

U.P. RC&D Council Meeting Minutes – September 14, 2021

Board Members and Staff Participating in Meeting: All participated via ZOOM video conference

Executive Board Members Participating by Teleconference: Howard Haulotte-Delta County Citizen, Bill Rice-Dickinson CD, Erin Daines - MSUE, Teri Grout – Alger CD, Jen Ricker-Feak – Iron Baraga CD, Jim German-Chippewa County Citizen, Renee Leow – Marquette County Citizen, Nick Cassel & Sydney Hank-UP RC&D Council staff

Others Participating in Person or by Teleconference: Bernie Lang-Menominee County, Amber Butterfield-Dickinson CD, Ashley Reitter-Schoolcraft CD, Theresa Nelson – Delta County, Gretchen Janssen – Houghton County

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:01 am (EDT) by Chairperson Rice.

Approval of Agenda: A motion was made by German, supported by Grout to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Haulotte, supported by German to approve the minutes of the previous meeting of June 9, 2021 with no changes. Motion passed.

Public Comments: No public comments were made

Financial Reports: The Executive Director (ED) presented the Balance Sheet as of September 1, 2021 and the Profit and Loss statements for the period January 1, 2014 through September 1, 2021 and for the January 1 through September 1, 2021 period. The combined balance in all accounts as of September 1, 2021 was \$37,552.11. The ED mentioned there were no notable purchases or deposits for the UPRCD beyond specific grant expenditures. Cassel reviewed the multi-year P&L which provides a more accurate picture of income and expenditures for many of the grant-funded projects which are multi-year in nature. The ED mentioned there were 4 grant reimbursements the UPRCD was waiting to receive, in addition to an advance, total equating to \$60,425.00, with various amounts distributed as sub-award reimbursement. A motion was made by Grout, supported by Haulotte to place the financial reports on file. Motion passed.

Business:

- **Introduction of Sydney Hank – new UPRCD employee:** Cassel gave a brief introduction of Sydney Hank, the new UPRCD staff who is working to complete road stream crossings in the Tahquamenon River watershed utilizing the DNR Fisheries Habitat Grant. Hank introduced herself, gave a brief education/professional background, and informed the Council of her excitement at the opportunity to work conservation projects.
- **UPRCD direct deposit discussion (*potential for motion*):** Cassel brought up the option for UPRCD to pay its employees via direct deposit. In the past, it was easier for one employee to have a single check signed once a month. Now with multiple employees, and German retiring from Chippewa County, Cassel mentions the cost of the direct deposit charges equate to that of the extra salary time spent to have physical checks signed. The cost is \$30/month plus \$0.10/transaction item. Currently, UPRCD pays Cassel anywhere between \$25-37.50/month to have physical checks signed. Leow, Grout, and Ricker-Feak all spoke on the value of convenience, and they support UPRCD getting direct deposit. A motion was made by Ricker-Feak, supported by German, for the UPRCD to adopt direct deposit via its current bank to pay its employees. Cassel will work with the Treasurer and other board members to adopt new language in UPRCD financial policy to accommodate the new direct deposit. Reitter from Schoolcraft CD offered Cassel assistance in adopting already existing language he can use in policy. It was also recommended that Cassel investigate updating QuickBooks to a version that allows direct deposit, tax payments, and other services. Leow recommended having a Jan. 1 goal date, to start the new calendar year fresh. A secondary conversation was had regarding UPRCD's current bank, MBANK, being taken over by Nicolet National Banking. Grout mentioned she's seen branch consolidation across the UP, and UPRCD may need to investigate a new financial institution in the near future.
- **UPRCD/MSUE Collaboration:** Cassel informed the Council he'd been in touch with Daines and other MSU staff regarding a potential collaborative position. This was spoken about several years back when Darcy Rutkowski was still ED, with thoughts on it being an opportunity for expanded partnership, with the ability to offer full time benefits and attract qualified employees. Daines updated the board on the progress to date: a conversation began shortly after Cassel started; due to COVID, MSUE experienced a "chill" on expanding partnerships and hiring new staffing; Conversations

