

MEETING MINUTES - CENTRAL REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Gladstone City Hall - Tuesday, April 5, 2011

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am by Chairman Hampton Waring.

IN ATTENDANCE: Howard Haulotte -Delta CD; Hamp Waring & Teri Grout-Alger CD; Renee Leow-Marquette CD; Jerry Doucette-Alger Co Comm; Chuck Harris and Bobbie Klocke -Dickinson CD; Tom Tauzer & Roger Quist-NRCS; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator/NRCS; Darcy Rutkowski -UP RC&D Council

INTRODUCTIONS AND MOMENT OF SILENCE: All members present introduced themselves and observed a moment of silence for Dave Schultz who passed away recently. Dave was the Delta Co. Commission appointee to this Council for the past few years.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES: The agenda was approved (Grout/Leow) with no additions. The minutes from the meeting of January 4, 2011 were approved (Haulotte/Leow) as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Dave Andersen provided a written treasurer's report which summarized the activity in the checking account from November 2007 through March 30, 2011. The ending balance was \$442.58. There was no activity since the last meeting. The treasurer's report will be placed on file (Grout/Leow). The members expressed a desire that the Treasurer send dues statements to the conservation districts requesting \$25 from each. A motion was made and passed (Grout/Leow) to request 2010 dues although the RC&D Program may not exist in the same way in the future due to federal budget cuts.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Update on County Dues: County dues for 2011 have been received from all counties but Schoolcraft and Alger. Jerry Doucette will follow-up on the Alger dues. It was noted that we had already been informed by Dave Andersen that Schoolcraft County had not budgeted any money to pay RC&D dues this year.

Update on Federal Funding for RC&D Program: At this point the RC&D program is funded through midnight on Friday April 8th through a Continuing Resolution. If congress fails to pass another continuing resolution or a budget bill for the remainder of 2011, then there is the possibility that the government will be shut down and neither Marilyn nor Darcy will be permitted to use the office, computers, etc. Darcy can continue to do work from home. It's looking extremely likely that RC&D funding will be eliminated for the remainder of the fiscal year and the budget bill that the House has passed does zero out RC&D. There are many uncertainties at this time and the Council will let members know more information when they get it. The members present expressed a desire to have the UP RC&D Council continue in some form and suggested the possibility of having members from all three regional councils meet together at some point in the future to discuss how to best move forward without federal funding. It was agreed that as times get harder and harder, there is a more critical need for RC&D assistance.

Additional Funding for RRIP-IT-UP Project: All RC&D Councils in the country were informed by NRCS that they would be the recipient of carry-over funds. Circle of Diamond Councils will receive more funds than non COD councils and the UP RC&D was told we would receive \$9480. It was required that the funds be spent to complete projects and the UP Council approved three deliverables related to the RRIP-IT-UP project to be completed under the agreement. Those deliverables are: install two additional field demonstration sites, inventory and map garlic mustard on 100 acres in Marquette County, and control garlic mustard using volunteers on a minimum of 20 acres. We were told that even if RC&D funds were cut, these funds would not be affected since they were carried over from a previous year. However, now NRCS has said there is the possibility they may be cut. A request for a portion of the funds will be made this week for work that will be completed within the next 30 days.

REPORTS

Alger Conservation District: Teri Grout reported that they are wrapping up their tree sale now. They have begun work on a 3-year GLRI grant which includes installing some culverts, and includes funding for a county-wide newsletter for the next two years (3x each yr). They have two new interns onboard that will be doing a lot of GIS work and will be bringing on a field crew this summer. Teri has been assisting the Schoolcraft CD on RRIP-IT-UP

activities with participation from Seney staff. The district has plans to rear *Gallerucella* beetles this summer with Superior Central students and release them at the AuTrain basin infestations. They have been notified that their proposed demonstration project at the AuTrain Scenic Site to control spotted knapweed and black locust has been awarded funding. They will also be doing a lot of garlic mustard mapping and control with a crew this summer. They hope to find funding to continue EAB work, and may apply for the “2% funds” from the Sault Tribe. The nature trail/park mini-grant project in Chatham is coming along nicely.

Alger County: Jerry Doucette reported that he has just returned from Lansing and meeting with Senators Levin and Stabenow about issues affecting counties. He offered to check on the status of the Alger County dues payment to RC&D.

