

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Iron County Courthouse, Crystal Falls – January 22, 2009

IN ATTENDANCE: Don Keith & Carol Rose Fouts -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; Ken Marshall-KBIC; Frank Wardynski-Ontonagon Co. MSUE; John Pelkola-Ontonagon Co Bd of Comm; Jim Stewart & Dave Stanek-Iron Conservation District; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Bd of Comm; David Harmon & Marvin LaGrew-Gogebic CD; Barbara VanAlstine & Darla Lenz-Ottawa National Forest; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D

The meeting was called to order by Treasurer Frank Wardynski at 10:10 am. The agenda was approved (LaGrew/Black) with the addition of “Introductions”. Members present introduced themselves.

MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved (LaGrew/Black) with a correction on the Iron County report. The beach at Runkle Lake was closed, not the park as stated in the minutes.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Darcy Rutkowski presented the Treasurer’s Report, which was accepted (Pelkola/LaGrew). As of 12/31/08 the balance is \$275.42. Activity in the past three months consisted of interest payments totaling \$.43 and maintenance fees totaling \$15.12. There was one expense in the amount of \$171.00 for lunch for the meeting held at the Keweenaw Mt. Lodge in October. Darcy reported that she spoke with personnel at Northern Michigan Bank regarding the maintenance fees. This is not the first time that the bank has started charging monthly maintenance fees without any notice. She was told that the bank would not reverse the fees as they had done in the past, and that the council was required to send the bank a copy of the letter from the IRS stating that we had 501©(3) status. After they receive the letter the board will decide if they will waive any future monthly fees. A motion to close the bank account at Northern Michigan Bank and Trust was approved (Harmon/Jacobson). The council agreed to make a decision on reopening an account at a different institution after the election of officers.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Election of Officers: Nominations were opened for the office of chairperson. Bob Black nominated Bob Larson. Two more requests for nominations for the office of chairperson were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. A motion was made that nominations be closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Bob Larson (Pelkola/Black). The motion passed.

Nominations were opened for the office of vice-chairperson. Carol Rose Fouts nominated Bob Black. Two more requests for nominations for the office of vice-chairperson were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. A motion was made that nominations be closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Bob Black (Pelkola/Harmon). The motion passed.

Nominations were opened for the office of secretary/treasurer. Bob Black nominated Frank Wardynski. Two more requests for nominations for the office of secretary/treasurer were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. A motion was made that nominations be closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Frank Wardynski (Black/Pelkola). The motion passed.

Currently Frank Wardynski and Don Keith are the two authorized check signers for the bank account. Don Keith reported that Carol Rose Fouts would be attending future meetings to represent the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners and that he would no longer be attending on a regular basis. He suggested that it would no longer make sense for him to be one of the authorized signers. A

motion was made that Vice-chairman Bob Black be given check signing authority and Don Keith would no longer have this authority (Fouts/Black). Motion passed.

A motion was passed (Pelkola/Black) that the Executive Assistant draft a letter to Northern Michigan Bank and Trust explaining the reason behind closing our account at their bank was due to dissatisfaction with the service we were receiving from them.

Elect representative to UP RC&D Council: The Western Regional RC&D Council currently has two people representing them on the UP RC&D Council. Those two representatives are Bob Larson and Bob Black. Every regional council may have a maximum of 3 representatives on the UP Council. A motion was made to nominate Ken Marshall to represent the Western Region on the UP Council (Petersen/Black). Motion passed.

Western Council Dues for 2009: A motion to re-instate \$25 dues which would be requested from each of the five conservation districts in the western region passed (Harmon/Jacobson). The dues were suspended for FY2008 due to the uncertain financial situation that the conservation districts were dealing with. Darcy will draft a dues request letter and invoice, noting the one year suspension.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Counties: Bruce Petersen reported on several projects from the three counties that he serves.

- 1) Hamar Creek-reapplied for \$100,000 funding grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (second try).
- 2) Staff at his office have been busy with WHIP projects, lots of planning work is done on snowshoes during the winter.
- 3) KBIC Walleye Rearing Pond Project-considering a secure storage building for chemical storage.
- 4) NRCS purchased a new camera with GIS capabilities, also stores 5 "pieces" of data for each GPS point and photo. It has the ability to match GIS data with photo/data. Camera is available for RC&D projects.
- 5) Bruce made a recommendation to NRCS that the Salmon Trout River in Houghton County would be an ideal candidate for a RWA. They already have a watershed council and volunteer engineering assistance. The historic Redridge Dam is in this watershed.
- 6) KBIC has been planting native wild rice during 2007-08 and will continue in 2009. They are partnering with the Ottawa National Forest.
- 7) Stamp sand remediation will be taking place this season on the East Branch of the Eagle River (Central 1 & 2 mining locations). The Houghton/Keweenaw CD is pursuing engineering funds for remediation of Central 3 at some future time.
- 8) Bat closures are being installed at the Copper Falls Mine (Keweenaw Co) and the Adventure Mine (Ontonagon Co).

Gogebic Conservation District: Dave Harmon reported that the CD has undergone a re-organization including new phone and computer with Mary Powell serving as secretary/director. Their annual meeting is scheduled for January 29 at the VFW in Bessemer. They are getting underway with their tree sale. Three of their directors participated in a youth snowshoe outing (Dan Perotti/wildlife recognition, Marvin LaGrew/history of snowshoes, and Dave Harmon/prepare for outdoor sports). They are conducting an Arbor Day Environmental Poster Contest with schools in Ironwood, Bessemer and Wakefield.

