

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**L'Anse Village Hall, February 4, 2010**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Carol Rose Fouts -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Rolof & 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; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa Natl Forest; David Harmon & Marvin LaGrew-Gogebic CD; Ken Marshall – KBIC; Sue Haralson & Gina Nicholas-Houghton Keweenaw CD; Jim Cederna & Dennis Margoni-Recreation Assoc. of Iron Co; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:00 am. The agenda was approved with the addition of “House Bill 5319” as a business item. Members present introduced themselves.

**MINUTES:** The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Darcy presented the Treasurer’s Report. The balance in the checking account as of January 29, 2010 is \$390.64 and there has been no activity for the past several months. Invoices have been sent to all conservation districts requesting \$25 dues for FY2010.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**County Dues:** Darcy reported that invoices were sent to all counties in the UP on January 19, 2010 requesting \$300 dues for FY2010. Counties were also asked to provide the name and contact information for their appointee and alternate to the regional RC&D council covering their county. Dues payments have already been received from Luce and Iron Counties.

**RC&D Performance Improvement Criteria:** NRCS and the National Association of RC&D Councils have developed a set of criteria that they are asking all councils to meet prior to September 30, 2011 (earlier if possible). NRCS will complete a “Rapid Assessment” of all designated RC&D Areas around March 30, 2010 to determine if each criterion is being achieved. There are seven criteria and the UP RC&D Council does not currently meet two of the criteria: Completes Annual Report, and Conducts Annual External Financial Audit/Review. These two criteria are currently in the process of being completed. Darcy will produce an Annual Report which will replace one of the newsletters that the Council currently produces. Bids have been requested from three local CPA firms for completion of a financial review.

**Annual Plan of Work:** Marilyn distributed the Annual Plan of Work for the UP RC&D Council which covers 2010. The Annual Plan was approved by the UP Council in December 2009 and was signed by State Conservationist, Garry Lee. The Plan details the major goals for the UP Council and strategies for accomplishing those goals. All active projects are included in the Plan and the format includes space for entering current progress on the individual projects which Marilyn had recently updated.

**Michigan House Bill 5319:** Bob Larson circulated a copy of the language in HB5319 and suggested that the Western RC&D Council oppose this bill which he described as transferring Michigan groundwater rights to the public trust (state owned) from private property ownership (which is now the case). Members questioned the ability of the state to manage this resource properly, the possibility of the state taxing water withdrawals, or limiting withdrawals in the future. A motion was made and passed that “The Western RC&D Council is opposed to any State control of ground water, and that they want to see groundwater remain under local control” (Black/Pelkola).

## **REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** Bill Menge reported that the county received funding and is working with WUPPDR and the Great Lakes Commission to develop a wilderness park on the tip of Pt. Abbey. They are also working on a “scramble area” on the Baraga Plains. He will attempt to get more information on this prior to the next Western meeting so the council can write a letter of support if they so desire.

**Baraga and Ontonagon Conservation Districts:** Bruce Petersen reminded members of the work KBIC completed on vegetative remediation of stamp sands in 2006 on 33 acres at Sand Point. The area was extremely uniform and now they are placing boulders, trees, mounds of soil, etc. in the area to create more diversity. There are a total of 10 bat enclosures that will be installed (9 in Ontonagon Co, 1 in Keweenaw Co) and 7 of these are located in the Ottawa NF and have already received funding. He also attended a Portage Twp Meeting and provided them GIS maps of shallow bedrock, soil sites that are well-drained (for crushed rock), and also sand and gravel deposits. The township will use the maps to update their land use plan. Bob Larson commented that high bedrock crushing can contaminate drinking water. They are currently working to complete 12-14 contracts (EQIP, WHP, Wetlands Resource Program, etc) prior to February 19<sup>th</sup>. Bruce also reported that UP Engineers and Architects applied for Great Lakes Initiative funding for Hamar Creek and worked with KBIC on an Indian Road funding proposal to remediate 3 road crossings. They hope to install larger culverts that will spread out the water and thus eliminate some of the erosion. Bruce sits on the Houghton Planning commission and they are looking for assistance for trail representation. There are more than 300 miles of trails in the western UP that don't have permanent easements. There is enough work to support a full-time position working on legal concerns for encumbrances and encroachment issues. It would be great to resolve some of these issues before they become problems. WUPPDR is looking at main artery trails to determine ownership.

**Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District:** Gina Nicholas reported that the district applied for another grant for “Central 3” on the Eagle River. This would be a \$600,000 project that would be contracted to NRCS (Rob Aho) for engineering and local contractors would actually do the work. They also applied for a GLRI grant for \$415,000 for Hills Creek/Black Creek which is in cooperation with NRCS, the Michigan Nature Association, Longyear, Michigan Tech and the CD. The restoration on the Cliff Mine site will be done this summer with funding they have already received.