Delta Conservation District: Howard Haulotte reported that their District is also busy taking tree sale orders. Their Annual Meeting is tonight and Vern Stephens will be the guest presenter and speaking on invasive plants and their affects on wildlife. Howard reported on highlights for the year, including: They will have fewer employees working on EAB (monitoring) this summer than last; issued 94 soil erosion permits; took over administration for county parks (have hired Steve Wery to do this); 283 in-office visits from the public, 147 onsite wetland assists; lead state-wide effort to restructure Michigan’s conservation priorities, which took lots of time but will help all districts if it goes through; 281 forestry/ag assists involving 47, 322 acres – Delta County was highest in state for number of NRCS contracts (90% were new people that had not worked with NRCS before; \$1.3 million allocated for landowner assistance from NRCS. The Delta CD is one of the more progressive in the state.

Delta County: No rep present

Dickinson Conservation District: Bobbie Klocke reported that the District is working to help people with reforestation by holding both spring and fall tree sales (including species for wetlands and wildlife). They installed 1587 EAB traps and also completed a second year of Eurasian water milfoil control. They are also doing purple loosestrife control with about 20,000 bio-control beetles. They have an Envirothon Team, and will be doing the photo calendar again this year.

Dickinson County: No rep present

Marquette Conservation District: Renee Leow reported that the Marquette/Alger CD district forester is going to be starting the second year of the EAB program and they are working on a county forestry proposal and promoting farm bill sign-ups. They held a successful apple tree pruning workshop with 70 people attending. Their tree sale order period is now finished and they will be delivering trees the last weekend of April. They had fewer orders, but larger orders this year and are using the sheriff work crew to help. They also reached out to the local food coop and offered their members a 5% discount. They have been holding workshops to educate the public (Marquette Twp and Chocolay Twp garden club) about invasive plants through their RRIP-IT-UP efforts. They plan to conduct some garlic mustard controls near the Iron Ore Heritage Trail and the Noquemanon Trail. Their soil permitting fees just increased for the first time in 3 years. They had a booth at the UP Builders Show at the Superior Dome and this was a great opportunity to feature all their programs at once. They are continuing work started last year on a “People’s Garden” at their office (the NRCS Area Office). They have planted cherries, blueberries and raspberries, and hope to add other things (tomatoes?) this year. There were 4 seasonal high tunnels funded in Marquette County through EQIP. Renee also distributed 4 types of invasive plant posters to members present, and she has more available in the district office.

Marquette County: No rep present

Menominee CD & County: No reps present

Schoolcraft CD & County: No members were present from the Conservation District or county, but Roger Quist who works for NRCS in that county reported that the district is holding a tree sale again and they are also participating in the RRIP-IT-UP project. MSUE closed their doors in the courthouse as of April 1 and Dave Andersen is working out of the Alger County MSUE office. The fate of the 4-H program is uncertain at this time.

MSUE: No reps present

USFS: No reps present

CUPPAD: No reps present

Coordinator's Report: Marilyn reported that she has been working very hard on a new grant proposal that is due on April 21 which proposes to eradicate garlic mustard in the UP. It will be submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and several of the current RRIP-IT-UP partners would be involved in this project too. She is looking for letters of support for the UP RC&D Council for this grant proposal. The major areas of infestation that will be the focus of the project are at the Cut River Bridge, AuTrain River Basin, Dead River and Montreal River, with quite a few other small infestations across the UP. She mentioned that Grand Marais won the Readers Digest "We Hear You America" contest and \$40,000 towards their harbor breakwall (RC&D) project. They will be featured in the magazine as well. The RC&D Project in Newberry to fund an ice rink (with synthetic ice) is now competing in the new Readers Digest contest and folks can vote for them. They have been trying to find funding for the ice rink for several years.

New Projects: The UP RC&D Council is not accepting any new project applications at this time.

Project Updates:

RRIP-IT-UP: Darcy reported that the project is progressing nicely. At least 4 demonstration site projects have been approved and will be installed this summer. Many of the partners have held educational workshops over the winter and are developing their work plans for the upcoming field season. Another UP-wide Conference will be held in November.

Manistique District Heating Plant: The feasibility study will be completed in May or June. Dave Andersen is still working on researching the formation of an energy cooperative.

Gladstone Marsh: Howard Haulotte said they are waiting for the DNR to put in place a lease agreement so they can continue to do buckthorn control work. They don't want to put any more funds into the project until the ownership issues are cleared up.

Correspondence: None

Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm and the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 5, 2011 at 10 am at the Gladstone City Hall.