Gogebic County: Dennis Jacobson reported that the county budget for 2009 was balanced in December 2008, they adopted a new ORV ordinance in October 2008, and the county continues to

support new trails for walking and bicycling. The Gogebic Medical Care Facility received a five star rating for nursing homes and is seeking federal funding for a major restoration and green house (assisted living) additions (\$8-9 million). The county may request a millage to help with funding. The county board works closely with the USDA Forest Service (Ottawa NF) as 60-70% of the county is part of the national forest. The county is optimistic that the new federal administration will be supportive of funding for conservation projects.

Iron County: Bob Black reported that logging will begin in March at the airport (jack pine insect infestation control). The proceeds from the sale have been designated for invasive species control at Chicagoan Lake. The Pine River Lumber Mill in Amasa will be hiring 30-40 employees at their new state of the art facility. The company moved to the UP from Wisconsin because there is more raw material here. Bob attended a wind energy workshop sponsored by MSUE in Houghton which was very informative. He learned that Michigan has great potential for wind energy, but very little is being harnessed. He also attended a mining forum and learned that there is a lot of prospecting taking place in Iron County. The county has signed an agreement with the same folks who manage the Watersmeet fish hatchery to use Cooks Run to produce hatchlings which will be stocked in lakes in the county. The county also passed an ORV ordinance. In the process they discovered a loophole that prevented 16-17 year olds from operating ORV's without a valid driver's license (even though 12-16 year olds were authorized to operate ORV's within view of their parents). It can be difficult to obtain drivers education in Iron County and the ordinance has been changed to allow the 16-17 year old drivers to operate ORV's within view of their parents as well. Bob mentioned that many people use sand bags in their trucks during winter for extra traction. He wanted to let folks know that the sand in the bags is hazardous and suggests using bags of corn instead.

Iron Conservation District: Dave Stanek reported that one of the priorities of the CD is invasive species control (particularly milfoil which they are controlling with chemicals and biological controls) and that they are working with the Dickinson CD on some control measures. Their tree sale will be starting next week and they are hoping to increase sales this year. They held their annual meeting in October, and the Dickinson Annual Meeting is January 31.

Keweenaw County: Don Keith introduced new Keweenaw County Commissioner, Carol Rose Fouts. She has been appointed to represent Keweenaw County at our meetings. He expressed his appreciation to the group for holding their meeting and purchasing lunch at the Mt. Lodge in October. Don has served as the Keweenaw County representative to the RC&D Council for 6 years and very much enjoyed working with the council on various projects. RC&D is currently assisting the county with the grant application that will be submitted to the DNR in April requesting funding from the DNR trust fund for the purchase of land (approximately 500 acres) around the Mt. Lodge for trail expansion. Keweenaw County passed an ATV/ORV ordinance in December. Don appreciates the economic boost the region gets from ATV/ORV riders, but has concerns about the county's ability to enforce the ordinance. He has a big concern that there is no continuity of ordinances between counties.

Carol Rose Fouts reported on the success of the fund-raiser held at the Mt. Lodge in December based on Babette's Feast. It cost \$100 a plate (a local chef donated his skills and food donated) and all the proceeds (about \$10,000) went into a fund to provide match for future grants for trail development and land acquisition. The Lodge is open Saturday/Sunday through next weekend, then closes for 2 months. The trails and access road will remain open however, and the ski and snowshoe trails are awesome. Carol also reported that she can provide expertise on meeting space ADA compliance and invited folks to call her with any questions in this regard.

MSU Extension/Ontonagon County: Frank Wardynski reported that there is uncertainty regarding the Smurfit Stone mill in Ontonagon. The company is having financial problems and if it closed it could mean the loss of 225 jobs in the area. This would make a big impact on conservation/natural resource utilization in the region. There has been little interest by investors in funding for a residential wood pellet plant, although they are still hopeful that things might change with the push for alternative energy by the new administration. Seven structures burned to the ground in the village of Ontonagon and there was likely some impact of the runoff from fire suppression to the river that flows through that area because many of the buildings contained asbestos.

WUPPDR: Kim Stoker informed the UP RC&D Council that Nels Anderson would be attending our meetings in place of Ken Marshall who resigned to take a job with KBIC. Nels is not in the office yet, but should be able to attend future meetings.

KBIC: Ken Marshall took a position with KBIC as their GIS specialist in the Planning and Development Department. The tribe has received a land use grant (environmental land use). They are in the process of hiring a land use planner to write the plan, but Ken will be providing the GIS analysis. He will also be coordinating the efforts of all the KBIC GIS users.

USFS: Barbara VanAlstine reported that USFS is also closely watching the situation with Smurfit Stone mill in Ontonagon as that company has contracts for sales within the forest and several other contractors take their raw materials to Smurfit Stone. Closure of the mill would also have a large impact on the USFS employees that live in Ontonagon County. They are going forward with timber sales (many sales are conducted during the winter when the impacts of harvesting are minimized). The USFS was asked to give input on how they might best use any stimulus funds that become available. They prioritized several projects that were “shovel ready” (environmental studies already completed) that related to road work, fish passage, etc. They currently have a prospectus out for a contractor to operate their campgrounds. Their travel management maps are being updated – periodically road closings are re-considered. The updated maps should be available in April.

Barbara also reported that there are two options that counties must choose between regarding the funds they receive from the USFS in lieu of taxes. One option is funding from the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. Some counties chose to receive funds from this program and others chose the standard method of funding depending on their individual situations.

