

MEETING MINUTES - CENTRAL REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Gladstone City Hall - Tuesday, October 4, 2011

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am by Chairman Hampton Waring.

IN ATTENDANCE: Howard Haulotte-Delta CD; Hamp Waring -Alger CD; Jerry Doucette-Alger Co Comm; Brian Bousley-Menominee Co Administrator; Dave Andersen-MSUE; Thomas Elegeert-Delta Co Comm; Dave Silvius-Hiawatha Natl Forest; Darcy Rutkowski -UP RC&D Council

All members present introduced themselves as there were a few representatives who were attending the Central RC&D meeting for the first time. It was noted with much respect and sadness that long-time UP RC&D Council member and former Schoolcraft County Commissioner, Ernie Hoholik, passed away in September.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES: The agenda was approved (Haulotte/Elegeert) with the addition of "Mini-grant proposal". The minutes from the meeting of July 5, 2011 were approved (Haulotte/Doucette) as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Dave Andersen provided a written treasurer's report which summarized the income and expense activity in the checking account from October 2010 through October 4, 2011. The ending balance was \$592.58. Darcy will send a reminder to counties that UP RC&D council dues of \$300 will be requested in January, 2012.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Update on Strategic Planning Meeting: Darcy distributed a copy of the notes which summarized the discussion at the strategic planning meeting (attached). In light of the projected budget deficit of almost \$20,000 the decision was made to cut back the number of regional RC&D Council meetings that the council executive assistant will attend from 4 per year to 2 per year. Darcy pointed out that the Central Regional RC&D Council may still meet 4 times per year if so desired, but the agenda and minutes and other meeting administration would have to be undertaken by the Central Council board officers. A number of short-term and long-term goals were decided upon at the strategic planning session with an immediate focus on continuing the UP-wide invasive plant work that has been started under the RRIP-IT-UP project and will be continued under the new Garlic Mustard Eradication project. The UP RC&D Council will also be developing an "advertising package" which will then be used to promote the Council.

Set Meeting Schedule for 2012: Meetings were scheduled for Tuesday, April 3 and Tuesday, October 2, 2012 at 10 am (Eastern time) in Gladstone.

Report on NC RC&D Conference/Outstanding Coordinator Award: Dave Andersen reported that he and Bob Larson and Darcy attended the conference last month in Stevens Point, WI. Former UP RC&D Council Coordinator, Marilyn Shy, was present to receive the award for 2010 Outstanding Coordinator for the NC Region after being nominated by the UP Council. Dave Andersen presented the award to Marilyn at the conference and noted her many great accomplishments during her time serving as coordinator for the UP RC&D Council. Many of the conference speakers were addressing issues related to the transition away from federal funding. Dave listened to Amy Beyer, Executive Director of CRA based in Traverse City. CRA has limited the type of projects they take on and focus on watershed remediation and wildlife corridors. That council brings in millions of dollars of grant funds and also received a large donation of about \$500,000 which they utilized to start an endowment fund. They have a full-time employee who focuses on fundraising and development, and a board structured much differently than the UP RC&D Council board. Dave requested a copy of their business plan and also a document on board member roles and responsibilities. He intends to have the UP Council spend time examining these documents to see if we can garner some ideas of how we might change our own council structure.

RRIP-IT-UP Invasive Plant Conference November 10, 2011: Darcy reported that she and the conference planning committee are very busy preparing for the conference which satisfies one of the deliverables of the RRIP-IT-UP grant. The speakers have been confirmed and the registration materials have been sent out. There is a great group of speakers lined up and she is hoping for another great turnout of participants.

Mini-grant Project Application: A mini-grant application was received from Michael Edwards to help fund his Eagle Scout project “Adopt-a-Tree” in Chocolay Township. He is working closely with the Marquette Conservation District and they support the funding request. His project involves creating an adoption plan for th 220 shrubs and trees that were planted along one mile of the US41/M28 corridor by MDOT. He is also working with MDOT, the Chocolay Area Business Association, and Fraco. He is requesting a mini-grant of \$150, and this is the first mini-grant request for 2011 made to the Central RC&D Council. The mini-grant was approved (Andersen/Doucette).

REPORTS

Alger Conservation District: Hamp Waring reported that the Alger district held Agripalooza last week in conjunction with the Marquette County CD where 380 5th graders from the two counties visited 23 different stations in 15 minute time blocks. Some of the groups represented at the stations and topics discussed were: NWS, trappers, DEQ, DNR, Mqt. Food Coop, soil erosion, and hay rides. The district is holding their fall native plant sale today. They wrapped up their CMI grant for the Munising Bay watershed, and are very busy with invasive plant work in both Alger and Schoolcraft counties.

Alger County: Jerry Doucette reported that the county is starting negotiations with their employees and trying to comply with PA152. There is some confusion in Lansing in regards to this bill and he has received conflicting information from various entities there when he calls with questions. The courthouse will have a new heating and cooling system soon and they will publicize it when it is complete. He attended a presentation from MAC at Bay College to learn of possible funding options for counties. They also learned about the ICivics curriculum for teaching students in grades 6-12 about county government. This curriculum is available to teachers.

