp Sand site has

been remediated, it was a successful project that could be highlighted in a future newsletter. Brian Buehler, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, visited the CLK school in Calumet to get information about their woody biomass heating system. There is a Huron River Watershed meeting today (with USGS & MDEQ) in Alberta. The project is being led by a USGS geomorphologist out of Madison with funding coming from DEQ (1/3) and USGS (1/3). The bat closure in Maas City at the Adventure Mine is completed and open for public tours.

Houghton Keweenaw CD: Gina Nicholas reported that the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District Annual Meeting is October 30. The program will revolve around thanking Louisiana Pacific for their donation of land and clean-up of the Seneca #3 Mine Site. The company wanted to divest this property but only if safe (not contaminated). Inspection of the land indicated it met DEQ pollution standards, but was loaded with trash. They totally cleaned up the site removing 6000 pounds of trash (mostly metal) and 150 tires. They gifted the land to the CD this past summer. This is an example of local government, the conservation district and a big corporation working together. The entrance to the mine was enclosed to keep people out but allow bats to move in and out. This is a destination for bats (and tourists!) from all over the Midwest. Gina also reported that the CD just completed the 319 management grant on the Eagle River. This puts them in a position to apply for future funding opportunities. Central 1 and 2 stamp sand sites have already been approved for funding and they hope to get funding for Central 3. All sites are historic in nature.

Gogebic Conservation District: Dave Harmon reported that the CD has undergone a re-organization and moved to Bessemer (500 N Moore St.) into the Natural Resource Building which also houses MSUE and the county forestry office. Mary Powell is the acting administrator (also a board director). Their annual meeting will take place in January or February and they will be having elections. They hope to get a new website. Black River Narrows is still a priority project for them.

Iron County: Bob Black reported that the CD has re-hired Robert Gussert and new part-time employee Gail Dalpra. The non-motorized trail between Crystal Falls and Iron River was approved, but the future maintenance is still an unresolved issue. At the county conservation meeting he learned that a couple of private citizens are selling carbon credits. The park at Runkle Lake (within the city limits of Crystal Falls) was closed for the season this summer due to problems with milfoil (the species has been found to be a new hybrid). Lots of lakes in the area have seen decreasing water levels and there is some interest in trying to raise the levels (must be approved by county board prior to DEQ approval). The Chicagoan Lake has a zebra mussel problem.

Keweenaw County: Don Keith welcomed the group to Keweenaw County and the Mt. Lodge. He expressed his appreciation for everyone driving a long distance to attend the meeting. Don, Frank Stubenrauch and Gina Nicholas attended an educational forum on EAB at the CLK school which was very informative. Don is concerned about local people selling firewood (which may now be illegal). All movement of firewood is now prohibited since people cannot accurately identify the species they are moving. There are some trees which seem to be genetically superior and resistant to EAB infestation and they are being studied. Frank, Don Kauppi, Don, and Bob Black all attended the UP Counties Meeting. One issue all counties are facing relates to the differences in the ATV regulations from county to county and the ambiguity in the present law. There is agreement that the bill (sponsored by Mike Lahti) needs modification. There are concerns about county liability because ATV drivers don't have insurance and enforcement of the law is a law enforcement nightmare. Don also mentioned that there have been some changes to CFR and it is now much easier and less costly to withdraw lands from the program. Keweenaw County just participated in a very successful shoreline clean-up (part of an international effort).

Don Kauppi reported that he is working on a grant to purchase land around the Keweenaw Mt. Lodge (a \$500,000 land acquisition). There is a fund-raiser coming up on 12/13/08 at the Lodge based on

Babette's Feast. It costs \$100 a plate (a local chef is donating his skills) and all the proceeds will go into a fund to provide match for future grants. Also, this weekend there will be a pizza buffet at the Mariner with the proceeds going for ski trail grooming. The Mt. Lodge will host a community-wide holiday party. The cross country ski trails (10 Km groomed) and all 25 miles of mountain bike trails (snowshoe in winter) will remain open over the winter, but the Lodge will close for a time period. Purchasing the land the trails are on is crucial to Copper Harbor. GMO owns land across US-41 and will probably allow easements (maybe eventually sell) on their property. By next year the Lodge will have 12 cabins winterized.

