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SPRING 2007 NEWSLETTER

Sand Point Stamp Sand Stabilization Project Completed



Late last year, stabilization was completed on 37 acres of stamp sands at Sand Point in Baraga County. This successful project involved assistance to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) for the development of a waste sand stabilization and re-use plan for a prime Lake Superior location, owned and managed by the tribe. The problem of stamp sand deposition at this location is the result of historic copper mining activity in the Rockland and Mass areas of Ontonagon County between 1902 and 1919. Mined rock was processed on the shores of Lake Superior in Baraga County approximately 2 miles north of Sand Point. Over time, lake currents transported the waste material just north of the village marina. The Sand Point lakeshore is used heavily for recreation, and is currently managed by KBIC for camping and community events.

Total cost of the stabilization project was \$485,500 which included a grant from EPA for \$312,000; a grant from the Great Lakes Commission Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Program for \$100,000; and cash and donated materials (topsoil) from the tribe valued at \$73,500. The tribe will also be planting indigenous species between the coastal wetlands and the newly covered areas, utilizing \$20,000 from the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). KBIC is now applying for BIA grant money to stabilize an additional 6-7 acres in the same fashion.

Upper Peninsula RC & D Council Receives Donation from UPPCO

The UP RC&D Council is pleased to announce that we have received a donation from UPPCO. The funds will be used to support the publication of the Council's quarterly newsletter. We are very grateful to have a partner like UPPCO that supports conservation education in the Upper Peninsula.



Upper Peninsula Power Company

Properly managed land is a gift to the future.



Grant Awarded for Central UP Volunteer Stream Monitoring Project

The Upper Peninsula Resource Conservation and Development Council has been awarded a \$14,000 grant by the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) and Great Lakes Commission to initiate a volunteer stream monitoring program in the central Upper Peninsula. U.P. RC&D will partner with Marquette and Alger County Conservation Districts to organize volunteer monitoring on the Dead and Anna Rivers. The project will increase awareness of water quality issues and foster participation in stewardship activities. Results will help evaluate the effectiveness of water quality protection efforts by local communities. Monitoring will begin in the fall of 2007 with the intent to maintain and expand long-term monitoring efforts throughout the Upper Peninsula. For more information or to volunteer, contact Elizabeth Coyne in Alger County at 386-7046 or Sarah Janda in Marquette County at 226-2461 ext 131.

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Forest Land Enhancement Program Funds Available

MDNR representatives have indicated that this year will be the last for the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP). The program was intended to promote sustainable forest management on non-industrial private forest lands by providing cost-sharing and technical assistance. Eight practices are eligible for cost-share: management plan development, reforestation, forest stand improvement, water quality improvement and watershed protection, fish and wildlife habitat improvement, forest health and protection, invasive species control, and wildfire and catastrophic event rehabilitation.

Landowners must have at least 12 acres with at least 5 forested or plan to be planted to trees, and must have a forest stewardship plan or the equivalent. If a landowner does not currently have a forest stewardship plan, he/she can get one through the FLEP program.

Applications can be downloaded at www.michigan.gov/dnr or obtained from your local Conservation District, or local DNR Service Center. All practices must be completed and receipts submitted for payment by September 15, 2007. The program will end on September 30, 2007.

Community Forums Scheduled in Newberry, Marquette and Houghton

The UP RC&D Council is one of several partners in a project which examines the role of corporate timberland ownership change in land use, conservation, and local prosperity in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. One of our roles in this project is to sponsor community forums in partnership with the Luce-West Mackinac, Marquette and Houghton-Keweenaw Conservation Districts to help inform citizens and policy-makers across the UP of research findings regarding changes in corporate land ownership over the past several years, the importance of the forest products industry in the U.P. economy, local and state regulatory capacity, market-based tools, and case studies of innovative approaches to regional timberland management and recommendations for changes in policy and behavior that can reduce negative impacts. We will be inviting members of county and township government, planning and zoning board members, conservation district and RC&D board members, owners and managers of mills and other timber products companies, foresters, conservancies and timber land owners, recreation, wildlife and other interested individuals to participate in the forums where we gather their input. The forums have been scheduled on June 19, 2007 in Newberry, June 20th in Marquette, and June 21st in Houghton. The entire draft report, as well as other project information, is available online at <http://forestlands.mtu.edu>. An excerpt of the Executive Summary of the report is printed here.

Forested areas make up the majority of land cover in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP), representing approximately 8.5 million acres or 79% of the total land base. Over half of the employee compensation in the manufacturing sector in the UP comes directly from forest products industries. However, Michigan's UP forestlands are undergoing a dramatic transformation in land ownership and economic makeup. More than one million acres of UP corporate forestland changed ownership in 2005 and 2006, moving primarily from traditional land owners directly tied to forest products industries (known as vertically integrated timber product companies, or VITPC) to large-tract forestland investors.

Two recent large-scale land sales underscore this change. In 2005, Plum Creek Timber Company, Inc. purchased 650,000 acres in the UP from Escanaba Timber LLC, formerly Mead Paper and MeadWestvaco. The purchase made Plum Creek, headquartered in Seattle, WA, the largest private landowner in Michigan. The second major land sale was in 2006 when International Paper (IP) sold 440,000 acres in the UP to the consortium of GMO Renewable Resources, LLC.

While the long-term implications of such dramatic and large-scale ownership changes for Michigan's Upper Peninsula remain unclear, many perceive an increased risk of large-tract forestlands being parceled into smaller ownerships. As parcelization increases and large-tract ownership is reduced, it has been shown public access and wildlife habitat decline (Rinkus and Markham 2006, Nelson 2001, and Radeloff, et al 2005). This concern has prompted increasing interest in the future of the UP's economic makeup and its traditionally resource-based, rural communities.

This People and Land (PAL) project focuses on a central question of land use in Michigan's UP: How will such changes in ownership of large-tract forestland affect wildlife habitat, public access and the economy? The answers have significant importance for residents, businesses, the forest products industry and seasonal visitors to the UP, where outdoor pursuits and the access to large-tracts of timberland have been historical linchpins of the lifestyle and economy.

This report collects and presents a range of relevant ownership change data, scenario analysis, economic information, state and local tools, and recommendations to inform future debate, discussion and action. It is not intended to be the final word on the issue, but rather as an entry point to a conversation through education, information and analysis that might point the way to future tools, research needs and informational gaps.

<http://forestlands.mtu.edu>