Darla Lenz introduced herself as the person who replaced Ralph Miller (who previously attended the RC&D meetings). She has been on temporary assignment to Alaska so this is the first meeting that she has been able to attend. She wanted to encourage local governments to pay attention to the new economic stimulus package that will be passed hopefully by the end of February. She encouraged them to also have “shovel ready” infrastructure projects and “greening facility” projects ready to go so if funding becomes available they will be positioned to apply for it. She also reported that the forest service is developing a document that will be ready in the spring that identifies alternative connector routes. They are also working with the DNR to develop a plan to restore jack pine communities on the Baraga Plains. Larger blocks of even-aged stands would provide Kirtland warbler habitat. They are also proposing to close about 10 mines in the Norwich area of Ontonagon County but will be maintaining bat access. They are also partnering with the DNR on a program called “More Kids in the Woods” geared for K-12 students. They are planning an educational summit which will help instill a long-term appreciation for the forest resources and take a more holistic approach. They are still looking for more partners to help with the summit which is scheduled for late 2009. Ken Marshall mentioned that they might partner with KBIC as they have a “weed and seed” program aimed at kids. Big Brothers/Big Sisters may also be interested in participating.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn reported that she has been back for 3 weeks from her detail in Washington, and she is happy to be back. She reminded folks that if they are involved with a project that has already been approved as an RC&D project and they are wondering about the status of the project – to contact her for information. She is in the process of updating the Annual Plan of Work for 2009 – it should be available on our website as soon as the UP Council approves it. She will definitely have copies at the next Western meeting.

NEW MEASURES: None

PROJECT UPDATES: Marilyn reported that of the five schools that received engineering pre-feasibility studies in the first phase of the BURN UP project – 1 school will definitely be moving forward with a second engineering study (for which they must pay half the cost) to determine the feasibility of installing a woody biomass heating system. That school is St. Ignace. Other schools are interested, but for various reasons do not wish to continue at this point in time. There will be two more woody biomass harvest demonstrations in 2009 sponsored by the project. A brochure for a workshop titled “Forest-based Bioenergy for Michigan’s Upper Peninsula” was distributed. The workshop is being sponsored in part by the BURN-UP Project and will take place on March 10, 2009 at the Peter White Public Library in Marquette. The steering committee is providing excellent technical advice and expertise to the project and they are in the process of determining the next steps in obtaining funding to continue the work. The project was the recipient of the “Two Chief’s Partnership Award. The award recognizes exemplary employees and projects from the Forest Service, NRCS, State Forestry Agencies, and conservation Districts who have worked collaboratively to support conservation and forest stewardship. Stamp sand remediation was completed at the Winona site. This is one of the five sites that were in need of remediation for the RC&D project “Inland Stamp Sands”. The results were terrific.

CORRESPONDENCE: Darcy read a letter from Steve Albee thanking the council for recognizing him at their last meeting. Steve noted that “it was a fitting occasion, for it brought closure to my association with this council that started in 1973 and which lasted 35 years.”

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held in Ontonagon – tentatively at the courthouse on either April 16, or 23. John Pelkola will check on the availability of the courthouse on these two dates for our meeting.

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Ontonagon County Courthouse – May 7, 2009

IN ATTENDANCE: Carol Rose Fouts -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; Ken Marshall-KBIC; Frank Wardynski-Ontonagon Co. MSUE; John Pelkola-Ontonagon Co Bd of Comm; Jim Stewart-Iron Conservation District; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Bd of Comm; David Harmon & Ron Zaleski-Gogebic CD; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa National Forest; Rick Miskovich-Ontonagon CD; Nels Anderson-WUPPDR; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:40 am. The agenda was approved (Menge/Black).

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

TREASURER’S REPORT: Frank Wardynski reported that a new account had been opened at mBank and the account at Northern Michigan Bank had been closed out. The current balance is \$390.64. The report will be placed on file.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

County Dues Update: Darcy reported that county dues in the amount of \$300 have been received from all counties except Delta County. Delta County has indicated that they approved payment of the dues but the check has not yet been received.

Western Council Dues for 2009: Darcy reported that all five conservation districts in the Western Region have paid the \$25 dues.

Legislative Update: When President Obama’s budget was released for FY2010 the RC&D program was zeroed out. Subsequently, the UP RC&D Council sent letters to both Michigan Senators and to Congressman Stupak (through their UP regional offices) requesting that they support action in the legislature to reinstate the RC&D funding at a minimum of \$56 million for FY2010 (flat level funding). We received responses back from all three offices that they all support the RC&D program and they would work to restore funding. Currently there is a “Dear Colleague Letter” circulating in the Senate in support of reinstating funding for RC&D and both Senator Levin and Senator Stabenow have signed that letter. We are very grateful for the strong support of our legislators and their UP staff.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Counties: Bruce Petersen reported on several projects from the three counties that he serves.

- 1) Many NRCS employees have recently attended training regarding the rollout of the new Farm Bill. One of the major changes that should benefit the UP is that NRCS will now be paying for landowner forest management plans. The landowner is not required to pay any given percentage of the cost of the plan; however, they would be responsible for the balance not covered by the specified amount for the given acreage they own. NRCS will certify consultant foresters that wish to be designated technical service providers and they will write the plan for the landowner. The payment to the provider from NRCS will be as follows: 0-10 acres \$345, 11-20 acres \$475, 21 or more acres \$740. This year the funding may be limited (pilot project). There is an informational workshop for consultant foresters that wish to become technical service providers on 6/24 or 6/25.

