

**Eastern Regional RC&D Council Meeting
Zellar's Restaurant, Newberry – March 17, 2011**

PRESENT: Jill Maki-Luce Co Comm; Dusty King & Wendy Wagoner - Chippewa East Mackinac CD; Dean Reid – Mackinac County; Kent Dankenbring & Pat Carr– NRCS; Rich Stevenson, MDNR; Nathan Fazer, EUPRPDC; Marilyn Shy - UP RC&D Council

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Dean Reid at 10:20 am.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The agenda was approved with no changes (Maki/Stevenson).

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as written (Wagoner/Maki) and will be placed on file.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Election of Officers for Eastern RC&D Council: Nominations were opened for the office of chairperson. Jill Maki nominated Dean Reid. Two more requests for nominations for the office of chairperson were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. A motion was made that nominations be closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Dean Reid (Stevenson/Maki). The motion passed.

Nominations were opened for the office of vice-chairperson. Jill Maki nominated Wendy Wagoner. Two more requests for nominations for the office of vice-chairperson were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. A motion was made that nominations be closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Wendy Wagoner (Maki/Reid). The motion passed.

Election of Representative to UP RC&D Council: Nominations were opened for the office of representative to the UP RC&D Council. Dean Reid nominated Nathan Fazer. Two more requests for nominations for the office of representative to the UP RC&D Council were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. A motion was made that nominations be closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Nathan Fazer (Wagoner/Reid). The motion passed.

A discussion ensued regarding the term lengths for the representatives to the UP RC&D Council; also, who were the other Eastern RC&D representatives, and the need for attending the regional RC&D Council meetings if you are on the UP RC&D Council. Marilyn stated that the current representatives for the Eastern Region are: Jill Maki, Aaron Hopper, and Nathan Fazer. There are no term limits stated in the by-laws. Jill thought it was important for UP RC&D Council members to attend the regional meetings in order to effectively represent the region at the UP RC&D meetings. Dusty said Aaron Hopper had told her that he was not going to be able to attend regional RC&D meetings. Dean Reid said he would like the full UP RC&D Council to consider all of these issues, and also consider an automatic dismissal of a Council member who missed a certain number of meetings, perhaps 4 or 6 consecutive meetings. Marilyn said she would pass along all of this information to the full UP RC&D Council at their next meeting.

County Dues Update: Marilyn reported that 2011 dues have now been received from all counties except Delta, Alger and Schoolcraft. Schoolcraft County has zeroed out the UP RC&D in their 2011 budget.

Legislative Update: Marilyn gave an update on the federal budget for the RC&D program. For FY 2011, the entire federal government is still operating on a continuing resolution (CR) that is set to expire on March 18th. Another CR has been passed by the House, which would keep the government operating at FY 2010 levels until April 8th. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be much support for the RC&D program in either the House or Senate, and the President's FY 2012 budget zeroed out the RC&D program. On March 14th, the Chief of the NRCS held a teleconference with all 375

RC&D Coordinators nationwide, and all 50 state conservationists. He said the NRCS was in the process of putting together “talking points” in the event that the RC&D program would lose all USDA funding, and it’s possible that this could happen soon.

Discussion followed regarding how the UP RC&D Council would operate in the event that this happened. Marilyn said that the Council had been considering alternatives and options in order to be prepared. One option for the short term would be for the Council to hire an intern that could help Darcy complete the deliverables under the RRIP-IT-UP project. The Council had discussed a number of other alternatives including Darcy working from home (not feasible, since she does not have high-speed internet available at her home); exploring rental rates for office space in Marquette; suspending regional Council meetings, etc. At this point the Council is not able to make definite plans since the budget is not settled.

Additional Funding for RC&D Councils: Marilyn reported that NRCS has signed a cooperative agreement with the UP RC&D Council providing \$9,480 to enhance some of the activities of the RRIP-IT-UP project. The deliverables under this agreement are as follows:

1. Installing two additional field demonstration sites to educate landowners, land managers and the public about the importance of citizen involvement in preventing the spread of invasive plants by November 15, 2011.
2. Inventorying and mapping garlic mustard sites in Marquette County on a minimum of 100 acres by October 15, 2011.
3. Control of garlic mustard using volunteers on a minimum of 20 acres by October 15, 2011.

Annual Report: Marilyn reported that Darcy has provided our Annual Report to all partners electronically.

REPORTS:

Chippewa County: Dusty King reported that the City of Sault Ste. Marie has received a grant through the DNR to complete a tree inventory as part of the application process for the designation of Tree City USA. The conservation district and LSSU is assisting in the inventory.