began once again in Spring 2021. Daines gave a description of how the partnership would look between MSUE and UPRCD, with the ED becoming a full time MSUE employee, but still UPRCD employee. Money would come from UPRCD grants, and MSUE, with MSUE providing benefits. UPRCD would benefit from the obvious employee benefits offered, MSUE covering portions of the cost for Cassel to acquire his Masters degree, but also being backed by a team of educators, grant writing assistance and administrative support. MSUE benefits from increasing their leverage and presence across the UP and enhancing what is currently already occurring. This topic arose many questions from many members of the board and partners. Several examples include: What would happen to the UPRCD board? Who would be the EDs direct supervisor? What would the actual benefits be to the UPRCD? How does this impact local and current projects? Couldn't MSUE simply contract with UPRCD? If the partnership didn't work, could the UPRCD recede and if so what would go where? What would happen with County allocations, as both UPRCD and MSUE receive UP allocations. The Council decided this was too large of a topic to steer one direction or another without further investigation, and decided to form a sub-committee to discuss, review, get questions answered, meet with MSUE, and report back to the Executive Board. This sub-committee will consist of Jim German, Jen Ricker-Feak, Bill Rice, and Nick Cassel. Cassel will coordinate efforts to meet and start the review process.

- **UPRCD/MSUE Collaboration:** Cassel reviewed current and future grant opportunities he'd like to have the Council consider for projects in the very near future. Several include: Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program – Hemlock Woolley Adelgid surveys in the UP. USDA NRC – Tribal wildflower/rain garden/pollinator project (Sault Tribe, Bay Mills, KBIC?), DNR Fisheries Grant – wait to see what priority projects exist, 2022 Wildlife Habitat Grant – Waterfowl education event – East, Central, and Western UP, partner with CDs, MUCC, DNR, DU, etc.

UPDATE ON CURRENT PROJECTS AND PROJECT FUNDS

USFS Hiawatha NF Agreement for Phragmites Management

Agreement Amount \$59,700 Match Commitment \$15,000 - *met*
Project Dates: April 4, 2017 to December 31, 2020 (Requested extension to September 30, 2021)
Partners – Hiawatha NF and UP Phragmites Coalition Partners
Remaining funds **\$2,147.46**

MISGP – Life After Phragmites: Wetland Restoration and Landowner Stewardship

Agreement Amount \$191,600 Match Commitment \$21,800 - *met*
Project Dates: March 2019 to March 31, 2021 (Received extension to March 31, 2022 due to COVID)
Partners – Marquette, Alger, Dickinson, and Chippewa Luce Mackinac Conservation Districts and their associated CISMAs
Remaining funds **\$33,972.79**

NFWF SOGL – Life After Phragmites: Wetland Restoration & Landowner Stewardship in Michigan's UP and Northeastern Wisconsin

Agreement Amount \$150,000 Match Commitment \$150,000 (reduced to \$66,035.26 due to COVID)
Project Dates: August 2019 to December 31, 2021 (Received extension to Dec. 31, 2022 due to COVID)
Partners - Marquette, Alger, Dickinson, & Chippewa Luce Mackinac CDs, GLIFWC, WIDNR, Marinette Co.
Remaining funds **\$124,775.18**

MISGP – Upper Peninsula European frog-bit detection initiative

Agreement Amount \$239,100 Match Commitment \$37,400
Project Dates: April 30, 2021 to April 30, 2023
Partners – Dickinson, Iron/Baraga, Marquette, Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation Districts, Michigan Tech and their associated CISMAs
Remaining funds **\$223,378.36**

DNR Fisheries Habitat Grant Program – Tahquamenon River road stream crossing inventory update

Agreement Amount \$62,400 Match Commitment \$6,900
Project Dates: July 16, 2021 to Oct. 7, 2022
Partners – DNR Fisheries Division, DNR Forest Resources Division, Bay Mills Indian Community, LSSU Center for Freshwater Research and Education, Chippewa/Luce County Road Commissions, Hiawatha National Forest
Remaining funds **\$62,400.00**

Partner Updates: Grout mentioned ACD is busy with knotweed and Phragmites treatments.

Future Meeting Dates: December 3 (*tbd – based on Executive Board doodle poll results*)

Adjournment: Motion was made by German, supported by Leow to adjourn the meeting at 11:32 am. Motion passed.