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Dave Harmon reported that DC Tom Berndt brought together local stakeholders to provide input in identifying priority resource issues to help determine local ranking criteria for FY2010 EQIP and WHP programs. The district received an award from the USFS for “Cooperatively Managing the Ecosystem at a Landscape Scale to Reduce the Effect of Invasive Species” and they are working with the USFS to hire a seasonal herbicide sprayer to control garlic mustard. They are now receiving income from the Soil Erosion Sedimentation Control Program (Bill Perkis is the county enforcing agent). June 12 is the kickoff for “Get Outdoors for Gogebic County” (part of a national event) and they are partnering with MSUE. The district is seeking foresters that want to become technical service providers for NRCS to write forest management plans. There is some online training involved prior to certification. The “Survivor Up North” program will take place on March 13 and some of the district directors are volunteering with about 25 youth predicted to participate. The District was one of four organizations in the Upper Peninsula to receive an Arbor Day Mini-Grant from the DNR. Their annual tree sale will be held on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Gogebic County:** Dennis Jacobson reported that the Gogebic/Iron County, WI airport new terminal is now operational. The Wakefield township supervisor reported that the western UP recycling plant has done well in the past year and they are planning on expanding operations (recycling of tires). The county supported them by selling them 40 acres for \$1. Orvanna Minerals is on schedule with their copper mining venture in Ironwood Township. They plan to start construction next year and open in 2013. The US Census Bureau is having trouble filling positions in Gogebic County.

**Iron County:** Bob Black reported that U.P. Engineers and Architects, Inc. was hired to write a 5-year Recreation Plan for the county. They are now in a 30 day comment period for the Pentoga Park Project. They hope to utilize the 80 acre Cooks Run (hatchery and blue ribbon trout stream) as a facility for youth activities and thereby be eligible for grants. Bob now serves on the recreation board of the Michigan Assoc. of County Commissioners. He feels like tourism from snowmobiles and ORV's is beneficial to the UP and is trying to collaborate with other counties to make regulations across jurisdictional boundaries consistent. He is part of a group called ANSWERS which includes the border counties of MI and WI and they are interested in a reciprocal ORV license (like is done for fishing). Iron County native Nick Baumgartner will compete in the Olympics on February 15th in snowboarding.

**Iron Conservation District:** Jim Stewart reported that the CD is in the process of trying to secure \$30,000 from the Ottawa NF for a portable boat wash. The funding will cover some wages, and other expenses. They received an award for their work with the Western UP Cooperative Weed Management Area. They are getting ready for their spring tree sale (also sell shrubs, berries, rhubarb, asparagus, etc.). Their CD Administrator is now working 2 days per week and she will be doing some work on administering the boat wash grant.

**Keweenaw County:** Carol Rose Fouts reported that Keweenaw Mt. Lodge is open for winter use 7 days a week. They recently held a ribbon-cutting for the new terrain park. The county commission voted not to support the terrain park financially but the Copper Harbor Trails Club immediately raised the money necessary. The Lodge will be receiving the "Spark Plug Award" from the Chamber of Commerce, but she wants to make sure folks know how much credit the trails club deserves for their efforts. She is also involved in Horizons Alternative High School in Keweenaw County. They spent a good deal of time clearing trails for the terrain park, sledding hill, skating rink, cross-country ski and snowshoe trails. The Lodge is working collaboratively with Mt. Bohemia to try to attract visitors to both venues. Until recently the snowmobile trail groomers didn't have a way to communicate with anyone in the area (poor cell service) and recently borrowed some radios to use for emergency purposes. There will be a public hearing to present plans for where snowmobiles may ride on public roads to access trails. She also mentioned their Annual Madi Gras fundraiser to support Horizons and Keweenaw Kraysons.

**Ontonagon County:** John Pelkola reported that the county board formed the Ontonagon County Economic Partnership and that there is now a lot of interest with the loss of jobs at Smurfit Stone (180) and the nursing home (60). There are 10 subcommittees and they are hoping to see some revitalization of the area. The Ontonagon Co. Prosecutor is working with the state of Montana hoping to speed up the sale of the facility for future re-use.

**KBIC:** Ken Marshall reported that the tribe is developing a transfer station for Baraga County which will be located in the industrial park. This should create a few jobs and is really needed in the area. They will start out just collecting garbage, but hope to add composting and recycling. They have a grant to build another gas station (Harvey or Negaunee area). The "Baraga County Community Wildfire Protection Plan" was funded (only 3 funded in the UP). This should help them develop capacity for fighting future wildfires in the area. They also received a grant to re-engineer the campground on Sand Point.

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine reported that they are also working on a community wildfire protection plan for the area around Bruce Crossing which is funded by the USFS and they hope will allow them to get future grant funding. The bat enclosures in the Ottawa NF mentioned by Bruce Petersen were funded by stimulus funding. Hiker safety is an issue with old mine pits. They are also updating Camp Nesbitt using local contractors, and fixing CCC buildings at Lake Ottawa. The Ottawa underwent a review last week that is done once every 10 years. The reviewers contact local government reps to see how the forest is doing. The forest is working on travel management maps to make improvements (changes come out every April). There

were 3 sales on the Ottawa that belonged to Smurfit Stone and were defaulted on. The Ottawa must report these losses and it makes more work for them.

**RC&D Coordinator Report:** Marilyn distributed an RFP for Estuary Habitat Restoration grants funded by NOAA and the Great Lakes Commission. These grants can be used for re-establishing historic hydrology and fish passage and habitat. The deadline is early March. She also reported that she has completed two years of training in the role of a facilitator, and has provisional accreditation. She is available to work with groups (preferably related to conservation issues) that need the assistance of a facilitator. Updates on projects were provided in the updated Annual Plan of Work that she distributed. One project specifically mentioned was the “cooperative weed management area for the eastern UP”. The USFS received funding to form a cooperative weed management area and they are working in collaboration with the Chippewa/East Mackinac CD.

