

Second Grant Received to Continue Work on Woody Biomass Project

The UP RC&D Council was recently notified that we have been awarded a \$48,700 grant by the Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC) of the U.S. Forest Service. The funding will help us continue the work being done currently on our BURN-UP Project (**B**iomass **U**tilization and **R**estoration **N**etwork in the **U**pper **P**eninsula). Twenty three proposals were funded from a total of 83 applications, so we feel very fortunate to receive this award. The grants encourage innovation and the sharing of processing and marketing knowledge with wood products manufacturers in the Eastern United States. The primary goal of the grants is to keep local wood businesses globally competitive and sustainable. According to Kathryn Maloney, Director of the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Division, "An important component of improving the health of hardwood forests is to maintain a vibrant forest products industry that has the ability to sustainably utilize lower-value trees for products that will assist our citizens with their energy needs as well as provide locally-produced wood products used in our daily lives".

During Phase I of the BURN-UP project all school districts in the Upper Peninsula were provided information regarding the benefits of heating with woody biomass and given the opportunity to attend a tour of three different schools (Calumet-Laurium-Keweenaw, North Dickinson, and Whitefish Twp.) that currently utilize woody biomass heating systems. Four school districts were chosen to receive no-cost engineering pre-feasibility assessments to determine if conversion to, or supplementing with a wood fuel-based boiler system would be a preferable alternative to their existing non-renewable fuel system. The assessments will be completed at the Stanton Twp. Schools, St. Ignace Area Schools, Munising Public Schools, and Manistique Area Schools. A website has been developed to provide information on woody biomass production and utilization in the Upper Peninsula. It contains a "Market Exchange" section where those looking to obtain wood products (chips, pellets, etc.) and those looking to sell the same can find each other! Check it out at www.upwoodybiomass.org. Two demonstrations of sustainable methods of woody biomass harvesting will be held this fall for loggers. Also, members of our steering committee for this project are continuing to assist the DNR to develop guidelines for sustainable harvesting of woody biomass in different forest types with varying soil productivity.

During Phase II of the project (utilizing the new grant funds) we intend to help one or more UP schools complete the steps toward converting to a woody biomass heating system by assisting them in obtaining a more detailed engineering assessment and helping them in their efforts to locate woody biomass materials to supply their new system. We also plan to sponsor two additional sustainable harvesting workshops, and identify potential locations for clustering small-scale wood-energy facilities in order to allow the use of larger and more efficient utilization technologies that would help wood suppliers make harvesting equipment investments more feasible by increasing and concentrating markets.



BURN-UP Steering Committee Members

Upper Peninsula Native Plant Restoration Project Completed

The Upper Peninsula Resource Conservation & Development Council recently completed a project with partners from the Superior Watershed Partnership, the Hiawatha National Forest, the Rapid River School Forestry Club, the Delta Conservation District, the Marquette Conservation District, and Northern Michigan University to restore several degraded sites using local-genotype native plant species. Three of the sites will serve as “outdoor classrooms” for public schools, universities and the general public. This native plant project exposed a significant number of individuals in the central Upper Peninsula to the benefits of using native plants in landscaping, new techniques for utilizing native plants for streambank stabilization, regional sources of native plant materials, and other organizations and individuals with similar interests in native plants. Over 90% of the restoration work was done by volunteers – virtually all who had no previous experience with native plants. During the restoration of 60 feet of eroding streambank on the Indian River, an instructional DVD was produced regarding the use of stem cuttings to produce live fascine bundles for riparian area restoration. All of the sites restored during this project have a core group of passionate volunteers who have plans to monitor and maintain the original sites and several have plans for expanding restoration efforts at these sites and others. An Online Native Plant Resource Center was developed and can be found at our website www.uprcd.org. Highlights of the Restoration Efforts at all four sites follow.



Stone Quarry restoration site covered in tar paper in order to eradicate weeds prior to planting



Second Season—continuing restoration at Stone Quarry Cabin.

