

MINUTES

Eastern Regional RC&D Council Meeting
McMillan Township Hall, Newberry
March 2, 2006 1 pm

Present: Pat Carr, CEMCD; Jim Farero, Mackinac Co. Commissioner; Sharon Brown, LWMCD; Dusty King, CEMCD; Scott Hughey, NRCS; Aaron Hopper, Chippewa Co.; Dick Timmer, Chippewa Co. Commissioner; Roger Quist, NRCS; Marilyn Shy, UPRCD Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski, UPRCD Admin. Asst.

Reports & Business Items:

Sharon Brown called the meeting to order at 1 pm and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved (Brown/Timmer). The new UP RC&D Coordinator, Marilyn Shy, introduced herself and gave the group a summary of her background and fundraising skills. She reported that she has been spending a great deal of time since she began work with UP RCD writing a grant for the St. Mary's River watershed.

County Reports: Marilyn's orientation to current projects was accomplished through reports by the counties and conservation districts.

Chippewa/East Mackinac CD: Pat Carr (watershed coordinator) and Dusty King (CD Admin.) gave updates on two watershed projects:

Les Cheneaux Watershed Project – they have approval for CMI funding and hopefully will get 319 funding in the future.

Water Guardinas – Project funding ends soon, but volunteers will continue monitoring sites through the summer, partnered with LSSU for analysis.

Sault Ste. Marie Watershed Planning Project – there are 5 creeks, partnering with LSSU for water quality analysis and inventory of sites. Outcome will be a plan of action for remediation/protection with hope of getting 319 funding in future.

NRCS – Scott Hughey: Scott summarized the federal assistance programs that he administers: EQIP, WRP, WHP which all are in the sign-up phase right now. Scott is also responsible for ensuring landowner compliance and collecting receipts for current recipients.

Luce/West Mackinac CD: Sharon Brown reported on the Hamilton Lake Nature Area Project. It is a neat piece of property with an original land survey line tree and historical and cultural significance. The land is owned by the county, 60 acres with a 10 acre lake, nature trail and signage. The advisory board is trying to reach a compromise with the hunting community to ensure availability to a broader community.

Chippewa County: Richard Timmer reported that Bay Mills Community College owns a piece of property adjacent to tribal lands and there is potential for a future RC&D project there.

New Projects: St. Mary's River Rapid Watershed Assessment – Mike LaPointe, Asst. State Conservationist for Area 1, requested that Marilyn begin working on this project immediately upon her arrival in Marquette due to the imminent grant application deadline. It was noted that this is not the normal process for the UP RC&D Coordinator to become involved in a project. Typically the project is brought to the regional council first for approval and at that time the coordinator begins grant-writing and other assistance. The project was approved (Hopper/Timmer).

Correspondence: Darcy noted that all counties and conservation districts would be receiving a letter from UP RC&D requesting dues payments for 2006 and confirming that county's and CD's appointee/alternate to UP RC&D.

Future Direction: There was discussion of the direction/priorities for future RC&D projects in the Eastern Region. Richard Timmer suggested alternative fuels might be important in the economic revival of agricultural lands in the E. UP (canola, rape seed). The County Road Commission is doing a pilot project with interested schools. Also, wood burning pellet technology might be expanded upon. It was suggested that some of the folks who were active with UP RC&D in the recent past be invited to the next meeting to answer questions and update current attendees on completed and current RC&D projects they have knowledge of (Bob DeVillez, Selden Collins).

Next Meeting Date: Those present decided to have Dusty, Sharon and Marilyn choose a date.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:30 pm.

MINUTES – EASTERN REGIONAL UP RC&D MEETING

USDA Service Center, Sault Ste. Marie

May 25, 2006 10 am

Present: Pat Carr, CEMCD; Jim Farero, Mackinac Co. Commissioner; Sharon Brown, LWMCD; Dusty King, CEMCD; Will Bomier, NRCS; Melissa Ronquist; Dean Sherwood; Bob Wiles, CEMCD; Richard Stevenson, DNR; Jim Pawlowicz, MDA; Marilyn Shy, UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski, UP RC&D

Reports & Business Items:

Bob Wiles called the meeting to order at 10 am and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved. Darcy reported that all 3 counties have paid their 2006 dues, but she is still missing some information regarding the appointee and alternate for CEMCD and for the Luce County Commission. The latest legislative update from the NARCDC was given – the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee rejected the President's budget request for the RC&D program and the program was funded at \$50,787,000 which was the same funding level as FY06. The Full Appropriations Committee will now consider the bill and then it will go to the House floor for consideration.

County Reports:

Chippewa/East Mackinac CD: Dusty King reported that the UP RC&D water guardians project is complete, however, monitoring will be continued by volunteers. They are still waiting to hear if the St. Mary's River Rapid Watershed Assessment Project will receive funding. There will be volunteer training for Citizen Scientists coming up this weekend.