#### **NEW MEASURES:**

**Iron County Multi-Recreational Facility Expansion-**This project involves the expansion of the Ice Arena in Caspian to become a multi-recreational facility by adding 240’ of length to the 122’ wide structure. The expansion will allow for low cost indoor sporting activities for this low income area. The focus on year round activities is to improve the wellness of residents of all ages, expand interaction and quality of life for the large senior population (23.7%), improve the sports performance of local athletes, and increase tourism in the county. They are going to incorporate as much “green technology” as possible (recapture of heat from cooling ice, incorporate solar, biomass, use recycled material from Connor Flooring). They are requesting help in locating appropriate grants for this project. The project was approved (Marshall/Pelkola).

**PROJECT UPDATES:** See above under “Coordinator’s Report”. Also, Darcy gave an update on the BURN-UP Project. The Phase II extension will be complete March 31, 2010. Remaining funds are being used to complete engineering pre-feasibility studies at the Republic-Michigamme School and also for select buildings at the Ford Center. Earlier this week a grant proposal was submitted to the USFS for a “BURN-UP Phase III” which would continue the current work being done and expand activities with new partners in northern Wisconsin (Lumberjack RC&D Council, BEREC).

**CORRESPONDENCE:** All councils received correspondence from the National Association of RC&D Councils regarding the President’s FY2010 budget which was recently released. The RC&D program has once again been zeroed out for funding. We are waiting for word on a recommended strategy for having funding reinstated by congress.

The council also received a request to donate an item for the silent auction for the North Central RC&D meeting which is scheduled for early April in Canton, Ohio. If any members have items they wish to donate, please contact the UP RC&D office. The donation can generate a lot of good publicity for the organization or business making the donation. The HK Conservation District offered to donate a t-shirt from their Bete Grise Preserve.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 20, 2010 (please note change in date from original schedule) 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).

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**Keweenaw Mt. Lodge, Copper Harbor, May 20, 2010**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Carol Rose Fouts -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Bruce Petersen-NRCS; Bob Larson & Cathy Newland-Baraga CD; Anton Pintar-Houghton Co Bd of Comm; Bob Black-Iron Co Bd of Comm; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa Natl Forest; Marvin LaGrew-Gogebic CD; Mark Klemp-Houghton Keweenaw CD; Jim LaMuth-WUPPDR; Steven Siira-Keweenaw County; Mike Schira-MSUE; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:11 am. The agenda was approved with no changes (Black/LaGrew). Members present introduced themselves.

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

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Darcy presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of April 30, 2010 is \$490.64. The report will be placed on file (LaGrew/LaMuth).

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**County Dues:** Darcy reported that invoices were sent to all counties in the UP on January 19, 2010 requesting \$300 dues for FY2010. Counties were also asked to provide the name and contact information for their appointee and alternate to the regional RC&D council covering their county. Dues payments have been received from all counties except Schoolcraft and Ontonagon. John Pelkola followed up on the Ontonagon County dues, and informed the council that the dues will be paid, but the money has been transferred over to the Ont. CD and they will have to call a meeting to approve the disbursement to the UP RC&D Council.

**Funding for RC&D Program-Legislative Update:** No new information to report at this time.

**REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** Bob Larson passed around some pictures of erosion in the Curwood Park area (along Bayshore Drive).

**Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Conservation Districts:** Bruce Petersen reported that KBIC and the Baraga County Road Commission have identified 8 culvert sites and applied for WHP funding in the amount of \$560,000 which looks promising. The Michigan NRCS has received \$8.9 million to be distributed for this type of work. The Road Comm. has added 35 more sites to a list of those they hope to get funded next year. Rob Aho is about 80% done with the design work on the Quincy Smelter site with the hope that construction will begin later this year. The Chassell Flood Protection (Hamar Creek) Project is on hold for now. MDOT is willing to clean out the highway culvert and easement area, but won't do it until there is funding to remediate the upstream sections of the creek which would prevent the culvert from filling with sediment in the future. Three and one-half acres of stamp sand remediation will be funded this year at Sand Point (Bruce is working with KBIC and Rob Aho on this). The Marsin Center project needs funding to convert the facility to a retreat center. There is 900' of frontage on the Portage Canal, 2 residences, a boat house and the donor left \$830,000 to help with the future needs of the property when it was donated to the Keweenaw Land Trust.

**Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District:** Mark Klemp reported that the preliminary design is completed for stamp sand remediation at "Central 3" on the Eagle River. They also applied for a GLRI grant for \$415,000 for Hills Creek/Black Creek which is in cooperation with NRCS, the Michigan Nature Association, Longyear, Michigan Tech and the CD. The funds for restoration on the Cliff Mine site have been approved, but not received yet. Funding to purchase additional acreage at the Bete Gris preserve has been approved, but not received yet. They are also applying for a Coastal Management Grant to install

signage and to do trail building. They are also in the process of applying for a watershed grant for work on the Pilgrim River (abuts the MTU ski trails).

**Houghton County:** Anton Pintar reported that the Houghton Co Trail Committee feels a trail coordinator is needed to focus on issues of land ownership in particular. They meet in August and hope to get all trail partners involved. There are lots of incursions happening at this time because easements are so variable from one owner to the next.

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Marvin LaGrew reported that they are working with the USFS on invasive plants and have hired a seasonal herbicide sprayer. They are now receiving income (although this has been slow and they hope it will pick up) from the Soil Erosion Sedimentation Control Program. They are partnering with the Ottawa NF and others on the "Get Outdoors for Gogebic County" (part of a national event). The District was one of 7 organizations in the state to receive a volunteer stream monitoring grant for the Black River (a tributary to the Presque Isle River) and they also received an Arbor Day Mini-Grant. Their annual tree sale was held in May and was very successful with sales up 20% from last year.

