

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**L'Anse Village Hall – April 4, 2013**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Steven Siira-Keweenaw Co Planning Comm; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa Natl Forest; Bill Erickson-Gogebic CD; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Comm; Anton Pintar-Houghton Co Comm; Ken Marshall-KBIC; Bob Black-Iron Co; Jen Ricker-Iron CD; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

**AGENDA & MINUTES:** The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:07 am. The agenda was approved with the addition of “UPCAP Meeting” under business items (Black/Siira). The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written (Pintar/Marshall).

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Anton Pintar presented the Treasurer’s Report. The balance in the checking account as of March 29, 2013 is \$510.64. The report will be placed on file (Black/Marshall).

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**2013 County Dues Update:** Executive Director (ED) reported that the invoices for county dues were mailed the first week of February 2013 and to date no dues payment has been received from Ontonagon, Iron or Baraga Counties in the Western region.

**2013 Western Council Dues:** ED reminded members that no dues were requested from the conservation districts in the Western Region for 2012. A motion was made by Black, seconded by Jacobson that no dues be requested for 2013. Motion passed.

**Update on Changing Regional Council Structure:** ED reported that although the Western Council members had expressed no objections to the possibility of changing from 3 regional councils to 2 regional councils, the Central region members were not in favor of this structure as this change would effect that region more than the Western or Eastern regions. The UP RC&D Council is still in discussions on this.

**UPCAP Meeting:** Bob Black made a motion, seconded by Jacobson, that the ED and any other available council members make a presentation about the UP RC&D Council at the UPCAP meeting in Hannahville on May 16, 2013. Motion passed.

**REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** No reps present

**Baraga Conservation District:** Bob Larson reported that the Baraga CD met at his house – there is no change in status – they are not active at this time but if the state of Michigan provides funding, they will become active.

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Bill Erickson reported that the district has been going through some re-organization with long-time UP RC&D Council representative, Dave Harmon leaving their board and also the past executive director leaving. They have some part-time secretarial support. Current members are Perotti, List, Zaleski, and Erickson. They currently have funding from two USFS grants. Mining in the county and surrounding area continues to be an important issue for them. They are also heavily involved in the controversial issues surrounding wolves in the county.

**Gogebic County:** Dennis Jacobson reported that Congress re-passed the rural development act and Gogebic County will receive \$50,000. The County 5 year plan has been approved by both the state and the county. Orvana Mining Company plans to begin operations for copper mining in 2014, and another mine (taconite) is being developed just over the border from Gogebic County in Wisconsin.

**Houghton County & Conservation District:** Anton Pintar reported that Houghton and Keweenaw counties are forming a recreational authority to work on trail issues. The planning commission heard a report on Prickett Lake land acquisition by the USFS and they support it. Eurasian watermilfoil is an issue in the county and he has represented the county at some meetings regarding this aquatic invasive plant for which grant funding is being sought.

**Iron County:** Bob Black reported that as Chamber director he is still involved in many of the trail issues affecting the region (OHV Connector Route, MiTrale, trail from Watersmeet to Sidnaw, Senate Bill 50 regarding ATVs, etc). He mentioned that the disc golf course on/near the Apple Blossom Trail may not survive. Helicopters have been flying over the county looking for ore deposits.

**Iron Conservation District:** Jen Ricker introduced herself as the new administrator of the Iron CD and Western Peninsula Invasives Council (WePIC) Coordinator. They have some GLRI funding from the USFS and some grant funds from the Pulling Together grant that the UP RC&D Council received to fund invasive species activities in their county and also some activities for WePIC in Gogebic and Ontonagon counties. She has been busy with their tree sale and getting the boaters association together.

**Keweenaw County:** Steve Siira reported that he has been elected as a director for the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District. The Keweenaw County Planning Commission has a new plan ready to go out to the public. Ten more acres were added to the Bete Gris preserve. Studies are being conducted now to determine the feasibility of copper mining at the old Homestead Mine in Kearsage.

**Ontonagon County: No reps present**

**Ontonagon Conservation District: No Reps Present**

**MSUE: No Reps Present**

**Keweenaw Bay Indian Community:** Ken Marshall reported that the tribe is being negatively impacted by budget cuts due to sequester, and expects to see more cuts in the near future. He also reported that the state is flying the whole UP with orthophotography (\$23/sq mile) and may also fly LIDAR. He is trying to get townships and other partners educated about how they might use these resources (assessors could use it).

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine reported that there is a lot of interest in state-controlled minerals on the forest by outside groups, and they are doing the EA for federal mineral rights. The Camp Nesbit “recovery act funds” contract is in place again. They are watching for changes to the Emerald Ash Borer quarantines – Houghton Co quarantine might be made more restrictive and the rest of the UP might be put under some type of quarantine as well.

**NEW MEASURES: No new project applications are being accepted at this time.**

#### **PROJECT UPDATES:**

**UP-wide Invasive Phragmites Project:** The project has a total of \$458,000 in federal funds for 2 years. The UP RC&D and partner conservation districts and Michigan Natural Features Inventory personnel sponsored 6 public workshops in March where about 200 landowners were educated about the biology of phragmites, the negative impacts on native species and communities, property and recreational impacts, and how landowners can participate in our project to get their phragmites treated with grant funds. There is not much phragmites in the six counties that comprise the Western RC&D region. Prior to any treatment, the mapping of the phragmites along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Delta and Menominee Counties will have to be completed by staff and outside contractors.

**UP Garlic Mustard Eradication Project:** Project partners pulled over 37,000 pounds of garlic mustard in the UP, and treated over 310 acres by herbicide or mechanical (hand-pulling) means during the 2012 field season and are gearing up to match that again this year. A new infestation has been reported at the Ford Center in Alberta. This is the first report of GM from Baraga County. This project ends on December 31, 2013 and is funded by a \$150,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

**Pulling Together Grant Proposal:** The UP RC&D Council was successful in obtaining \$54,661 for this two year project. This grant will provide funds for several of the UP CWMA's and also funds to continue some of the RRIP-IT-UP activities like the UP-wide conference and the standardized mapping procedures. The project will also provide funds for a weed crew for KISMA and a part-time coordinator for WePIC (both in the Western Region).

**CORRESPONDENCE: None**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 pm (Black/Pintar).

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held at 10 am (Eastern Time) on Thursday, October 3, 2013 in Houghton County.