- 2) WHIP and EQIP sign-up is now underway until June 5 for those cost-share programs. The caps for all those programs have been removed (this is a change from previous years) and the cost-share amount for beginning farmers and tribes is 90% NRCS/10% landowner.
- 3) Bruce has been working with KBIC on WHIP funding for abandoned mine land and also an agri-containment chemical facility (for the walleye rearing facility).
- 4) Bruce and Marilyn will be meeting with stakeholders from the Otter River Watershed next week to identify sites that have the worst erosion problems for possible remediation. This is a follow-up to the Otter River RWA project.
- 5) Last week the first tribal environmental fair was held. Dave Osmak had some great displays and about 200 kids attended.

Bob Larson mentioned that there are some radon gas and black mold problems at the hatchery that are being dealt with and that he and his wife attended an invasive species meeting last week at the hatchery. Bill Menge reported that the L'Anse Wardens Power Plant is burning sawdust, chips and pretty much anything that does not contain asbestos. There is also a new pellet plant in the L'Anse Industrial Park which will be making pellets from both hard and soft woods, switchgrass and manure. Bill attended the Ag Day at the Capital which was very interesting, but was disappointed that there was no one there with a display from the UP.

Gogebic Conservation District: Dave Harmon reported that Mary Powell has completed updating the audit for 2007-08 and all grants are also up to date. Melanie Fulman from the Ottawa NF is the liaison between the FS and the CD and is helping them secure resource people and with public relations. They sponsored an Arbor Day Poster contest, and Dave has been volunteering to do some tree pruning visits. He attended the Logging Jamboree and there was good information on biofuels. They are using paper waste, tires, rail road ties, and trying to completely stop using coal. They are working with Michigan Works and the Gogebic Forestry Dept. to utilize work crews that have been assigned to Gogebic County. The tree sale is May 9th.

Gogebic County: Dennis Jacobson reported that he attended the Sustainable Forestry Conference and it was very interesting. He was able to network with loggers, landowners and foresters. Michigan Works summer youth program has 80 positions open for youth 14 to 24 years of age. The Ottawa NF is seeking comments on the new off-highway vehicle (OHV) connector routes at this time.

Iron County: Bob Black reported that he also attended the Sustainable Forestry Conference which had a very good turnout and heard Bill Cook speak about BURN-UP and other biomass issues. The Iron County Extension Agent spoke on partnering with others to get joint projects going. The Cooks Run fish hatchery is available to anyone who would be willing to use it for free with the stipulation that they provide fish for the county. Bob stated that this is one of the best fish hatcheries in the world! Iron County is also anticipating 70-80 people being hired through Michigan Works to do conservation work in the county. He has applied to serve on the MDNR's Citizen's Advisory Council for the Western UP and the UP RC&D Council wrote him a letter of support for that position. He is still waiting to hear if he was selected or not.

Iron Conservation District: Jim Stewart reported that the CD sponsored a booth at the home show in Iron River with several handouts. They were also able to promote their tree sale. The CD is still doing building inspections and has had 5 so far this year (compared to only 3 last year at this time). The tree sale went pretty well and they sold planting bars as well as trees. They are helping promote landowner assistance through WHIP and EQIP and this is going well.

Keweenaw County: Carol Rose Fouts attended the Keweenaw Sustainability Meeting prior to this meeting. She said there were excellent presentations regarding all types of environmental sustainability and a good list of resources (which she will pass on). There were lots of examples of ways to live sustainably without quality of life reductions. The county has approved two grant proposals recently and she mentioned that it is always challenging to get consensus on these issues. One grant proposal that will be submitted is for land acquisition around the Keweenaw Mt. Lodge. This has been submitted to the Natural Resources Trust Fund and the county match was \$10,000 which will be taken from the EDC fund. Also, \$4500 was approved for trail grooming this winter and the money that was not spent is going back to the county. They have also applied for \$250,000 from MSHDA to upgrade housing for seasonal employees who work in the county during the summer. Next winter the Keweenaw Mt. Lodge will remain open more and they have been publicizing this heavily.

Ontonagon County: Rick Miskovich reported that the conservation district office has moved to the county road commission office. They hope this will help with budget problems they've been having. The tree sale is now underway.

MSU Extension/Ontonagon County: Frank Wardynski brought up concerns regarding the wetlands enforcement which the MDEQ is relinquishing. He has heard suggestions that CD's take over the enforcement and he does not believe this would be beneficial for CD's. This would change their function from one of assisting landowners to being a regulatory organization. It has been suggested that the state is "testing" CD's to determine if they can handle forestry assistance and wetland permitting. The pellet plant project that Frank has mentioned at previous meetings has a business plan, but no investors so is on hold for now. They are developing a mission statement related to promoting biofuels. MSU Extension has sponsored 4 classes aimed at helping folks deal with financial hardships and stress. Much of the traditional agriculture is disappearing in the UP, but there are lots of new small alternative farming practices coming in.

WUPPDR: Nels Anderson attended his first UP RC&D Council meeting. He has taken the job that Ken Marshall previously held at WUPPDR as GIS specialist.

KBIC: Ken Marshall coordinated the orthophotography for the village of Baraga and village of L'Anse. The tribe is working with MTU students on this project. KBIC is interested in pursuing a transfer station, recycling and household hazardous waste collection. They are planning a fishing derby for June 27 at the fish hatchery and need volunteers. Last year they had a great turnout for this derby.