**Iron County:** Bob Black reported that he feels like tourism from snowmobiles and ORV's is beneficial to the UP and is trying to collaborate with other counties to make regulations across jurisdictional boundaries consistent. He is part of a group called ANSWERS which includes the border counties of MI and WI and they are trying to designate one location for obtaining the information on regulations for all counties. ORV groups and the MDNRE have been receptive to this networking opportunity. Iron County did not receive funding from the MDNRE for a boat wash at Pentoga Park/Chicagon Lake (although the DNR was willing to fund a boat landing). However, the Iron CD received a grant from the Ottawa NF for a portable boat wash for the area and will be hiring personnel to operate it this summer.

**Keweenaw County:** Carol Rose Fouts reported that the county board listened to a presentation last night from the EDC. The EDC made a proposal for the re-use of Mt. Horace Greely as a Bio-Fuel generating facility (handout given). She also reported that she submitted her resignation to the Keweenaw Bd of Commissioners, but they asked her to reconsider and stay on until she sells her house, so she withdrew her resignation for the time being. She reported that Don Keith has expressed interest in being the appointee to RC&D. She reported that the county has a public park and bathrooms at Great Sand Bay and the road commission is applying for a \$95,000 matching grant for playground equipment.

**Ontonagon County:** John Pelkola was unable to attend due to another commitment, but Barbara Van Alstine reported that the county has developed a partnership council in an attempt to enhance the situation in the county. The RAC application (Secure Rural Schools) is moving through the process, and Ontonagon and Gogebic Counties are working with Northern Initiatives to see if they can be helped by the North American Development Bank.

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine distributed a brochure on "Becoming an Outfitter or Guide on the National Forests". The USFS is trying to be compliant with the code in the federal regulations that states commercial enterprise on FS lands must be permitted. The program is already established in the Huron-Manistee NF where they have about 70 permitted outfitters (mostly canoe liveries). The state may take over the licensing of guides (bear this year). The minimum fee for a special use permit is about \$80. The permitting process should help regulate problems, and the money from the fees goes back into the program. Permits can be rescinded if there are complaints. At this time, out of state hunters are not required to hire a guide. The campground maintenance on the forest has been contracted to the same concessionaire as last year (they had a good experience). Stimulus funds will be used to renovate Camp Nesbitt (historic CCC Camp) for school education. Contractor bids will go out in June. Three Smurfit Stone sales that were defaulted have been re-bid and all are under new contracts.

**MSUE-** Mike Schira reported that MSUE is undergoing a restructuring process statewide, and that the public probably won't see much of a change. There will still be presence in every county, but not individual county extension directors. Mike will be responsible for forestry training UP-wide. MTU received a grant to do EAB research, looking for a bio-control. Andrew Stohrer and his grad students are working on the project near Calumet. MSU/MTU are working with Frontier Energy on a cellulosic ethanol project -MTU is looking at available resources (different from total resources), and MSU is surveying loggers for production capability.

**WUPPDR:** Jim LaMuth reported that they are working with Baraga Co. to do a management plan for Pt. Abbye (old RC&D project), and also updating the Keweenaw Co. Recreation plan with the recreation committee there. They are working with Iron County to submit a Trust Fund application for the Apple Blossom bike Trail (one part of the Iron Co bike trail project). WUPPDR and MDOT are hosting a program called "Training Wheels" which includes 2 hours of instruction regarding bicycle facility design and then a bike ride. They are working on a master transportation interpretive plan for the area from the Houghton lift bridge to Copper Harbor. Jim reported that Nels Anderson left WUPPDR to return to school.

**RC&D Coordinator Report:** Marilyn reported that the UP RC&D Council received \$150,000 from the NFWF for an invasive plant project (more details under project updates), and the Chippewa East Mackinac Conservation District received almost \$100,000 from the USFS to establish a cooperative weed management area in Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac counties. The only part of the UP not currently covered by a CWMA is Houghton, Keweenaw and Baraga counties. The FONSI has been signed for the Grand Marais Harbor Breakwall, and local partners hope the funding will be coming soon. She is working with KBIC on a groundwater sustainability project for their fish hatchery. They need 800-1000 gal of water a minute. The grant proposal that UP RC&D had submitted for a third biomass project was not funded. She will be working as a facilitator in Maryland in late June with a group that is making decisions on CIG proposals to receive funding. She hopes to get some tips from this experience on what they are looking for in successful proposals.

**NEW MEASURES: None**

**PROJECT UPDATES:** Darcy gave an update on the RRIP-IT-UP Project. Rapid Response/early detection teams will be established in all conservation district areas by the time the project is completed. Some will be established the first year, and others the second. Three Train-the-Trainer educational workshops were held (there is one this afternoon in conjunction with this meeting which everyone is welcome to stay for), and almost 90 people were trained on the invasive plant problem, how to prioritize the problems, identification and treatment for various species, and monitoring and mapping infestations. The workshops have been well-received. Each conservation district and each tribe will be receiving grant funds, and we are working with many other partners as well.

**CORRESPONDENCE: None**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 pm with many members staying for lunch and the afternoon invasive plants workshop (Black/LaGrew).

**NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 5, 2010 in Ontonagon County. Tentatively the meeting will take place at 10 am (Eastern time).**

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**Ontonagon County Courthouse, August 5, 2010**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Don Keith -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Steve Siira-Keweenaw Co Planning Comm; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa Natl Forest; Dave Harmon & Ron Zaleski-Gogebic CD; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Comm; John Pelkola-Ontonagon Co Comm; Frank Wardynski-Ontonagon CD & MSUE; Ken Marshall-KBIC; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:05 am. The agenda was approved with no changes (Menge/Harmon). Members present introduced themselves.

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

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Darcy presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of July 31, 2010 is \$490.64 with no recent activity to report. The report will be placed on file (Keith/Pelkola).

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**County Dues:** Darcy reported that dues payments have been received from all counties except Schoolcraft and Ontonagon. Frank Wardynski reported that the Ontonagon CD had approved the payment at their last meeting and he thought a check had been written and mailed. He will follow up and John Pelkola also offered to follow-up if payment was not received in the near future.

**Funding for RC&D Program-Legislative Update:** There was no new information to report at this time.

**2009 Annual Report:** Darcy Rutkowski distributed copies of the 2009 Annual Report for the Upper Peninsula RC&D Council. They were very well received.

**REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** Bill Menge reported that the county owns a 258 acre parcel out on Pt. Abbaye that is being developed into a nature park. They received a \$15,000 planning grant from the DNRE. They hope to incorporate some ADA accessible trails and install a water (naturally-filling) tank for fire protection.

**Baraga, Ontonagon and Houghton Conservation Districts:** Bruce Petersen retired on July 31, 2010 so he will not be attending meetings on behalf of these districts any more. No replacement has been hired yet.

**Houghton County: No reps present.**

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Dave Harmon reported that they have pared down their budget. Their sources of income are from the tree sale, soil erosion permitting, and 3 grants. Each Director has taken responsibility for and oversees a separate program. They work closely with Dennis Jacobson from the County Board of Commissioners and have lots of new volunteers. Tom Bergman has been doing some stream monitoring and they are looking at purchasing a no-till drill. Ron Zaleski reported that the district sponsors weekly walking tours in Ironwood and also some in Bessemer. They are attracting lots of tourists to these walks.

**Gogebic County:** Dennis Jacobson reported the county heard a report from Susan Spear, Ottawa Forest Supervisor, on the role of the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) that has been put together as part of the Secure Rural Schools Program. The county has over \$400,000 to spend on local conservation projects that will enhance the Ottawa. Dennis is a member of the RAC and he is keeping the CD informed. He also said

that Melanie Pullman from the USFS reported that the Black Rier Harbor has been dredged and that camping has increased there with many out of state visitors. Northern Initiatives received a grant of \$150,000 to promote tourism in the UP and held a seminar related to this that Dennis attended. The goal is to attract tourists from southern states through websites, tv advertising and local surveys.

**Iron County: No reps present.**

**Keweenaw County:** Don Keith introduced Steve Siira from the Keweenaw County Planning Commission. Steve has been appointed by the county board to attend RC&D meetings. Don reported that the KEDC Chairman Ray Chase, has worked diligently on a trail system design (both motorized and non-motorized) that was the first of its kind to be approved in Lansing. Sixty-three property owners are involved and signed a 1 year agreement which allows ATV access on their property. The county can now advertise this access but the goal is to get deeded easements and dedicated ownership eventually to secure future public access. They are also working to connect the trails in Baraga, Ontonagon and Iron counties and have reciprocity between Michigan and Wisconsin for trail passes. He also reported that a new state of the art roadside park is now open at Great Sand Bay.

**Ontonagon County:** John Pelkola reported that he missed the last RC&D meeting so he could attend the county disaster training the same day. The ambulance crisis in the county has been resolved with a millage to support the services and new folks being trained as paramedics. He also reported that the railroad between Ontonagon and Sidnaw may shut down, and a refinery has also stopped operating in White Pine. He would also like to see some work done at the pond located in the park in Trout Lake. Frank Wardynski reported that he is facilitating the Ontonagon County Economic Partnership which is volunteer-based. They have received \$14,000 in community funds to use for matching grants they may apply for. Their marketing committee is gearing up and the business recruitment committee is hoping to find a new business to utilize the Smurfit Stone facility and the shipbuilding site. An economic development person working in both Ontonagon and Baraga counties will be starting soon. He is also on the Ontonagon CD board and reported they are struggling to figure out how they will operate on very limited funds. They have laid off their administrator and he thinks there may be a big turnover in the board members. He is focusing his energy on the economic partnership now and doesn't have much time for the CD. Barbara VanAlstine thought she might know of some folks in Ontonagon County that could be interested in serving on the CD board.

**MSUE:** Frank Wardynski reported on the ongoing restructuring process that MSUE is undergoing. They are currently developing a staffing plan and current employees can indicate interest in the available positions. This should be finalized within the next couple months. There will be much more sharing of resource people across county lines, but he doesn't think the public will see much difference.

**Keweenaw Bay Indian Community:** The tribe just finished releasing walleye fry into Lake Superior (2<sup>nd</sup> year). They estimate that 12,500 have been released. They received a grant to build a dome greenhouse near Pequaming and a land use planning grant. They are creating jobs now in the county through: expanding the health care facility, building a new daycare center, replacing 12 culverts (3 already done, others will be finished next summer), and by installing fiber optics in the Village of Baraga. Ken wrote and received funding for a grant of \$690,000 (over three years). His position will be funded by this grant and they will be installing a big computer server which will make KBIC the GIS hub for the county. They also received a grant for a transfer station for Baraga County, and another household recycling grant. KBIC is also hiring a plant specialist.