Partner: Deb LeBlanc, West Zone Plant Ecologist, Hiawatha National Forest—A total of 2.5 acres of land along Lake Superior’s shoreline characterized as disturbed Great Lakes Shoreline was restored with native vegetation. The restoration took place at two sites in the Hiawatha National Forest: The Historic Bay Furnace Recreation Area, and at Stone Quarry Cabin on Grand Island.

Restoration at the two sites included:

- Non-native species were removed
- Approximately 8,000 native plant plugs planted
- A retaining wall was created at the Stone Quarry cabin site
- 10 native planting days during the two year project
- Much of the site preparation, planting, weeding and watering was done by volunteers from the Grand Island Association, The Manistique Master Gardener Program, Northern Michigan University Ecological Restoration Class, Hiawatha National Forest Native Plant volunteers, and Landmark volunteers from the Nature Conservancy

Partner: Rapid River School Forestry Club, Delta Conservation District and Central UP Chapter of WildOnes—A 2.3 acre site in the Rapid River School Forest was cleared of non-native Scotch Pine and seeded to native prairie plants under the cooperative efforts of these three groups. The jack pine savannah site will serve as an outdoor classroom for area students and other interested community members and provide a seed source for native plant materials.



Dr. Sundell standing in disturbed/turf grass site prior to restoration.

Partner: Carl Lindquist & Geraldine Larson, Superior Watershed Partnership—The Partnership restored approximately 110 linear feet of stream habitat and adjacent banks and made accessible approximately 5 miles of additional stream habitat (upstream) for fish and aquatic organisms that was previously blocked by an unused (perched) culvert which was removed. The project took place on Orianna Creek, a cold water trout stream, and the restoration eliminated a source of sedimentation that was impacting approximately 1.5 miles of habitat downstream from the culvert. Following culvert removal, the streambanks were reshaped to original contours and stabilized with native plants and seeds. An onsite demonstration was held for 20 students from the Environmental Science Program at Northern Michigan University in conjunction with the restoration.



Educational sign placed at Rapid River outdoor classroom.

Partner: Dr. Ron Sundell & Students from Northern Michigan University—Developed two native plant study areas—a 1 acre jack pine savannah and .7 acre retention pond/wetland—on campus as well as 45 (2m x 2m) native plant plots which will be a source of native plants and seed for the future.

Restoration on the NMU Campus included:

- Planted and cared for over 10,000 native plant plugs in the university greenhouse that were subsequently planted at the site
- Students conducted surveys of vegetation, birds, small mammals & insects
- Ten “Native Plant Workdays” were conducted
- More than 500 students received information about the project through their classes



Orianna Creek streambanks stabilized with native plants and seeds.

Rapid Watershed Assessments Being Conducted

The UP RC&D Council has received funding from NRCS to conduct three additional Rapid Watershed Assessments (RWA). The first phase of each RWA is the development of a resource profile which will provide a summary of the resource conditions and conservation efforts in the watershed that can be used as a focal point for discussions during locally-led identification of resource concerns and priorities. The second phase will be the development of the resource assessment that builds on the information in the profile and develops quantitative estimates of the size, scope, and value of natural resource needs in the watershed. One assessment is being conducted for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) Tribal Lands Watershed which is located for the most part in Baraga County. Representatives from the KBIC Natural Resources Department, Western UP Planning & Development Region, Baraga County Road Commission, and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working in partnership with the UP RC&D Council to complete this assessment. The second RWA is being conducted in the Eastern UP on watersheds encompassing 975, 877 acres in parts of Alger, Schoolcraft, Luce, Mackinac and Chippewa Counties. The Tahquamenon River and the Two Hearted River are two of the more well known in this large watershed area. The Chippewa East Mackinac Conservation District is our primary partner in this assessment, with help from the Luce West Mackinac Conservation District. The third RWA is just getting underway on the Otter River in Houghton County. The UP RC&D Council is working in partnership with the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District on this watershed assessment.

