

MEETING MINUTES - CENTRAL REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Gladstone City Hall - Tuesday, October 6, 2009

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am by Chairman Ernie Hoholik. Everyone introduced themselves.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ernie Hoholik-Schoolcraft Co; Renee Barron-City of Gladstone; Tom Tauzer-NRCS Delta Co; Hamp Waring-Alger & Marquette CD; Jerry Doucette-Alger Co Commission; Dave Andersen-MSU Extension Schoolcraft Co; Clyde Thoune-Menominee CD; Bill Rice & Chuck Harris-Dickinson CD; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES: The agenda was approved (Andersen/Thoune) with the addition under business items of "County Dues Update" and the minutes from the meeting of July 21, 2009 were approved (Waring/Andersen) with no changes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Dave Andersen presented a summary of the activity in the checking account through September 30, 2009. The ending balance is \$642.58. A motion was made to place the treasurer's report on file (Thoune/Rice).

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Legislative Update: Darcy reported that the house and senate conference committee for the FY2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill has restored funding for the RC&D Program as a **standalone program**. The conference committee language provides \$50,730,000 for the RC&D FY2010 budget. The National Association of RC&D Councils feels this is a big win for our RC&D Program because the Senate proposal would have given the Secretary of Agriculture the **option** of providing the funding within the Conservation Operations account.

Michigan Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grants: Dave Andersen provided the group with an update on these grants. The State of Michigan released the RFP on 9/25/09 and the grant application deadline is 10/22/09, which provides very little time to put together the application. He and Marilyn attended a training session by DLEG personnel prior to the release of the RFP and Dave began work at that time for the application which he coordinated for the City of Manistique and the other partners that are looking at the feasibility of a District Heating Plant for that area. All communities in the UP are eligible to apply for the funds, and no match is required, but match is looked on favorably.

County Dues Update: Darcy reported that at their meeting on September 29, 2009, the UP RC&D Council voted to make no changes to the amount that is requested for annual dues from the 15 counties in the UP. The dues will remain at \$300 and invoices will be mailed to the counties in January 2010.

REPORTS

Alger Conservation District: Hampton Waring reported that the district is finishing up their watershed restoration project and also the problem at the race track has finally been resolved. They wrapped up the Michigan Works "Learn While You Earn" program and the youth did a tremendous amount of work on several conservation projects. They will be holding a fall tree/wildflower sale in conjunction with the Dickinson and Marquette CD's. Watershed Manager, Liz Coyne, attended a shoreline protection workshop. They are sponsoring "Agri-palooza" in cooperation with the Marquette CD for all 7th graders in the two county region. Students will visit 19 stations and there is a poster contest. The CD is open 4 days/week now. They are celebrating their 50th anniversary at the Annual Meeting on November 4 at Messiah Lutheran Church with a program by Lynn Emerick and displays from their archives.

Delta Conservation District: Tom Tauzer reported that the district is in the process of filling a new position of a forester. The position will start next week and is funded jointly between the CD and NRCS and has two years of funding. The DNR was originally going to have a part in sponsoring the position, but has backed out for now. The new position will address a need for forestry services in Delta County which is currently not being met. Tom mentioned that all district funding is uncertain, and that MDA will make a decision as to what to do with the funding they have. The Conservation Stewardship Program in the new Farm Bill has had great response, it rewards people who are doing good management. The Michigan Works crew did some work on the Garden Flood Control Project and NRCS engineers have completed a map of the watershed. The district also held their annual 5th grade Ag and Natural Resources Tour where they bus the kids to 4 sites, and all schools in the county participated.

Dickinson Conservation District: Bill Rice reported that all their grant funded projects are due to be completed in September and Ann is working to secure more funding. They will be participating in the joint Alger/Marquette/Dickinson fall tree sale, and their office is also open 4 days per week now.

Marquette County: Hampton Waring reported that the district also had a Michigan Works Youth Crew and that they helped with Agri-palooza, did work at Connor's Creek, the Trestle Park native plant garden, and other invasive plant pulls. Their Annual Meeting is scheduled for October 28th at Upfront and Company. The district is renovating its website and have gotten about 3000 hits/month. They also have plans for putting a rain barrel on site (which is pretty expensive to construct).

Menominee County/CD: Clyde Thoun reported that they also had a successful fall tree sale and have had luck educating folks that fall planting can be better than spring. They did sell bigger plants. They have their CD staffed 21 hours/week (the hours divided between 3 people) and they need a good spring tree sale to help keep it open. The Annual Meeting is in March.

Schoolcraft County: Dave Andersen reported that the county board conducted a space utilization study and consequently rent in the courthouse doubled. The CD and NRCS could not afford their current space and are moving to a very small space. The funding is very limited. Ernie Hoholik reported that the state park is closed for renovation.

MSU Extension: Dave Andersen reported that his office also had a Michigan Works crew of 6-9 kids plus a supervisor. They were used to help with 4-H programs, partnered with the Sault Tribe, and cleaned up the environmental lab (an interpretive trail which focuses on forestry and wildlife management). It's in good shape now with help from a grant from the UP Forestry and Wildlife Fund. Dave reminded folks about the fund and that they distribute grants of up to \$2000 twice a year. The contact person is Gary LaPlant at the UP Community Foundation (906-786-6654). The UP RC&D Council has a seat on the board. Grants were made in April and may be made again this fall. Dave is also holding workshops in Schoolcraft and Iron Counties on "Adaptive Re-Use" which involves making use of existing infrastructure (brownfields, etc). The workshops are on 10/27 in Manistique and on 10/28 in Iron County. There is also an Ecommerce workshop on "How to get your business on e-commerce" on November 2. MSU Extension is also looking at changes in how they are organized. They have considered changing from a county-based to a need-based system. Their budgets are pretty good through 2011, but then they will see a big problem with funding. In order to take advantage of stimulus funds, the states had to hold higher education harmless. MSU Extension hopes to cut back their extension agents through attrition. At this time each county extension director has both local and UP-wide responsibilities.

Coordinator's Report: Marilyn was not able to attend the meeting, but she sent an updated Annual Plan of Work so folks can see what progress has been made on various projects.

New Projects: None

Project Updates: Dave Andersen gave an update on the Manistique District Heating Plant Feasibility Study. This project is an offshoot of the BURN-UP project. He, Marilyn, and Linda Howlett met with Lew McCreery, the grant administrator of our Forest Service grant at the Manistique cluster site. They also visited the Bay College “cluster” site. Mr. McCreery offered to provide a pre-feasibility study for about 80% of the cost with the BU grant funds to be used as match for the remaining 20%. There are 16 stakeholders/buildings (12 organizations). The USFS will analyze the energy use data that was compiled from each building for the past 2 years, and they will do a site visit, look at distribution systems, etc. They hope to have the results back by early January. The follow-up engineering work would require another \$65,000 and they have applied for the EECBG grant to cover those costs. They would also need to form a district energy authority, and then seek a bonding issue if they decide to proceed. Darcy reported that the BURN-UP project received a grant extension for Phase II until March 31, 2010. The two harvest demonstrations were held in September and had great attendance. Marilyn and Darcy have been working on a UP-wide grant proposal to control invasive species throughout the entire UP. The proposal involved 5 tribes, 13 CD's, TNC, MDOT, MSUE and MNFI. We won't find out if the project is funded until March 2010.

Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 am and the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 5, 2010 at 10 am at the Gladstone City Hall.