USFS: Barbara VanAlstine reported that USFS is now taking comments on OHV connector routes and the best way to affect change is by commenting. The new OHV maps are available in their offices showing where riding is allowable. This process has been ongoing for 8 years. They are planning to have an YCC crew based in Bessemer which will travel/work throughout the districts. They had hoped to obtain stimulus funds for additional crews, but did not receive them. The Ottawa seemed to fair pretty well in the budgeting process and will soon be filling some new permanent positions (timber markers and seasonal employees). They have contracted with a new concessionaire for their campgrounds. Camp Nesbit is up and running for environmental education and they have hired a seasonal employee to help school groups there. They are proposing to raise the fees for the camps to better reflect the actual costs for hosting groups. The fee increases must be approved by the Recreation Regional Advisory Committee. They are cognizant that school groups do fundraising to help offset costs for attendance, but currently the USFS is subsidizing the various group stays as well.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn reported that Becky Otto, the District Conservationist for Marquette and Alger counties is leaving and that she and Jerry Davis are covering those responsibilities until a new person is hired. They hope this will take place soon as they position has been advertised already. In that capacity, Marilyn attended some training on the new farm bill. She will be meeting next week with stakeholders in the Otter River Watershed to follow-up on issues which were identified during the RWA last year. They hope to identify sites that have the worst erosion problems. The BURN-UP Steering committee has tentative plans to tour the L'Anse power plant at their next meeting on July 28th. There was some discussion that this Western RC&D group would also be interested in a tour of that power plant. Marilyn distributed an updated Annual Plan of Work so everyone could see what progress is being made on various projects. Marilyn also reminded the group that all new project applications must be at the UP RC&D Council office no later than 2 weeks prior to the regional meeting at which they are being considered for approval. The project must be sponsored by some local unit of government or non-profit group. She thinks it would be beneficial to re-work the project application so there is a questions right up front asking the applicant "what do you want to do in this project"? Darcy received the award from the North Central Association of RC&D councils for council administrator of the year. She and Darcy will be attending the National Association of RC&D Councils Conference in Albuquerque next month for the award presentation and several days of training.

NEW MEASURES:

Pentoga Park-Chicagon Boat Wash – Bob Black gave some background on this project which is being sponsored by the Iron County Parks and Recreation Committee. They have been frustrated with the state of Michigan for not taking action on the invasive species and VHS problems in Chicagon Lake (which is the largest body of water in the county). They decided to use the profits from logging jack pine trees on county property (for bud worm control) and invest them to help fight invasive species/VHS in Chicagon Lake. The first step is to install a manual boat wash and later looking at re-routing some access roads. The project was approved (Wardynski/Pelkola).

Calumet Community Composting-Bruce Petersen gave some background information on this project. There are several business owners in Calumet interested in reducing the waste stream of compostable materials in the area. They would like to look at the feasibility of installing a worm composting operation (containers where worms compost restaurant waste) in one of the existing older buildings in the village. Bruce is currently working with the Calumet Township Supervisor who has indicated that the township would be interested in sponsoring this project. Bob Black made a motion to accept this project contingent upon approval from Calumet Township to be the project sponsor before the project comes up for consideration at the next UP RC&D Council meeting on June 5, 2009. The motion was supported by Dave Harmon and approved. If Calumet Township (or another sponsor) does not sign the project application prior to June 5th, the project will not be considered for approval.

PROJECT UPDATES: All project updates were done in conjunction with reports above.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

NEXT MEETING: There are two possible scenarios for the next meeting – possibly touring the L'Anse power plant on July 28th in conjunction with the BURN-UP steering committee meeting or if that can't be arranged, then a meeting in Bessemer at the Natural Resources Center on Thursday, August 6th at 10 am Eastern time.

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Gogebic County Resources Center, Bessemer – August 6, 2009

IN ATTENDANCE: Carol Rose Fouts -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; John Pelkola-Ontonagon Co Bd of Comm; Jim Stewart-Iron Conservation District; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Bd of Comm; David Harmon, Ron Zaleski & Mary Powell-Gogebic CD; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa National Forest; Sandy Lahtinen, Linda Jindrich & Morgan Grasso-Miners Memorial Heritage Park; 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 (Pelkola/Zaleski) with no additions or corrections. Members present introduced themselves.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT: Darcy Rutkowski presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of July 31, 2009 is \$390.64 and there has been no activity for the past three months.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Future Grant Opportunities: Marilyn distributed handouts on two upcoming grant funding opportunities: the Great Lakes Basin Soil and Sedimentation Control grants (2010 RFP's are due out in October this year) and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grants (RFP's may be out in August or September). There are many different opportunities and some require no match. Marilyn is available to provide grant writing assistance to partners with current RC&D projects that feel one or more of these grants may be appropriate for their project.

Set Dates for Future Regional Meetings: Marilyn reported that the UP Council is in the process of revising the project application and would like to list all the meeting dates for the calendar year (2010) on the form and also on the website. This will allow those submitting a new project application to plan for the date that the application will be due in the UP Council office (which is two weeks prior to the meeting at which the application will be considered for approval). It will also allow staff at the UP RC&D Council office to schedule other activities around the quarterly regional meetings. It was decided that the meetings would be the first Thursday of the month on a quarterly basis. The next five meeting dates are November 5, 2009 and during 2010 February 4, May 6, August 5, and November 4.