These Rapid Watershed Assessments are just what they sound like—RAPID! Assessments are scheduled to be completed in 9 months from start to finish. This can pose some challenges in watersheds that are experiencing winter for about one-half the project time period! The completed resource assessments will provide initial estimates of where conservation investments would best address the concerns of landowners, conservation districts, and other community organizations and stakeholders within a watershed. These assessments help landowners and local leaders set priorities and determine the best actions to achieve their goals.

On a separate note — Congratulations to the Chippewa East Mackinac Conservation District for finishing their work on the St. Mary's River Rapid Watershed Assessment! The conservation district worked in partnership with the UP RC&D Council to complete one of the first two assessments in the State of Michigan. The other assessment was done by the Huron Pines RC&D Council on the AuGres-Rifle-Tawas River. The completed assessments are now available on the NRCS website at :

www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/RWA.html

Funds Available to Improve Wildlife Habitat

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has 2008 funding available for wildlife habitat improvement. Funds, which cover about 75 percent of the typical costs for practices to improve wildlife habitat, are available this year for applications received before August 1. Practices to improve wildlife habitat include planting native grasses and trees, windbreaks, stream habitat improvement, and controlling invasive species. Applicants for the wildlife habitat incentives program do not have to be engaged in agriculture. Homeowners with large plots of land (10 acres), owners of recreational land and other rural landowners who want to improve wildlife habitat on their property are eligible to apply. For more information, or to apply, contact your local USDA Service Center. If you don't know the phone number of your local USDA Service Center, call the Marquette Service Center at (906) 226-9460, ext. 127. More information is also available online at www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov.

Vision

The Upper Peninsula Resource Conservation & Development Council will promote the conservation of the natural resources of the Upper Peninsula for the benefit of its current and future residents. The Council will strive for a balance between the management of natural resources to protect the environment, and the implementation of economic development activities in order to sustain economy for the region. We will identify resource conservation and land use issues, and work with local communities to address these concerns.

New 5-Year Area Plan Approved

The UP RC&D Council is pleased to report that we have received approval from Garry Lee, NRCS State Conservationist in Michigan, of our new 5-year Area Plan. The UP Council used the Area Planning process as an opportunity to update their vision and mission statements and solicit input from citizens and our many partners from across the entire Upper Peninsula regarding their view of the major conservation needs and opportunities for the region. This input helped define the goals, objectives, and strategies that were prioritized under the four NRCS required elements: Land Management, Water Management, Community Development, and Land Conservation. The new area plan is available on our website at www.uprcd.org.

The UP Council Area is the largest in Michigan and includes almost one-third of the land area of the state, but just 3% of the total population. This presents unique challenges that a single Coordinator and Council must meet to address the diverse conservation needs for an area that stretches 320 miles from east to west. The structure that was developed 35 years ago when the UP RC&D Council was authorized still seems to be working quite well. The 15 County Boards of Commissioners, the 13 Conservation Districts and the three Regional Planning and Development Districts each appoint representatives to serve on one of three Regional RC&D Councils. These quarterly Regional Council meetings are the first step for citizens wishing to secure the assistance of the UP RC&D Council. From the Regional Councils, representatives are drawn to serve on the full Upper Peninsula RC&D Council. The full Council meets quarterly and makes decisions on the administration and operation of the organization, as well as the final decision on which projects to accept for implementation. The UP Council greatly appreciates the interest and input they received from all their partners during the Area Planning process!

Mission

To foster partnerships among diverse stakeholders that support a healthy environment and economy for the Upper Peninsula.

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Visit our website: www.uprcd.org

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UP RC&D Council Newsletter

Featuring:

- *Council receives another grant to continue work on BURN UP Project*
- *UP Native Plant Project Completed*
- *Three new Rapid Watershed Assessment Projects Underway*
- *Funds Available to Improve Wildlife Habitat*
- *Five Year Area Plan Approved*



Upper Peninsula Power Company

Properly managed land is a gift to the future