Delta Conservation District: Howard Haulotte reported that their District has a new employee that started this week under a 3 year funding grant from GLRI (through NRCS) to work with landowners in the Whitefish and Tacoosh watersheds. The district just finished their first year of managing the Delta County parks, and they feel the parks are in better shape than in the past as a result of their management. The district is moving out of the NRCS office into an office at one of the county parks (Pioneer Trail Park).

Delta County: Thomas Elegeert suggested that the UP RC&D Council might develop a relationship with UPCAP. The Director is John Mead and it is a private organization based in Escanaba with grant-writing staff. Delta County is doing alright financially and will be celebrating their 150th anniversary next week. The county is happy with the agreement they have developed with the Conservation District to manage the county parks.

Dickinson Conservation District/County: No Rep Present

Marquette Conservation District: Hamp Waring reported that the district worked with the Alger District to sponsor Agripalooza (see details under Alger CD). They are holding their fall tree and native plant sale today. Their Annual Meeting is scheduled for November 3 with Jim Hammill and Ben Mukula speaking. Their native plant garden in Trestle Corridor has been named a Monarch Way Station by the Monarch Association.

Marquette County: No rep present, M. Quayle notified office of previously scheduled appointment conflict.

Menominee CD: No rep present

Menominee County: Brian Bousley reported that the county is in the process of replacing the boilers in the courthouse. Their development at the airport is on hold while waiting for funding from Marinette County, WI and 3 of their 6 open contracts are on hold waiting for a union vote.

Schoolcraft CD & County: No members were present from the Conservation District or county, but Dave Andersen reported that Ernie Hoholik passed away on September 11, 2011.

MSUE: Dave Andersen gave an update on the status of the Manistique District Heating Plant project. The plant will have a small footprint (50' x 200") and be located on school property. They are waiting for the final

performance contract from Johnson Controls (with guaranteed savings) and have recently been told that the stakeholder cooperative will need to seek 501 (c) 12 status as a municipal utility. This will give them access to additional loans. It will probably be an \$8-9 million dollar project and they anticipate \$7 million in savings over 25 years (at a minimum, based on today's fossil fuel costs). If the project is a go – Johnson Controls will guarantee savings and will cover the cost of amortization, and then sell it back to the stakeholder cooperative. They would tentatively break ground next fall and the plant would be in operation by September 2013. Dave noted that the UP RC&D Council played a critical role in this project and that it will be utilizing a renewable resource and will support logging jobs in the area using 1-3 semi-loads of chips/day for the two 10 million btu boilers. The distribution piping is the biggest cost of the project. It will also support a UP company, Messersmith Manufacturing.

USFS: Dave Silviesu reported that they have just concluded FY2011, and they are operating under a continuing resolution for FY2012, so are being conservative at this point. Spending projections for FY2012 are for a 4-10% reduction in the FS budget. With declining budgets they will be looking to reduce employees (through retirement). The Hiawatha has a new forest supervisor (replacing Tom Schmidt), Jo Ryer, who has spent most of her career in the Great Lakes states. There is also a new district ranger in Munising as Theresa Chase has transferred to the Mark Twain NF in Missouri. Some of the things the Hiawatha will be emphasizing in 2012 are:

- Landscape scale restoration strategies across ownerships which increases effectiveness, watershed restoration and forest health will be emphasized, working on Little Black Creek and 18 Mile Creek as these fit criteria of national goals
- Unmanaged recreation – struggling with ATV use and damage
- Developing Conservation Education with reduced funding – Clear Lake is a great facility for this
- Salvaging dead and dying trees (Beech and Ash), meeting management goals for forest health and age-class distribution. The HNF could provide more timber (only cutting 1/3 of new growth), but need funds to have more capacity to cut
- Community Wildfire Planning Efforts – The Nature Conservancy has a contract to help with this effort to reduce wildfire risk in areas close to forests, looking at fuel reduction. Once the wildfire plan is in place, they can apply for other funds

Dave also reported that the project for public lands day was the AuTrain River cleanup. HNF had a YCC crew this past summer (6 students), and Kid's Fishing Day was successful with 200-300 kids at Camp 7 Lake. The Delta County RAC will be obligating \$135,000 for projects in FY2012. They are using \$500,000 in GLRI funds to improve fisheries and replace culverts. They will be moving to a new HQ in Gladstone in November.

CUPPAD: No reps present

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 plans for the conference are well underway. All conservation districts that received funding to do RRIP-IT-UP contract work should have turned in final reports and match reports as of October 1. Many districts have accomplished an enormous amount of work with their funding. The project will be wrapped up prior to December 31, 2011.

Gladstone Marsh: Howard Haulotte reported that the City of Gladstone turned over all money and records to the conservation district to continue the project. They are still waiting to get the lease for the property straightened out with the state.

Escanaba River Clean-up: Howard Haulotte reported that they are hoping to receive funding from the state to remove the bridge. In order to get the funding the Delta County Road Commission had to take ownership of the structure.

Correspondence: None

Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 pm (Andersen/Elgeert) and the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 3, 2012 at 10 am at the Gladstone City Hall.