Luce County: Jill Maki reported that the county had decided to move the probation office and relocate it near the MSU Extension office, but that this was met with a lot of concern by county residents. For that reason, the idea has been rescinded.

Luce/West Mackinac Conservation District - Lisa DenBoer has resigned as the administrator at the LWMCD. Lisa is still assisting with the District’s tree sale.

Mackinac County: Dean Reid reported that the hospital has received funding to complete the long-term care facility. The county board of commissioners is supporting the agreement with the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance which covers the 4 northern counties in the lower peninsula and is based in Boyne City. They are contracting with them to do a survey of Mackinac County’s economic development needs.

NRCS: Kent Dankenbring reported that he and Pat Carr have finished processing all of the resent sign-ups for the spring field season. The District did well, and landowners will be awarded about \$750,000 in conservation program contract cost-shares. Two landowners were accepted into the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). In the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), about \$80,000 was awarded for easement payments. For the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), landowners will receive about \$100,000 in cost-shares. Pat Carr reported that the Sault tribe is putting in a windbreak at a housing development at 4 Mile and Shunk Rd.

Chippewa East Mackinac CD: Dusty King reported that it is a busy time due to the upcoming tree sale, with many landowners coming into the office. At the state level, there is an effort to convince the legislature of the need for conservation district foresters and other resource professionals. It is significant that 61% of all forestland in the state is private forest land. The new program would make an effort to get more timber to market. Dean Reid commented that with the new Mascoma plant in the works, there is a great need to get private forest landowners knowledgeable and ready to supply some of the demand. Dusty stated that of a potential 30 conservation district forester positions statewide, 5 positions would be slated for the UP.

EUPRPDC: Nathan Fazer reported that EUPRPDC is finishing up the wildfire protection plan for Luce County; it should be completed by July. EUPRPDC put in a grant application for the Little Rapids Habitat Restoration through NOAA. Chippewa and Mackinac Counties have agreed to a new flyover, leaf-off aerial imagery, through a partnership with Microsoft. It is a public/private partnership with some licensing restrictions. EUPRPDC might be working with the City of Sault Ste. Marie to do a non-motorized plan.

MDNR: Rich Stevenson reported that he is now a Unit Manager for the MDNR in Newberry. There have been a lot of personnel changes. Their name has changed back from MDNRE to MDNR. Many people took advantage of the early out opportunity. Steve Milford is the new District Supervisor, and he is in both Newberry and Crystal Falls. The CFM budget is not strong at all. There are now only two CFM foresters in the UP, and they have other assignments besides CFM. There is only one CFM forester in the lower peninsula, Mike Hamley. There has been a plan formulated along the Lake Superior shoreline to protect habitats in this area. As a result, there have been some road closures where there has been illegal traffic on the beach and along the shoreline. There have been some complaints by certain members of the public, who think they have a right to drive on these roads. Rich still has the opportunity to spend some time working with private landowners, but this portion of his job is limited, and he can't spend too much time on it, as he has other responsibilities. He has also been meeting with other groups to discuss the Heritage Route and to design an expansion for the Shipwreck Museum: US Fish & Wildlife Service, Shipwreck Historical Society, Audubon Society, and landowners along Whitefish Point. Rich stated that we may have an interesting fire season if we have a lack of rain this spring. There has been little snow this winter, which has meant increased opportunities for inventory, but a poor season for snowmobiling.

MSU Extension: Jill Maki reported that MSUE just held their 32nd annual Winter Break for Knowledge program in Newberry. Lisa DenBoer conducted a morning and afternoon workshop on invasive plant identification.

Coordinators Report: Marilyn gave an update on the Manistique District Energy Feasibility Study. Aside from that project, she did not have any additional items to report on that will not be covered under project reports.

NEW PROJECT MEASURES: None

PROJECT UPDATES:

RRIP-IT-UP: Marilyn reported that the steering committee will also be awarding 4 mini-grants for invasive plant demonstration sites which will be installed by next fall. The applications for these mini-grants were due on February 28, 2011. A subcommittee met on March 11th to rank the applications and will recommend the top four to the Steering Committee on March 21st.

Eastern UP Cooperative Weed Management Area: Wendy Wagoner reported that their CWMA just finished writing and reviewing their strategic plan, and also their annual plan of work. Many activities are planned for this field season including a GIS-mapping workshop at Cut River on May 18th.

Tahquamenon Area Civic Center: The TACC Committee recently hired an engineering firm to prepare a master plan for the site. They were not successful in obtaining funding under the Pepsi Refresh grant program.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

Meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm (Maki/King).

NEXT MEETING DATE: The next meeting is scheduled for June 16, 2011 in Cedarville. Wendy will assist Darcy in finding a meeting location.