Legislative Update:

Darcy reported that both the house and senate agriculture appropriations committees reinstated \$50.7 million for the RC&D FY2010 budget. The National Association of RC&D Councils is urging council members to call their legislators and ask them to support the house version of the bill. The house version funds the RC&D program as a separate, stand-alone entity and the senate version rolls the funding into the NRCS Operations Budget and therefore the funding for RC&D would be discretionary. A letter from UP RC&D Council chairman Bob Larson has been sent to the UP offices of both senators.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Conservation Districts: Bruce Petersen reported that the ponds were emptied recently at the KBIC fish hatchery. The fish have been in the pools for about 2 months feeding on an alfalfa medium. They grow from being barely visible to up to 5 inches in length, however, when they get over 1.5 inches, they start cannibalizing each other. He also had a copy of a

letter of support from the Western UP Health Dept. for the Calumet Composting Project. The letter was written to Paul Lehto and Sue Raker. The UP Council is awaiting a request from Calumet Township, the project sponsor, to reconsider the project. They had requested the letter of support be included with the project when it was resubmitted and also that the sponsor address the questions of what entity would sell the composted material and retain the profits. Bruce mentioned that NRCS purchased a Ricoh camera with GPS capabilities last year and it is being used for a wetland amphibian and invertebrate study. Work in the Eagle River watershed to remediate stamp sands is progressing and the Houghton Keweenaw CD just heard that they will be administering another grant in the amount of \$394,910 to remediate mine tailings at the Cliff's Mine site. Bruce is involved with a project (Norwich Hills) to enclose four mine openings with expanding foam. The mines will still be available for bat access.

Gogebic Conservation District: Dave Harmon welcomed the group to the Gogebic County Resources Center. We have not held a western RC&D meeting in Gogebic County for at least three years. He reported that they held an openhouse at the Center in July and over 200 visitors toured the facility. Dick Bolen, Director of Forestry & Parks for the county will lead a tour of the facility following the meeting. The district tree sale was held in May and over 5,000 trees/shrubs were sold to about 50 customers. In June their state operating grant was decreased by \$2,030. Next fiscal year the grant may be eliminated entirely or a token amount given to the Conservation Districts (\$3500-4000). The district is working with the county forestry dept to try to get potable water at Little Girls Point. Mary Powell resigned from the board to take a part-time office position with the district and Dave Anderson was appointed to fill the vacancy until an election for the vacant position is held at the Annual meeting in October. Ron Zaleski is working with the USFS on several garlic mustard weed infestation sites in the county. Dave has been making "house calls" to county residents seeking advice on tree issues for several months – most of them referred by MSU Ext. The district and other local agencies will be involved in a summit to be held in Silver City sponsored by MSU Ext. on November 5 with the goal of getting kids and families in the outdoors.

Gogebic County: Dennis Jacobson reported that the Gogebic Range Solid Waster Authority (GRSWA) is seeking support for a class 2 & 3 landfill site in the county. The request has been turned over to the county's forestry department. The Ottawa NF received \$1.2 million from stimulus funds and plans to use the funds to repair roads, bridges, culverts and to improve signs in the forest and brushing along roads. The Orvana Copper Mine project appears to be on schedule with a proposed 2013 start-up.

Iron County: Bob Black reported on the Pentoga Park Project - an engineering firm has been hired, and road construction will be done by a citizen under a community service agreement with the county. They hope the road will be completed by this fall. They plan to focus on invasives next (possibly apply for grants). The Indian Lake Association is seeking permission to pump water back into the lake to help fight low water levels. There is some concern of this starting a precedent as many of the other local lakes are also seeing low water levels. The county has some concerns regarding the loss of waste disposal services.

Iron Conservation District: Jim Stewart reported that the CD will be sponsoring a Conservation Fest next week, and there has been a lot of local interest in the control of the invasive species buckthorn, and in the no-till farming. The number of soil permits which the district has administered this year is behind last year's number which means less revenue for the district. They will be sponsoring an educational booth at the Iron County Fair, and the district is very concerned about budget cuts and loss of revenues.

Keweenaw County: Carol Rose Fouts reported that the county did not receive the grant they had applied for to provide seasonal housing by renovating local motels. She cautioned folks that when applying for grants they should be sure to elaborate on the rural nature of the “downtowns” in the UP. The county loaned the Keweenaw Mt. Lodge \$5000 to do more work on the ski trails surrounding the lodge. They plan to stay open this winter. The county also approved building and zoning permits for 2 windmills on private property (43 feet high). They plan to clarify the process for future people who may be interested in wind energy on their property. The county installed a permanent bathroom at the park at Eagle River Beach. They also acquired property last year at the mouth of the Gratiot River and they are working to put a management plan in place now. It is located 7 miles “off the beaten path” and currently there is a port-a-potty there. She reiterated the importance of tourism to the county and how the events they hold there are such an important part of bringing people to the area. The events held or planned include: Farm Block Fest, Eagle Harbor Art Fair, Copper Harbor Art Fair, Thimbleberry Jam Fest, and Eagle River Bridge Fest.

Ontonagon County: John Pelkola reported that the 5th Annual Porcupine Mt. Music Fest is coming up soon. He said that Smurfit Stone is still operational with over 200 employees. Maple Manor closed and in conjunction with that the Beacon Ambulance Service will no longer be operating as it was tied to Maple Manor.

USFS: Barbara VanAlstine reported that USFS projects were batched with others in the region for stimulus funding. They received some funding for fire training, and to improve facilities (Black River Harbor, Camp Nesbitt, and Lake Ottawa). They also received funds for road maintenance and OHV signage. It was determined that FS had no authority over one of the OHV connector routes in their management plant (along FH16), and therefore they are seeking an alternate route. They are working hard to meet targets on the forest, but personnel are getting pulled out west for fire control and that makes it more difficult. The Ottawa had two sales last year, has 4 more out on bids currently, and hopes to bid out 6 more sales. They review mining proposals on FS lands to make sure the activities are compatible with the forest plan, but the BLM has the authority to oversee mining on USFS lands. They have hired a new campground concessionaire (out of Iron River) and to date they have received positive feedback about the services. They are also doing work on the Sturgeon River Road.

