

**Eastern Regional RC&D Council Meeting
Chippewa East Mackinac Conservation District, Sault Ste. Marie – July 19, 2011**

PRESENT: Jill Maki-Luce Co Comm; Dusty King & Wendy Wagoner - Chippewa East Mackinac CD; Dean Reid & Jim Hill – Mackinac County; Kent Dankenbring & Pat Carr– NRCS; Jim Moore-Chippewa County; Nathan Fazer, EUPRPDC; Darcy Rutkowski - UP RC&D Council

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Dean Reid at 10:03 am.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

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

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Update on Short-term changes (office space, phone, etc): Darcy provided a short synopsis regarding the termination of federal funding for the RC&D program which occurred in April, 2011 and the effects this has had on the UP RC&D Council. The Council has obtained new office space in the same building that the UP Children’s Museum is located (129 W. Baraga Ave, Marquette). The council has a 6 month lease for this space. She is still checking mail, email and phone messages at the former office on Commerce Drive. The Council does not have a new phone number (906-225-0215) and internet service is now in place. The new council email address has been distributed to all members and has been in use for approximately two months already. The Council has between \$60,000 and \$70,000 in savings to help sustain them during a transition period. The current R-I-UP grant will be completed before December 31, 2011. Approximately one-half of the Executive Assistant’s salary is provided by grant funds and Darcy spends an average of 20-25 hrs/week coordinating this project. The council also received news yesterday that they will be receiving another grant in the amount of \$150,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to work with partners to “Eradicate Garlic Mustard in the UP”. The UP Council has decided not to accept any new projects until after their September 13th strategic planning meeting.

Update on Long-term Vision for UP RC&D Council: Nathan Fazer summarized the decisions made by the UP Council when they met a few weeks ago. They decided that each of the Regional Councils should meet in July or early August and should appoint three representatives to attend a strategic planning meeting in Marquette on September 13th (these 3 would be in addition to the 3 current representatives from each regional council). They hope to get input from each of the regional councils at this meeting and develop some short-term and long-term goals. The UP Council realizes that it will be challenging to continue operating in the same manner as they have in the past, especially trying to operate in such a large geographic area. The Council has access to The Grant Station website and newsletter and will be looking for grants that might help to support the Council activities in the future.

Appoint 3 members to attend September 13 strategic planning meeting: Dusty King, Jim Hill and Jim Moore (hopefully) will join current UP Council members Nathan Fazer, Jill Maki, and Aaron Hopper for the strategic planning meeting on September 13 in Marquette. Jim Moore suggested that a synopsis of some of the strengths and weaknesses of other RC&D councils in Michigan would be helpful for this meeting.

REPORTS:

Chippewa County: Jim Moore reported that the City of Sault Ste. Marie moved out of the city/county building and the county now has sole possession (although the city police are still there). The building and courtroom are being renovated. The county re-districting reduced the number of districts from 7 to 5. He reported that the health department has received \$500,000 in funding to provide dental care in the high school. There was already a nurse practitioner in place at the high school (accepting third party reimbursement). This has been successful in providing services to a number of students who didn't have very good access to health care previous to this.

Luce County: Jill Maki reported that they have a new county clerk because the previous clerk retired. The county employees will also be maintaining the same number of work hours as they had previously worked (no cuts in hrs necessary at this time).

Luce/West Mackinac Conservation District – Martha Sundermeier has now resigned – she was only a part-time administrator for a few short months. Dusty reported that the LWMCD and CEMCD boards are having discussions about the possibility of merging the two districts into one big district covering all three counties. The three counties already collaborate on lots of things, are all part of the one planning and development region, and are all involved in the EUP CWMA so it might make sense.

Mackinac County: Jim Hill reported that he is the new appointee for Mackinac County and is attending his first RC&D meeting. He said the county is working with the NLEA to determine if they want that group to provide economic development services for the county. They are in the process of holding local meetings on this. He mentioned that some residents have concerns about the East Lake dam (the present dam is leaking water and causing fluctuating water levels). There are issues to consider since it feeds the Sucker River which is a designated trout stream, and there is also adjoining USFS property. Manistique Lake water levels are also a concern for some residents. They are also doing a study regarding a new jail. The long-term care facility of which the county is part owner, is scheduled to become vacant and they need to look at re-use possibilities. One idea is a community college.

NRCS: Kent Dankenbring reported that he and Pat Carr are now in the middle of the construction season and very busy implementing NRCS program projects and design work. Much of this work is under the WRP (Wetland Reserve Program). He said they have heard of a possible 15% cut to the federal funding for NRCS being proposed in the 2012 budget. The agency has already offered buyouts to RC&D coordinators, and may offer buyouts to a wider range of NRCS employees.

Chippewa East Mackinac CD: Dusty King reported that their district is considering the proposal to combine with the LWMCD. It makes a lot of sense in some regards as the two districts already are partnering on some projects. Dean Reid mentioned that it would be nice if folks in Mackinac County could have an NRCS employee “come to them” for program sign-ups rather than having the citizen travel to the Sault. The farm service agency already covers this 3-county area and conducts some office hours in all counties. Dusty said she is interested in learning more about how the Delta CD has now taken over the administration of the county parks. The district is conducting a timber sale on their property in Pickford and they are looking for more property that they might buy for timber management. One of the district employees has become a certified pesticide applicator and is doing RRIP-IT-UP and EUP CWMA work. They hope that at some point in the future they will be able to apply for MDNR, MDOT and USFS contracts for this type of work.

LWMCD: No reps present

EUPRPDC: Nathan Fazer reported that EUPRPDC is pretty well set for grant-funded projects for next year. They did receive the coastal zone management grant to do the “Green Ways & Blue Ways” work on

Lake Huron. They had a community meeting last night and received lots of good input. The Little Rapids restoration grant was awarded to them, but the design work for this project will be contracted out. The Wildfire Protection Plan for Luce County should be done in a few weeks.

MDNR, USFS, MSUE, RD, FSA: No reps present

NEW PROJECT MEASURES: None

PROJECT UPDATES:

EUP CWMA: Coordinator, Wendy Wagoner, reported that they have a work day scheduled for Vermillion Point this coming weekend. They were notified by the USFS that they will receive about \$40,000 for the 2012 fiscal year to help pay for a coordinator for the CWMA. Frogfest was a huge success with lots of the EUPCWMA partners participating. Staff members from the MNFI came up and were able to look closely at all 100 or so infestations of phragmites. Six have been determined to be invasive, and will be treated.

RRIP-IT-UP: Darcy reported that she spends a great deal of time facilitating this project. Partners are immersed in field work right now. The second annual UP-wide conference on invasive species will take place in Marquette on November 10th and a conference planning sub-committee is meeting later this week to start the planning. She distributed a handout which detailed the accomplishments so far and we have met or exceeded all deliverables. We are also getting very close to our match requirement for this grant. Five demonstration projects are being installed across the UP, with one site at the Cut River garlic mustard infestation. Bootbrush signs will be installed at trailhead on both sides of the bridge. The new grant funds for eradicating garlic mustard will help continue the RRIP-IT-UP efforts. One of the partners which will be receiving a large chunk of funds is the CEMCD.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

Meeting was adjourned at 12:05 pm (Hill/Maki).

NEXT MEETING DATE: The next meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2011 in St. Ignace (at the Bridgeview Rest Area- weather permitting).