MSU Extension: Frank Wardynski reported that he is working with a group that is developing a business plan for a residential wood pellet plant. The plan is being improved and they are looking for investors. Going through the process has been very helpful and they are questioning whether or not they need a better marketing study. Frank mentioned that agricultural costs are rising because of fuel costs-fertilizer costs being one component- and they are trying to find alternative sources (fish waste?). Traxell in White Pine is burning hardwoods (because the cost of coal is rising) and maybe their wood ash could be sold as fertilizer. Frank has also been trying to educate farmers about the value of hay – and made the point that if they don't charge enough it's like selling nutrients out of the ground for free.

WUPPDR: Ken Marshall reported on the USGS National Map grant that he received. He just received an additional grant to continue the work in partnership with MTU. He will be working with 15 IT students and they will be creating an ARC GIS website. WUPPDR is becoming a steward for 6 counties of GIS data and will train someone at each county to maintain the GIS data and update it for their county. Ken will oversee the work to make sure it is correct. Ken is holding a GIS workshop on 11/7/08 in Marquette to educate people who have data but don't know what to do with it. He is also attending all the 911 committees to promote release of this data to public domain (create a digital plat book). This should help with economic development because parcel mapping allows the investors to do analyses regarding business locations. He just completed the KBIC RWA. One of the main concerns of the local citizens and the tribe was barriers to fish passage. He surveyed 92 culverts and 25 had barriers to fish passage. The USFWS has money available to respond to fish barrier problems. Ken mentioned that he worked with Doug Mills of the Baraga Co. Road Commission to get GPS coordinates for all the road crossings and that Doug is very innovative and pro-active. The DNR applied for a grant for WUPPDR to do a title search on all areas of the snowmobile trail between Hancock and Lake Linden and Calumet to Lac Labelle.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Darcy read a message she received from Marilyn regarding her temporary assignment in Washington, DC:

I am working in the NRCS Operations Management and Oversight Division in Washington, DC. The major responsibilities of my division are: conducting operations management reviews for the NRCS state offices, providing training on operations management to the NRCS state offices, coordinating customer service satisfaction surveys, providing leadership for business planning, and coordinating a national facilitator cadre. Since most of these activities are brand-new to me, my own participation has been pretty limited! I have sat in with the deputy chiefs and taken notes as they put together the National business plan for NRCS, and helped to put together a national calendar of events, and a national calendar of reports—so far I have compiled over 120 dates for reports that are due. I have most enjoyed my work with the facilitator cadre, and I will attend a national training on facilitation during the first week in November, which I think will be extremely helpful in my future RC&D work when I get back. Before I left for Washington, I facilitated groups working on some of the RC&D projects, and I think the training will help provide me new skills and new tools to help these projects achieve their goals. I have also been allowed to meet with a number of people in leadership positions. One person that provided me a lot of information is in charge of the Conservation Innovation Grants

(CIG) Program, that is part of the Farm Bill. I miss my work and my job in the U.P! I return to Michigan on December 19, and I look forward to seeing all of you in January.

NEW MEASURES: None

PROJECT UPDATES: Darcy reported that the three Rapid Watershed Assessments that were being facilitated by the UP RC&D Council have all been completed and are available on the Michigan NRCS website. The BURN UP Project hosted two successful woody biomass harvesting demonstrations in September. One was held in Trenary on land being managed by Plum Creek Timber Company and being logged by Nelson Logging. The second demonstration took place near Shingleton on land owned by The Forestland Group and being managed by Cold Springs Forestry. More than 40 people attended each demonstration. Also, five schools received free engineering pre-feasibility studies which were done by Integrated Designs, Inc. The studies will help schools determine if converting their non-renewable heating systems to one which utilizes woody biomass would be feasible. The schools receiving the studies were St. Ignace, Tahquamenon Area Schools, Munising School District, Manistique School District and Stanton Twp. Schools. The studies have been completed and show promising results for most of the schools. One or more of these schools will be considered for a second, more-detailed engineering study (the school will be required to match the award from the UP RC & D Council) in the second phase of the project. The website for the project (www.upwoodybiomass.org) continues to be developed and provides a wealth of information about woody biomass utilization.

NEXT MEETING: January 22, 2009 at 10 am (Eastern time) – in Crystal Falls.