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine distributed handouts regarding the Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) which were recently established in both Ontonagon and Gogebic counties. Those counties will be receiving funds through the Secure Rural Schools Act. Baraga County can apply for funds through the Ontonagon Co RAC and Marquette County doesn't have enough forest service land to qualify for a RAC and Iron County decided

not to. Local conservation projects can be funded through the RAC's. The Ottawa is using stimulus funds to complete deferred maintenance on Camp Nesbitt (a CCC camp built in 1938). They contracted with a company in Bay City which in turn sub-contracted with a Houghton company to complete the work. They are doing re-roofing, updating bathrooms, etc. The camp gets a lot of use from local school districts. They also used stimulus funds to complete more abandoned mine bat closures and several culvert replacements. The wildfire protection plan is almost complete for the Bruce Crossing area. Once the plan is approved and in place, they can then apply for additional funds. They also acquired 900 acres on Pricket Lake which is north of the Sturgeon River and are working with the Trust for Public Lands on this.

**WUPPDR: No reps present.**

**RC&D Coordinator Report:** Marilyn reported that the USDA has a "growing locally project" (Michigan is a pilot state) which includes such things as high tunnels and farm markets. The job of District Conservationist that Bruce Petersen held closes tomorrow and she hopes the new person will be as active in RC&D as Bruce was. She thinks there may be a new project coming to our next meeting from the Ironwood area related to a biomass project there. The Marquette/Alger and Dickinson/Iron CD's are working to fund forester positions in their districts. The grant they are applying for requires a 1:1 cash match for the NRCS funds. The forester would provide services for private landowners.

**NEW MEASURES: None**

**PROJECT UPDATES:** Darcy distributed a handout on the RRIP-IT-UP Project which summarized the accomplishments so far. Rapid Response teams have begun to be established in 11 of the 13 conservation districts. Partners have conducted 12 invasive plant control workdays, and she and Marilyn have begun discussions with all 5 tribes in the UP about possible invasive plant control activities and needs they want to address. They will be sponsoring a UP-wide conference on invasive plants in Marquette on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the Delta CD helped them distribute RRIP-IT-UP information at the UP state fair. Marilyn reported that there was a good turnout at a recent meeting to discuss the situation at the Black River Narrows. There were representatives from the USFS, NRCS, MDNRE, the CD and local landowners. The next step is to get an NRCS engineer to look at the situation and develop a design.

**CORRESPONDENCE: None**

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 pm (Menge/Pelkola).**

**NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held at 10 am (Eastern Time) on Thursday, November 4, 2010 in Kenton at the USFS office. Barbara VanAlstine will reserve the meeting space.**

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**USFS Kenton Ranger District Office, November 4, 2010**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Don Keith -Keweenaw Co Bd of Comm; Steve Siira-Keweenaw Co Planning Comm; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge & Bill Rolof-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa Natl Forest; Dave Harmon & Marvin LaGrew-Gogebic CD; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Comm; Anton Pintar-Houghton Co Comm; Frank Wardynski-Ontonagon CD & MSUE; Ken Marshall-KBIC; David Stanek-Iron CD; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:00 am. The agenda was approved with no changes (Jacobson/Siira).

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

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Darcy presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of October 29, 2010 is \$515.64 with the only recent activity being the deposit of the Ontonagon County 2010 Dues of \$25. Darcy explained the mini-grant program that the Central RC&D Council instituted this year to utilize some of their funds to support small projects. The report will be placed on file (Marshall/Jacobson).

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**County Dues:** Darcy reported that 2010 dues have now been received from all 15 counties. Ontonagon and Schoolcraft counties both paid their dues since the last meeting.

**Set Meeting Schedule for 2011:** Quarterly meetings were scheduled for 2011 on February 3, May 5, August 4, and November 3. A motion to approve this meeting schedule passed (Harmon/Wardynski).

**Circle of Diamonds:** The UP RC&D Council recently applied for and received Circle of Diamonds designation from the National Association of RC&D Councils. This program requires that councils are in compliance with best management practices for non-profit organizations, have effective working relationships with several partners, council boards represent the diversity of the population of their service area, have up-to-date bylaws, annual plans of work, and strategic plans, and are effectively communicating with their constituents by means of outreach documents such as newsletters, and annual reports. There is no cost to be a Circle of Diamonds member, however, the application must be resubmitted each year. The UP RC&D Council is only the second out of eight councils in Michigan to receive the designation.

**REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** Bill Menge reported that the county is holding a public openhouse to get input on the Pt. Abbaye Park.

**Baraga Conservation District:** Bob Larson reported that one of their board members resigned, and they are strapped financially. Their board has made the decision to close the office and lay off their part-time administrator when their bank account has only \$1000 remaining in it. They are trying to find grants to apply for that might extend their existence. Ken Marshall suggested they apply for "2% funds" from KBIC to support the district. A formal letter to the tribal president is required, and this would need to be sent at the beginning of 2011. The Baraga CD tree sale is also making about \$2000 less every year.

**Houghton County:** The Houghton Co. Planning Commission is trying to coordinate trails for both Houghton and Keweenaw counties. They have formed a steering committee, and hope to get a trail coordinator. They heard a presentation by the Iron Ore Heritage Trail personnel and are hoping to get some additional information from the Tip of The Mit Trail authority. They will explore forming an authority which

would serve as the funding organization and they plan to coordinate efforts with the DNRE and MDOT. Barb VanAlstine mentioned that the Ottawa NF would be interested in participating in the planning process. Anton attends the Conservation District meetings on behalf of the county and reported that their Annual Meeting is in March and their tree sale is the first Friday in May. They are going to be selling grapes this year, and the tree sale profits cover about 50% of the cost of having an administrator in their office with the remainder coming from savings at this point.