Luce/West Mackinac CD: The signs at Hamilton Lake are close to final design. The Michigan Association of RC&D Councils will have their fall meeting in Newberry in October and that will include a field trip to Hamilton Lake.

Michigan DNR: Richard Stevenson reported that there are five eco-teams in the state, of which 2 are in the UP (East and West). These teams are in the process of writing eco-regional planning documents and will be holding public sessions for input. He also reported that state forests are achieving dual certification and moving to make that part of their regular procedures. This certification indicates that the forests are producing forest products (including timber, recreation, wildlife) in a sustainable manner. The state forest practices will be audited to evaluate those standards versus independent certification standards.

Michigan Dept. of Agriculture: The MDA has created a new engineering position in conjunction with NRCS and the Conservation Districts (one-half of funding will come from NRCS, one-half from MDA). They are in the process of interviewing candidates for the position. This person will help handle a huge backlog of WPR projects. The new farm bill is coming out and the sign-ups are ongoing.

New Projects:

Tahquamenon Area Civic Center – Sharon Brown and Melissa Ronquist presented this new project on behalf of the Tahquamenon Area Civic Center Committee. It meets the goals of the UP RC&D by improving community development and quality of life for residents by increasing services and facilities in conjunction with environmental protection. There is potential for the building to utilize environmentally sensitive (green) design. It addresses the lack of community facilities in the Newberry area and has broad support from a number of entities in the region. Marilyn recommended it's approval at the Eastern Region level. Jim Farero expressed some concerns regarding his experience with the Newberry Village Council through his work on the Community Action Board. The CAB felt the council was uncooperative and hard to work with and he questioned their support of this project. Sharon felt the Civic Center project might serve to unite some groups which have had opposing views of other area projects. There was also some concern mentioned regarding bird safety and the idea of using wind generation for this new building. The project was adopted (Brown/King).

UP People and Land Community Forums Project – Sharon Brown presented this project which is a partnership of the Luce-W. Mackinac CD, the Houghton-Keweenaw CD and the UP RC&D Council. The project involves passing on information to the public regarding the implications of changes in timberland ownership occurring across the Upper Peninsula. This information is being documented by MTU, MSU and NWF and would be made available to the public through 2 forums (one in Newberry, one in Houghton – with possibly a third forum in the central UP pending additional funding). The UP RC&D would serve as an “umbrella organization” for the forums which will provide information on land ownership patterns and how large transfers of

land ownership will affect the timber industry, economic development, tourism and recreational opportunities for residents. Marilyn recommended that the council adopt the project and it was adopted (Brown/King).

Review of Eastern Regional RC&D Projects: Darcy distributed a list of all RC&D projects for Chippewa, Mackinac and Luce Counties. The projects that are still open were highlighted. Members present will spend some time studying the project list prior to the next meeting and also passing the list on to persons who may have been involved in some of these projects in the past with the hope that we can obtain an update on some of them that have not had activity in quite some time. It is possible that some of these projects have been completed or cancelled and the files were not updated. Changes in personnel in the UP RC&D over the past few years mean that current employees have little background on some of these projects.

Updates on current/future projects:

Upper Peninsula Native Plant Restoration – Native plant restoration is about to begin on sites in Alger, Delta and Marquette Counties and a restoration specialist has been contracted. This person will be establishing a native plant resource center on the UP RC&D website.

Dickinson Co. Blue Green Algae Project – This is a probable future UP RC&D project which would deal with the influx of blue green algae following zebra mussels entering an aquatic system. Seventy-five percent of the lakes sampled in that area had blue green algae at levels of concern (it poses health issues for humans and animals). Will Bomier told of his experience with blue green algae problems in lakes in southern Minnesota and of the associated negative economic impact.

Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, August 23rd at 10 am in Engadine, to be followed by a picnic. Sharon Brown will reserve the picnic shelter.

**MINUTES – EASTERN REGIONAL UP RC&D MEETING
Garfield Township Hall Picnic Area, August 23, 2006**

Present: Pat Carr, Dusty King, Johanna Nugent-CEMCD; Sharon Brown-LWMCD; Jim and Marion Farero-Mackinac Co. Commission; Dick Timmer-Chippewa Co. Commission; Richard Stevenson-MDNR; Will Bomier-NRCS; Donna Peppin, Marilyn Shy, Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved with the addition of the business item “Bob Wiles Resignation”.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting: The previous meeting minutes were approved (King/Timmer).

