

Upper Peninsula

*Resource Conservation
and Development Council*

*Serving Keweenaw, Houghton, Gogebic, Ontonagon, Iron, Baraga,
Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee, Schoolcraft,
Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac Counties*

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Quarterly Partner Report

December 2011

Happy Holidays from the Upper Peninsula RC & D Council

As the year comes to an end, the UP RC&D Council is proud of all we have been able accomplish. These accomplishments are particularly satisfying considering the number of changes our organization has undergone in a short time period. On April 15, 2011 congress passed a budget for FY2011 which did not provide any funding for the RC&D program. This had an immediate impact on the 375 RC&D Councils across the nation. All RC&D coordinators across the country (including our coordinator, Marilyn Shy) were to immediately cease work on any and all RC&D activities. Councils were given short notice to vacate federal office space and cease the use of federal equipment. All cooperative agreements were terminated.

The RC&D program was authorized by Congress in 1962, and local Councils established an immediate cooperative relationship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Each council had a federally employed Coordinator who was assigned to assist the council to complete the conservation and development projects outlined in their Strategic Plans. Local RC&D Council members are all volunteers and councils are 501 (c) 3 organizations. Locally elected RC&D council members chose the priority projects for their area and then the projects were implemented with the assistance of the federal coordinator. The RC&D Program was one of the federal government's success stories in creating jobs and efficiently leveraging financial resources to support economic development and resource protection in rural areas. On average, \$6.93 was generated for every \$1.00 of federal funds invested in the RC&D Program nationwide. In FY2010, the eight RC&D Councils in Michigan exceeded that national average by leveraging **\$895,699** in federal funds into **\$8.96 Million** spent in local communities throughout Michigan - **a return of \$10.00 for every dollar the federal government provided**. This left council members and partners wondering why this program was zeroed out.

The UP RC&D Council responded to these circumstances by beginning a strategic planning process. Several council members representing all three regions came together in September 2011 to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the UP RC&D, and develop some short-term and long-term goals. For the short-term we will narrow our focus and continue to do what we are good at, and where we feel we have found our niche—UP-wide invasive plant work. We are just wrapping up a very successful two year invasive plant project (see next page), and have new funding to begin a project for the next two field seasons. We have put a temporary hold on accepting any new project applications until our strategic planning is completed. Several board members will also be working on a business plan over the next few months, and we will be looking at our membership structure as well. We have also moved to new office space in downtown Marquette.

We would like to thank former coordinator, Marilyn Shy, for assisting our council for the past 6 years. Her skills and abilities, and her personality, were a great fit for our council. We also want to acknowledge the support and cooperation we received from Mike LaPointe and all the other staff in the NRCS Area Office. We miss all of you!

UP RC&D Council Board Members

Bob Larson, Chairman – Baraga Conservation District * Howard Haulotte, Vice-Chair – Delta Conservation District * Dave Andersen, Secretary/Treasurer – MSU Extension (retired) * Bob Black – Iron County * Nathan Fazer – Eastern UP Regional Planning & Development Regional Commission * Aaron Hopper – Chippewa County * Jill Maki – Luce County * Ken Marshall – Keweenaw Bay Indian Community * Hampton Waring – Marquette & Alger Conservation Districts

Our Mission: To foster partnerships among diverse stakeholders that supports a healthy environment and economy for the Upper Peninsula.



In the photo, from left, Ken Marshall, Bob Larson, Darcy Rutkowski, Hampton Waring, Marilyn Shy, Dave Andersen, and Jill Maki

Marilyn Shy is Honored as Outstanding Coordinator

Former UP RC&D Council Coordinator, Marilyn Shy, has received the 2010 McCarty Award for Outstanding Coordinator from the North Central Association of RC&D Councils. The award was presented to Marilyn at their annual conference which was held in Stevens Point, Wisconsin in September. The North Central Association of RC&D Councils serves the 72 RC&D Councils in seven states – Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. The award recognizes a coordinator who empowers their council to utilize the RC&D program to its fullest extent, by training council leaders (including underserved groups) and enabling them to operate the organization through good non-profit management. Marilyn was nominated by the UP RC&D council for her leadership in bringing together a diverse group of partners

to form a coalition which received funding to combat invasive plants throughout the Upper Peninsula. One of the most important accomplishments to come out of this project is the tremendous amount of communication that is now taking place among the UP RC&D Council members and all the other partners and citizens involved in this project.

RRIP-IT-Update -

About a month ago, 80 people came together for RRIP-IT-UP's Second Annual UP-Wide Conference on Invasive Plants: Pieces of the Management Puzzle. The diversity of the groups that were represented at the conference is proof that there is an enormous amount of interest in collaborating to deal with invasive plant issues in the Upper Peninsula. The conference came at the end of two field seasons of invasive plant work by all the UP conservation districts, the UP tribes, and many other federal, state and non-profit partners. The project will be finished and the final reports submitted within the next month, but the list of project accomplishments to date is already impressive. Each of the conservation districts and tribes received project funds to prioritize the invasive plant problems within the lands they manage, and train staff and volunteers to tackle the problems. Here's what they were able to accomplish in the last 18 months:

The Collective Accomplishments of all UP Conservation Districts:

- 13 Rapid Response Teams activated**
- 79 Training and educational events sponsored**
- 924 Adult volunteers recruited and trained**
- 1338 Student volunteers recruited and trained**
- 121 Workdays treating invasive plants conducted**
- 2533 Hours of invasive plant control work**
- 4 Demonstration projects installed**
- 110 Partners enlisted**
- 670 Acres of invasive plant infestations controlled**



Rapid Response Invasive Plant Intervention Team of the UPI

Thousands of UP residents were exposed to the invasive plant problem, and opportunities to improve it, through county fair displays, press releases, newspaper articles, radio and television interviews, annual meeting presentations, outreach events, and conferences

Our 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 the economy of the region. We will identify resource conservation and land use issues, and work with local communities to address these concerns.