Other Partners: Morgan Grasso and Linda Jindrich from the “Friends of the Miners Memorial Heritage Park” informed the group about the activities and goals of their group. The “Friends” are trying to create a park-like setting through the caving area that the city owns (600 acres) in the middle of Ironwood. They are trying to make folks more aware of the trails that exist and also to expand non-motorized, interpretive trails within the area. The group has applied for non-profit status and currently has about 20 members. It is a pretty area with ponds and fields which has lots of potential. There are two mine shafts located on the property.

Sandy Lahtinen distributed a copy of an article that appeared in the Marquette Monthly regarding the first all-girl tribal youth conservation crew on the KBIC L’Anse Reservation. Sandy’s daughter has been working with the crew this summer and they are sponsored by KBIC and the Superior Watershed Partnership.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn provided the group with several project updates. The BURN-UP Project will be wrapping up later this year. There will be two harvest demos in September, one near Seney and the other near Alberta. There are also two “clusters” of users – one in Manistique and the other at Bay College in Escanaba – which are going to be receiving feasibility studies from the USFS in conjunction with Project BURN-UP. The Manistique group submitted a project application for assistance at the Central meeting last month which was approved. The Houghton Keweenaw CD

received another grant to continue work on stamp sand remediation – this one is for the Cliff’s mine site in the Eagle River Watershed.

NEW MEASURES: None

PROJECT UPDATES: See above under “Coordinator’s Report”.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am (Black/Menge) and some folks stayed for a tour of the facility.

Tour of Natural Resources Center: Dick Bolen gave the group some background information on the Natural Resources Center prior to the tour of the facility. In 2006 the county was approached by the USFS to determine their interest in taking over the facility. The FS has had a long relationship with the county, the Bessemer Ranger district in particular. In October 2007 a purchase agreement was signed. The property is 3.7 acres and provides the storage space that the forestry dept. needed for their equipment. Some of the buildings were built by the CCC and a new building was also built in 1986. The county had a vision to make it a Natural Resources Center and it currently houses MSU Extension, the Gogebic Conservation District, the county forestry dept, and the soil and sedimentation program. They feel this is a one-of-a-kind situation in the state of Michigan.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5th in L’anse and will be combined with a tour of the Warden Power Plant. Tentatively the meeting will take place at 10 am (Eastern time) with a tour after lunch at 1 pm.

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
L'Anse Village Hall, November 5, 2009

IN ATTENDANCE: Carol Rose Fouts & Frank Stubenrauch -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Rolof-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; John Pelkola-Ontonagon Co Bd of Comm; Jim Stewart-Iron Conservation District; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Bd of Comm; David Harmon, Dave Anderson & Marvin LaGrew-Gogebic CD; Nels Anderson - WUPPDR; Ken Marshall – KBIC; Bob LaFave – Village of L'Anse; Dave & Marcy Cella – Huron River Restoration; Steve Law – NRCS; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:00 am. The agenda was approved (Black/Harmon) with no additions or corrections. Members present introduced themselves.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT: Marilyn presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of October 30, 2009 is \$390.64 and there has been no activity for the past six months.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Legislative Update:

Marilyn reported that both the house and senate agriculture appropriations committees reinstated \$50.7 million for the RC&D FY2010 budget. President Obama signed the bill into law in mid-October.

Sustain Our Great Lakes Invasive Species Proposal:

Marilyn reported that she and Darcy worked on a grant proposal to create Rapid Response Teams across the UP that would identify and map the location of invasive plant species. There is also some funding proposed for invasive species control. The funding awards will be announced in January 2010.

REPORTS:

Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Conservation Districts: Bruce Petersen reported that the ponds were emptied recently at the KBIC fish hatchery, with an estimated 16,000 walleye ready to be released. However, the fish like to swim against the current, and so they fought like mad to stay in the ponds when the valve was opened. There will need to be design changes to better handle the release of the fish in the future. He also reported on the Hamar Creek Project. Chris Holmes of UP Engineers and Architects recently submitted a grant proposal under the NFWF Sustain Our Great Lakes Program. Bruce provided a map and some additional information for the proposal. Bruce mentioned that NRCS funded 2 mine closures that will have bat access using WHIP funds. One is near the Copper Falls mine on the Carl Geis property. The other was the Adventure Mine. He has been working with the Ottawa NF who has received \$400,000 in stimulus funds to close an additional 12 mines that will have bat access. Remediation work on the Central Mine Site was completed in September.

Gogebic Conservation District: Dave Harmon reported that Mary Powell resigned from the board to take a position with the district and Dave Anderson was elected to fill the vacancy at their annual meeting. MSUE was given a Conservation Award at their annual meeting for their outstanding work in Gogebic County. Ron Zaleski continues to work on invasive species projects, and is also working with the garden club, the youth in the 4-H Club, and the Boy Scouts. Dave continues to make site visits to residents who need advice on tree issues referred by MSUE. The district and other local agencies are involved today in a summit being held in Silver City sponsored by MSUE with the goal of getting kids and families in the outdoors. Dave Anderson resigned his position as the Soil Erosion County Enforcing Agent (CEA). The district will take over the program with Bill Perkis as the new CEA. Bill

was a former soil scientist with the NRCS. Several of the directors are working on projects that would restore the fisheries on the Black River.

Gogebic County: Dennis Jacobson reported that Ottawa NF received \$1.2 million from stimulus funds and plans to use the funds to replace culverts, perform tree removal along roadsides, and put up new high definition signs. The courthouse has received a new roof and new carpeting, and the renovation of the jail continues. The proposed landfill for Gogebic County is now dead due to a problem with the soils in the area.

