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SUMMER 2006 NEWSLETTER

Upper Peninsula Native Plants Restoration Project

Years of productive planning among the U.P. RC&D Council, Northern Michigan University (NMU), the Superior Watershed Partnership (SWP), and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have brought about a collaborative service-learning project to restore native plant communities to degraded sites across the Upper Peninsula. A major objective of the project is to promote and develop sources of native plant materials for installing erosion control systems. Restoration work will continue throughout a two-year grant period. During that time, two native plant study areas will be developed on Northern Michigan University's campus, two riparian areas will be stabilized using live fascine



Ron Sundell stands on the proposed native prairie restoration area on Northern Michigan University's campus. The area is to be completed summer 2006.



Streambank on the Dead River to be stabilized and restored using live fascine bundles and native plant seeds and plugs.

bundles, a 1.4 acre jack pine savanna at the Rapid River School Forest will be restored, and a one-acre site will be cleared of non-native species and restored with native species. An instructional DVD about the use of live fascines was created and will be distributed to restoration leaders throughout the Upper Peninsula. An Online Native Plant Resource Center has been added to the UP RC&D website (www.uprcd.org). The web page includes information on native plants, landscaping, native plant suppliers, and organizations throughout the Upper Peninsula.

The project specifically addresses the shortage of labor, expertise, and native plant material and in turn will educate the public and train volunteers on native plant restoration while establishing native plant "seed banks" to meet future demands for local genotype plant species.

Under the direction of Carl Lindquist of the SWP, approximately 500 lineal feet of Dead River streambank will be stabilized and restored using live fascine bundles and native seeds with student and community volunteer support. Dr. Ronald Sundell, Director of NMU's Environmental Science Program, will work with project staff, student volunteers, and partner organizations to develop "outdoor classrooms" to be made available to both NMU students and teachers throughout the Upper Peninsula. The site restored on the Rapid River School Forest in Delta County will serve as an educational site for primary and secondary public education in the south-central Upper Peninsula region. With additional funding in the future we hope to institutionalize the program and offer services and expertise to many more schools, municipalities, and tribes.



1.4 acre jack pine savanna at the Rapid River School Forest to be restored with the use of native plants.

Iron County Pathway Feasibility Study

Two years ago, the Iron County Road Commission received assistance from the Upper Peninsula RC&D Council to apply for funds from the National Scenic Byways Program. This past spring, the Commission was awarded \$60,000 and has contracted with WUPPDR to conduct the feasibility study.

The Iron County Heritage Trail Pathway Feasibility Study will evaluate potential bicycle-pedestrian linkages between the cities of Iron River and Crystal Falls and the many historic and recreational heritage route sites along the way. The purpose of the project is to prepare a comprehensive plan for the development of a connected bicycle-pedestrian trail system in Iron County, to enhance visitor experience and encourage non-motorized activities along the heritage route.



Stops along the route include: Pentoga Park Indian Burial Grounds, Alpha Circle Historical District, Iron County Courthouse, Harbour House in Crystal Falls, Iron County Museum, Mansfield Location and Pioneer Church, and five other sites in the area. A detailed driving guide including more information on each of these sites can be found at:

www.ironheritage.org.

The feasibility study is expected to be completed in 18 months. By September 2007, a draft of the report will be available for public comment. For more information, see the UP RC&D Council website at:

www.uprcd.org, and click on “Projects.”

St. Mary’s River Rapid Watershed Assessment

The St. Mary’s River Watershed in Chippewa County was one of 19 projects selected nationally to conduct a rapid watershed assessment. A grant of \$44,440 will be awarded to the Upper Peninsula RC&D Council, who intends to work in partnership with the Chippewa/East Mackinac Conservation District to identify, assess, and prioritize natural resources concerns in the watershed. The goal of the watershed assessment is to use it to obtain funds for conservation practices that are needed to correct or prevent pollution problems.

The watershed encompasses 375,315 acres, with about 47,000 acres in agriculture. The balance of the land is a mix of wetlands, forest and urban land. The St. Mary’s River is listed as one of 42 Great Lakes Areas of Concern by the International Joint Commission. Despite this designation, the river supports a warm and coolwater fisheries community with many wetland dependent fish species. Wetlands in the area are considered to be some of the most diverse across the Great Lakes.



Other project partners include Lake Superior State University, and the Intertribal Fisheries and Assessment Program (IFTAP), which is part of the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA). CORA believes that if successful, the project will lead to better water quality, preservation of fish and wildlife habitat, and a better quality of life for the citizens and visitors to the Eastern Upper Peninsula.

Torch Lake Superfund Site Final Acre Ceremony

After 16 years, the Torch Lake Project has been completed! This project became a measure proposal in 1990, and was submitted to EPA for funding in 1991. After many years of planning, funding was acquired in 1998 in the amount of \$15.2 million from the EPA's Superfund.



Torch Lake was the site of copper milling/smelting facilities and activities for over 100 years. The first mill opened on Torch Lake in 1868. Copper was extracted by crushing or “stamping” the rock. Crushed rock particles were deposited in a slurry into Torch Lake, and formed what is now known as stamp sands. It is estimated that nearly 200 million tons of stamp sand tailings were dumped into and along Torch Lake.

Over 700 acres of stamps sands have been capped and revegetated in Lake Linden, Hubbell/Tamarack City, Mason, and Calumet Lake areas. To celebrate the completion of this project, a ceremony will be held at 1:00 pm on August 17, 2006 in Lake Linden. For more information on this Final Acre Ceremony, or if you would like to attend, contact the UP RC&D office.

New Staff at the UP RC&D Office!

Since our last newsletter, the UP RC&D Council has added some new staff people. **Darcy Rutkowski** is the UP RC&D Administrative Assistant. Darcy serves as the Council's day-to-day manager, taking care of all financial matters, maintaining the website, and assisting on projects when needed. **Marilyn Shy** is the UP RC&D Coordinator, taking Paul VanRyzin's place in February of this year. Marilyn works mainly with the projects, providing assistance with permitting, agency coordination, fundraising, and other activities that are necessary to get UP RC&D projects installed. **Donna Peppin** is the Native Plants Restoration Specialist, working contractually through the Marquette County Conservation District. Please feel free to contact any of the staff via phone or email. We look forward to your comments and ideas.

Upper Peninsula RC&D Council

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