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Dave Harmon reported that they are wrapping up a very good year, and the treasury looks good for next year. The county gives them about \$3000 per year and most of that is spent on rent. They will hold a tree sale again this coming year and volunteers are critical to the success of the sale. They are applying for grants to support their work in 2011 including one to restore fish habitat on Narrows Creek and another for the Gogebic County Invasive Plant Management Program. They have continuing grant support through the RRIP-IT-UP grant and members of their CD will be meeting with Marilyn and Darcy on December 2 to review this past season and plan activities for next field season. Mary Powell attended the MiCorps Conference and training recently, and they are submitting a new project application today to try to secure technical expertise in developing a full MiCorps proposal along with funding opportunities and strategies to sustain the program for the long term. They also had a meeting of stakeholders recently where 7 sites in the Black River watershed were identified for future work. They are working with the DNRE, Ottawa NF, and NRCS partners on this project. Their Annual Meeting and election will be November 10<sup>th</sup> at the Elk & Hound at 5:30 CST. Bill Cook, MSUE Forester & Wildlife Biologist, will be the guest speaker and talk about using forest resources to sustain the rural economy and also woody biomass utilization. Mary Powell attended the "All Partners meeting" on September 29 in Marquette and found it was very informative with many great ideas exchanged. Marvin LaGrew met with the Ironwood city manager and community development director to discuss a possible biomass project.

**Gogebic County:** Dennis Jacobson reported that the Ottawa NF was advertising for RAC projects, but that is now closed. There is a new sheriff in Gogebic County. He attended a seminar last week in Marquette and received some facts that will help when considering future economic predictors: IT WILL BE 5-7 YRS BEFORE WE GET TO 4-5% UNEMPLOYMENT; IN 1980 25% HAD MORE THAN A HS DIPLOMA - NOW IT'S 80%; 1 IN 3 IN COLLEGE NOW IS OVER 40; INFLATION WILL STAY UNDER CONTROL BECAUSE OF THE INTERNET - WE'VE ONLY TAPPED 10% OF THE INTERNET; TATOO REMOVAL WILL BE A BIG BUSINESS IN COMING YRS; A BABY GIRL BORN THIS YEAR - 60% WILL REACH 100; UP HAS 43% OF STATE FORESTS; WE NEED TO ENTICE RETIREES TO COME HERE - THEY BRING THEIR ASSETS - 1 RETIREE CAN BE WORTH 3-5 MANUFACTURING JOBS; MI HAS BEEN IN A RECESSION 9 YRS AND IS NOW EXPERIENCING SOME MODEST GROWTH - UNEMPLOYMENT HAS GONE DOWN FROM 14.4 TO 13%; HEALTH CARE IS LARGEST EMPLOYER IN COUNTIES; CANADIAN ECONOMY IS DOING GOOD

**Iron County: No rep present.**

**Iron Conservation District:** Dave Stanek reported the district was represented at the Iron Co business expo and promoted their spring tree sale and invasive plant/animal work, their no-till drill and tree pruning experience. The spring tree sale was successful, more than 20,000 items sold. They also assisted the Forest Park 5<sup>th</sup> grade class in planting 1000 red pine seedlings at the Memorial Forest near the airport and had a fall conifer plug sale and sold over 9000 pine trees. They received funds from a GLRI grant to the Ottawa NF, and used them to provide a portable boat washer and employ 2 people plus a coordinator. The two employees made contact with 1000 people at fishing sites and lake association meetings. They washed nearly 100 boats at over 25 different lakes during the 16 week program. The district rented out the no-till drill to area farmers and planted 22 acres in 2010. They also applied for and received a \$2000 grant from DTE/DNRE to plant trees in Alpha with volunteers from the fire dept and local residents. They had a county-wide recycling day in June collecting metal, cardboard, appliances and computers. The district also had a booth at the Iron County Fair and a table at the Harvest Fest where they distributed information on the RRIP-IT-UP project, tree sale, and boat washer activities. Their annual meeting was held October 19 with about 50 people

attending. The guest speaker was Mark Mylchrest, DNRE fisheries technician speaking on improving trout habitat on the Brule River. No election for directors was needed this year. They are also implementing the soil and sedimentation program for the county and so far have taken in over \$13,000 with expenses to date just a little over \$5000. This is an increase from last year with most of the increased revenue due to infrastructure expansion in the city of Crystal Falls. They are replacing gas and sewer lines. A 1.5 mile bike path is also being built along US-2 there.

**Keweenaw County:** Steve Siira reported that the planning commission finished compiling their zoning ordinances and maps and this has been sent to the printer. They held a public meeting to get input about changing the zoning on US-41 through Mohawk and since no one from the public attended they cannot make the changes at this time. They are developing a strategic plan and in the future hope to do more planning and less zoning. Don Keith reported that Keweenaw County completed their “Blueprint for Tomorrow” a 5-year planning document and that it emphasizes doing more with partnerships. The Brownfield redevelopment committee is working on stamp sands and they are working on a feasibility and engineering study with WUPPDR to utilize stamp sands as granular fungicides (possibly in shingles). This is part of a 6 county study and WUPPDR is asking for funding from all the counties to support it. He reported that Keweenaw County has the “flagship premier roadside park” in the state at Great Sand Bay. In fact, Keweenaw County has 11 roadside parks, more than all the other counties combined in the western UP. The Keweenaw ATV club has worked with 46 private property owners and the DNRE has officially approved designated, signed trails that cross private property for the first time ever. This is a one-year agreement. There are 86 miles of trails from the Houghton lift bridge to the tip of the Keweenaw and it is in the best interest of all trail users if the trails are designated.