Business Items: A resignation letter from Bob Wiles was presented, and regretfully accepted. Dusty noted that Bob has served the Eastern Regional UP RC&D Council for at least 10 years. The council will hold elections at the next meeting. Dusty will try to contact Aaron Hopper to

make sure he is aware that he is still considered a representative from the Eastern Council to the UP Council.

Reports:

Chippewa County: Dick Timmer reported that they are still focusing on alternative energies, the City of Sault Ste. Marie is interested, Chippewa Co. – not quite as interested. Bay Mills CC has a grant to purchase a seed press mill and is using raw materials from the MSU Experimental Farm in Chatham. There is also interest in wood chip technology. The Canadians are further along than we are in the UP and they are willing to share their technology/resources. Sharon and Dusty both attended an alternative fuels workshop with Bay Mills personnel that was very educational. They requested that Dick and others from Bay Mills make a presentation on the status of their alternative fuels work at the MACD Annual Meeting on December 6-8 in the Sault.

Mackinac County: Jim Farero noted that Mackinac County has been focusing on and investing in tourism projects. A bike trail from DeTour north into Chippewa County is being planned and the Mackinac Co. Commission gave this group \$10,000. They also provided \$15,000 to a group that is moving a lighthouse in St. Ignace. Mackinac County also has some interest in alternative fuels.

Some issues with Wind energy were discussed. One issue is getting the the power from the wind farm to the location where it is being utilized. These wind farms can have a negative effect on land values.

NRCS: Will Bomier reported that NRCS is in the middle of a busy field season with projects such as small stream crossings for livestock/equipment, prescribed grazing systems with fencing, erosion control projects, windbreaks/tree plantings for wildlife (lots of trees being planted in the next year through CRP). Johanna Nugent was introduced as the new engineer hired through the conservation district to help with the project backlog. Will noted that the high fuel prices are limiting because the project costs were calculated a couple years prior to project implementation.

Chippewa/East Mackinac CD: This is a very busy time for the district with UP State Fair and County Fair activities, and school starting and projects there. The district purchased a rain barrel – rain gardens/rain barrels are of interest to the public for conserving rainwater/stormwater. Pat Carr reported on the progress in the SS Marie watershed project which will be wrapped up near the end of September. They will then be looking for implemenatation funds. The CD has also applied for a \$900,000 3-year implementation grant for the Les Cheneaux watershed, and should hear about that very soon. A 25% match is required and will consist of volunteer labor from the watershed council, RC&D support, county rd comm.. equipment usage (cash match is only about \$10,000).

Luce/West Mackinac CD: When Sharon met with Scott Shaffer from the DEQ, the Paradise Marina project was brought up. The project kind of fizzled out when the contact person (the twp supervisor) moved. Dick Timmer indicated that Chippewa County is still interested and looking for funding (it might tie in with the Heritage Route). She discussed the Tacquamenon Civic Center brownfield site with him. The site has already gone through 3 cycles of clean-up but still

has some problem areas. The company that owns it would give it to Luce Co. – but with (very) restrictive covenants. DEQ might have money to help make the site as attractive as any other site. They have a consulting firm coming to their next meeting to help with feasibility studies and planning and then have scheduled a Community Forum in Feb. They are hoping to establish a public/private partnership to support the project. The Hamilton Lake sign (full color 3' x 4') should be arriving today and they will dedicate the site on National Public Lands Day at the end of Sept. Luce County just opened their roads to ORV's, however, received a letter from the State Attorney General's office stating the county does not have the authority to do that. Chippewa and Mackinac Counties both have similar ordinances.

DNR: Richard Stevenson reported that the state forests are now certified by two national standards of Forest Certification and have been conducting third-party internal audits to confirm the certification. The certification caused wide-scale planning and a state-wide plan is being worked on, as well as an eco-regional plan being written and modified. Conservation easements on state land are a "big deal". TNC brokered the agreement with the Forest Land Group involving lands in 6-7 counties, but prior to their involvement ending in 2012, the state will develop a monitoring program. Richard is still assisting landowners in the E UP, but the funding for this might be in jeopardy for 2007. The DNR was fighting forest fires in the Keweenaw and out west and are at readiness condition 5, so must be ready/willing to send personnel when needed.

Coordinator's Report: The contract for the St. Mary's River Rapid Watershed Project has been received, and the project will get underway by the beginning of October. They hope to get implementation funds in the future. Marilyn suggested that we remind the regional planning councils that they can have reps at all the regional RC&D meetings. Marilyn will be attending an Ash Seed Collection workshop in Ashland (there is also a workshop in St. Ignace). Marilyn distributed a written report with several project updates.