Iron County: Bob Black reported that U.P. Engineers and Architects, Inc. was hired to write a 5-year Recreation Plan for the county, and to write a grant proposal for the Pentoga Park Project. There will be a community workshop on Nov. 12 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm in order to get some public input on the plan. To increase participation, a website has been created where citizens can view the presentation and email their comments. The web address is: www.upea.com/ironcounty.html. For the Pentoga Park Project, a road has been constructed by a citizen under a community service agreement with the county. It will be closed during the winter, and open during the summer. The village of Gaastra has backed out of the group that has been working to obtain funds to put in the bike trail between Crystal Falls and Iron River; they will be looking to obtain grant funds to do their part of the trail on their own.

Iron Conservation District: Jim Stewart reported that the CD held its annual meeting, with a 25% increase in attendance. The district is working on the control of buckthorn with county residents. The district board held a special meeting on their budget and decided to use their savings in order to keep their doors open this year. They did cut the hours of their administrator to 2 ½ days per week, and also cut the directors' per diem. They will try to obtain more funds from the county, and also try to increase tree sales.

Keweenaw County: Carol Rose Fouts reported that the county voted to allocate \$10,000 for a park at Great Sand Bay. In addition, a large grant was received in the neighborhood of \$350,000 for the purchase of property. The park will have stairways installed to help alleviate some of the erosion. The year 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of the county's incorporation. Each township's historical society will participate. A bathroom/changing room has been installed at the Eagle River Park. Wind turbines are up and running on private property in Bumbletown. Unfortunately, residents are reporting that the turbines create a lot of noise. Keweenaw Mountain Lodge will be open from January until mid-March, 7 days a week. Frank Stubenrauch remarked that although he is a big proponent of wind turbines, he is not so much in favor of seeing them go up in town, because of the noise issue. He would prefer to see them go up in rural areas, like for example, near Mount Horace Greeley.

Ontonagon County: John Pelkola reported that Maple Manor closed and in conjunction with that the Beacon Ambulance Service will no longer be operating as it was tied to Maple Manor, with a total of 48 employees lost due to the closures. In addition, the railroad is trying to shut down. To discuss the overall loss of jobs, a meeting was held last night with over 50 people present. In recent times, the county has lost 900 people. The schools are suffering.

KBIC: Ken Marshall reported that the tribe is working on obtaining funding for increased fish passage, which would mean fixing culverts on many of the road/stream crossings. He has been working on an ortho project using 12" color photos with infrared. He is also working on a project with regional tribes which involves utilizing 3" aerial photography to map the growth rate of invasive species. Certain locations on each reservation were chosen, and will be monitored over time to try and track the growth of the invasive species, and their distribution. A feasibility study is being conducted by KBIC to see if a windmill manufacturing plant can be set up in the old Terex building. The

windmills are the small variety, designed for residential use. They are intended to take care of 70% of the electric needs of a family, and will cost \$12,000 after rebate. The payback is thought to be 8-10 years, and the windmills are said to be very quiet. A Community Wildfire Protection Plan has been funded in Baraga County. After it is completed, the plan will help the county to obtain federal funds for wildfire protection.

WUPPDR: Nels Anderson reported that he is working on two recreation plans, one for the city of Hancock, and one for Stanton Township. He submitted a grant proposal for a watershed analysis on the Pilgrim River under the NFWF Sustain Our Great Lakes Program. WUPPDR also submitted a grant proposal for energy conservation for Ontonagon under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG).

Other Partners: Marcy Cella reported for the Huron River Restoration. They have been monitoring macroinvertebrates at 10 stations; all showed good or excellent ratings. In addition, they have found 43 road crossing sites on the Huron that have water quality problems. Bob LaFave reported for the Village of L'Anse. They have a serious erosion issue on the Falls River, and are submitting an RC&D measure proposal today to request RC&D assistance for the project. They are replacing a bridge that was built in 1918 that has not been at all maintained. In addition, they are continuing to work on water and sewer projects. Steve Law, Acting NRCS Area Conservationist, reported that he is covering for Mike LaPointe until December. Of the \$27 million in Farm Bill cost-share funds that came to the state this year, the UP received \$1.5 million. He offered to the county commissioners that were present that he is available and willing to make presentations at county board meetings, to help county commissioners understand the value of conservation districts and NRCS to their counties.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn reported that the BURN-UP Project has received an extension and will be wrapping up in March of 2010. There were two harvest demos in September, one near Manistique and the other near Alberta. There are also two "clusters" of potential woody biomass users – one in Manistique and the other at Bay College in Escanaba – which are going to be receiving feasibility studies from the USFS in conjunction with Project BURN-UP. The Manistique group submitted a project application for assistance which was approved by the Central RC&D Council and the UP RC&D Council. They have also applied for funding under the EECBG program.

NEW MEASURES: Falls River Erosion Project

The Village of L'Anse is requesting assistance in researching funding and in grant writing for a project that would correct serious erosion issues on the Falls River. The area runs from the mouth of the Falls River up to the old Celotex Bridge. Steel sheeting was put in place 50 years ago, and has rusted through, creating a hazard for those who visit the park and walk along the riverbank. Motion by Bob Black, second by Bill Rolof, to accept the measure proposal; motion carried.

PROJECT UPDATES: See above under "Coordinator's Report".

CORRESPONDENCE: None

The meeting was adjourned at noon (Harmon/Marshall) and some folks stayed for a tour of the L'Anse Warden Electric Plant.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 4, 2010, in Keweenaw County. Either Marilyn Shy or Darcy Rutkowski will contact Carol Rose Fouts to determine the exact location. Tentatively the meeting will take place at 10 am (Eastern time).