**Ontonagon County:** John Pelkola called last week to say that he could not attend this meeting due to a conflict with another meeting he was required to attend.

**Ontonagon Conservation District:** Frank Wardynski reported that they have an annual meeting scheduled for January 17, 2011 where an election of board members will be held. The petitions will be available by November 17 or 18 from Kathy Pattison (although she is no longer working, her email address is still working). Four out of five of the board positions will be open, and he reported they need new blood and more involvement from the public. They did not do the tree sale last year and MSUE picked it up (volume was down, but profitability was still good). Barb VanAlstine suggested that they ask for volunteer help from boy and girl scouts and their families to help with future tree sales.

**MSUE:** Frank Wardynski reported on the ongoing restructuring process that MSUE is undergoing. They now have a state staffing plan in place. He is now an extension educator for dairy and beef production (responsible for beef over entire UP and dairy in the western 2/3). There will be less face-to-face contact with the public (lower travel budgets) and more use of internet technology for education, and more contact by phone. He doesn't believe there were any MSUE job losses across the UP due to restructuring, but it is possible that future openings may not get filled. There will be a meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup> to decide the fate of the Chatham Experimental Station (the dairy herd has already been sold).

**Keweenaw Bay Indian Community:** The tribe is going to start collecting wind data in January when three 200 foot wind towers are installed (the previous 100 foot tower did not collect sufficient data). Towers will be placed on both sides of Keweenaw Bay and they are working with Seventh Heaven Wind out of Madison. The tribe received a GIS Enterprise grant for \$690,000 for 3 years. Ken will be paid out of this grant and he will also travel to DC to make a presentation on this grant as KBIC is the first tribe to receive a grant like this. They are also working on the Baraga County Wildfire Plan and they will be building a new gas station in Marquette.

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine distributed handouts regarding the Kenton Ranger District House Removal and Restoration Project. They are going through the NEPA process to remove administrative houses which are not rented and in the wild and scenic river designated area where the plan states that the houses should be removed. She is working with John Pelkola on a Resource Advisory Council (RAC) proposal to deal with the invasive weed in the pond in Trout Creek. The plant is actually a native plant, coon's tail, but is displaying invasive characteristics. There is a new ATT cell phone tower being built near Kenton on private land (which is preferred over placing on FS lands because the landowner receives rent). Barbara asked all conservation districts that have NF lands in their areas to send their tree sale brochures to the USFS offices on the Ottawa. She feels that there would be a lot of interest from the USFS employees.

**WUPPDR: No reps present.**

**RC&D Coordinator Report:** Marilyn reported that she has been working with the Marquette/Alger CD's and the Dickinson/Iron CD's to try to get some grant funding for forestry positions. The foresters would work with private landowners and the districts would be required to provide a 50% cash match for the grants. The Marquette and Alger districts together were successful in receiving the funding and the Dickinson and Iron CD's are still working on finding the cash match (possibly from local forestry companies).

**Other- MARCDC Meeting Report:** Bob Larson reported that he, Marilyn and Darcy attended the MARCDC (MI Assoc. of RC&D Councils) meeting in Traverse City last week. There was a presentation on the Boardman River Restoration Project, and a tour of sites in the watershed where 4 dams will be removed as part of the project. The MARCDC will have booths set up at the Michigan Township Association meeting and the Michigan Family Farm Conference, both taking place in January 2011.

**NEW MEASURES: MiCorps Black River Stream Monitoring Project-**The Gogebic CD currently has a small grant to put together a stream monitoring program and receive initial training on how to do the monitoring. There is a lot of local interest in monitoring on the Black River and they are also working with the USFS, property owners, NRCS and MDNRE. The river currently has problems with an oxbow area that has slowed stream current and caused rising stream temps. They would like to eventually restore the river to the trout fishing stream it once was. They are asking for RC&D assistance with technical expertise and developing the grant proposal and also working on the QAPP if they do receive the grant. The project was approved (Marshall/Wardynski).

**PROJECT UPDATES: RRIP-IT-UP-**Darcy distributed a handout on the RRIP-IT-UP Project which summarized the accomplishments so far. Rapid Response teams have begun to be established in 11 of the 13 conservation districts. Partners have conducted more than 46 invasive plant control workdays, and recruited more than 217 volunteers, and have more than 40 partners involved in the work. The first "UP-wide conference on invasive plants: partnerships for control and restoration" took place yesterday in Marquette. There were 71 people in attendance and the speakers were very well received. They will be working with all the districts over the winter to evaluate their accomplishments over the first field season and plan for activities for the next field season. **Black River Narrows Project-** Partners are working to come up with a plan for remediating a portion of the river that was narrowed by flooding and debris deposits. This has led to slower currents and increased water temps and fish are blocked from moving upstream to spawn.

**CORRESPONDENCE: None**

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 pm (Menge/Wardynski).**

**NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held at 10 am (Eastern Time) on Thursday, February 3, 2011 with the location to be determined.**