UP Native Plant Restoration Specialist: Donna Peppin was introduced as the Native Plant Restoration Specialist (contracted through the Marquette CD) with the UP Native Plants project. Goals of the project are to restore degraded areas across the UP with locally native plants, creating educational areas, streambank restoration using live fascines on the Dead River, and creating an instructional DVD on the live fascine technique. This is a two year project with partners from NMU, SWP, USFS and Rapid River School Forest. All sites will become seed sources for local genotype native plants and outdoor classrooms for educating the public. She is doing promotion in the Marquette Mining Journal, through the UP RC&D newsletter and she created a new webpage on the RC&D website (www.uprcd.org). The webpage includes a landscaping section, plant lists, suppliers list and a survey. She will conduct native plant and live fascine field days. She is now in the process of submitting a grant to fund a project to create native plant outdoor classrooms at several schools across the UP. Sharon suggested that the Master Gardener Program might be a source of volunteers for Donna. It was noted that the Bay Mills Indian Community is currently collecting seeds (history dept) for a major seed company and also the Eastern UP Native Plant Coop collects and sells everything they collect to a seed company.

Other: Marilyn noted a very serious Garlic Mustard infestation at the mouth of the Cut River, it might be spread by the mowing that is taking place there. The DNR has done some prescribed burns upstream to try to control this invasive and Pat Halfrisch of MDOT is a good contact person. Marilyn suggested that winter might be a good time to get together a group of folks who could act as a rapid response team for invasives and seek grant funds for this work.

New Projects: Copies of the East Soldier's Lake Equestrian Campsite and Trailhead Project application was distributed. The sponsoring organization is the Superior Trail Riders Association. The project involves the establishment of an equestrian trail head/campsite on USFS lands to accommodate equestrians who ride the trails in the Raco/Soldier's Lake area. Paula Johnson, USFS, is aware of their proposal and supportive. They would first need an environmental assessment. The project was approved (Timmer/King).

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 9th at 10 am in Cedarville (Pat Carr will find a location)

Eastern UP RC&D Meeting November 9, 2006

Meeting opened with Marilyn, Sharon, Dusty, Pat Carr, Scott Hughey and Wendy Wagoner. No quorum declared. Agenda approved. Discussion on what constitutes a quorum and who are voting members followed. We need to do a review of these policies and would like to know what other UP RC&D's are doing. Election of officers was tabled to the next meeting. Darcy to send Dusty and Sharon the mailing lists for perusal.

There is interest in having the forestry committee re established. The ecosystem projects, the SIP video and the school forest newsletter were all projects of this committee. The list of old members will be reviewed and contacted. This group may need to be restructured as well. A study is underway in the UP to evaluate economies and trends of forest management. There will be public forums held as part of this study- this could be the catalyst to reestablish the committee.

The North Central RC&D's (eight states) meet in Frankenmuth in March. Looking for items for goodie bags. Sharon to email Darcy the Brewery address. Wendy to send contact for maple sugar producer.

Messersmith Manufacturing has asked to present at one of our meetings. Group decided to suggest they have a booth at the convention instead.

Reports- CEMCD is assisting the Native Plant Coop with a new book on native plant gardening. Mackinac county - Jim Farero is no longer a county commissioner. He has been their rep with us for a number of years. What is the process for replacement? Should Marilyn or someone else approach Mackinac and Luce counties for new reps?

New project measures-

Les Cheneaux Watershed project was presented. This will be presented for acceptance at the next meeting.

North Huron Scenic Pathway is a new project however Jeff Hagen from EUP Regional Planning was not here to present it. Wendy Sexton from USDA RD (Escanaba) is a good contact for him for a feasibility study. Wagoner to give contact information to the bike path group. The project in Cedarville based on wetland enhancement needs to be revisited with this project in mind- how can they be worked together. MDOT could be a player here.

Riverbank Restoration DVD was available for distribution. This is based on live fascine workshop held at Clear Lake two years ago. Darcy to get a cost for more of these and Dusty and Sharon to decide how many more they would like to have.

King asked that the RC&D files be checked for an outline on how to start an association.

NRCS report- Farm Bill program signups start mid December and will go through March or April. Scot and Will have a goal to be CNMP certified this year.

LWMCD- Civic Center project has hired an environmental organization to form an intergovernmental body to do planning and fund raising for this project.

Hamilton Lake phase two- a walkway for handicap accessibility is being started.

Access to Recreation meeting on November 27 about grant opportunities. Marilyn to email Wendy the details.

Preproposal for a Rapid Response for Invasive Control grant was not successful. There is interest even at a statewide level for a project such as this. EUP Districts will pursue making this an RC&D project. West UP has a Cooperative Weed Management Area project that is similar. Wendy to contact Dickinson about this - Marilyn to send Dusty a copy of the proposal. Also look at the grant Marquette has to do their "Pulling Together" for garlic mustard removal.

Next meeting is February 7th in Cedarville. Discussion on quorum resulted in a decision to have an RSVP on the agenda so that we always know who is attending.