

MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL
Iron County Courthouse, February 3, 2011

IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Siira-Keweenaw Co Planning Comm; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Bill Menge-Baraga Co Bd of Comm; Barbara VanAlstine & Ian Shackelford-Ottawa Natl Forest; Dave Harmon, Marvin LaGrew & Ron Zaleski-Gogebic CD; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Comm; Anton Pintar-Houghton Co Comm; David Stanek & Gail Dalpra-Iron CD; Wayne Wales & Bob Black-Iron Co Comm; Kevin Manninen-WUPPDR; Bruce Petersen-Charter Twp of Portage; Marilyn Shy-UP RC&D Coordinator; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:00 am. The agenda was approved with no changes (Menge/Jacobson).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written (Pintar/Wales).

TREASURER'S REPORT: Darcy presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of January 31, 2011 is \$515.64 with no new activity since the last meeting. The report will be placed on file (Jacobson/Menge).

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Election of Officers for Western RC&D Council:

Nominations were opened for the office of chairperson. Bill Menge nominated Bob Larson. Two more requests for nominations for the office of chairperson were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. Nominations were closed and a unanimous ballot was cast for Bob Larson.

Nominations were opened for the office of vice-chairperson. Anton Pintar nominated Bob Black. Two more requests for nominations for the office of vice-chairperson were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. Nominations were closed and a unanimous ballot was cast for Bob Black.

Nominations were opened for the office of secretary/treasurer. Bob Black nominated Anton Pintar. Two more requests for nominations for the office of secretary/treasurer were made, and there were no additional nominations for this position. Nominations were closed and a unanimous ballot was cast for Anton Pintar.

Elect Representative to UP RC&D Council: This election did not take place as all the current representatives (Bob Larson, Bob Black and Ken Marshall) are willing to continue serving in this capacity.

2011 Annual Plan of Work: Copies of the Annual Plan of Work were distributed. The format of the plan is determined by NRCS, and new this year was the addition of estimates of coordinator time commitment and budget to complete the project. Marilyn will update the plan periodically with accomplishments/progress on the various projects.

Additional Funding for RC&D Councils: NRCS recently notified the UP RC&D Council that carryover funds are to be made available to RC&D Councils nationwide. For Michigan, \$4500 is available for non-Circle of Diamonds Councils (COD) and \$8,730 for COD councils. The UP RC&D Council is a member of the Circle of Diamonds. The funds must be used for projects which are detailed in our 2010 Annual Plan of Work and will be obligated by March 1, 2011 and must be expended prior to August 30, 2012.

2010 Annual Report: Copies of the 2010 Annual Report were distributed to members. The report will be sent electronically to all partners.

REPORTS:

Baraga County: Bill Menge reported that the engineering was completed yesterday for the Pt. Abbaye Park. The park will have trails, campsites, and water wells. Some extra land has been donated adjacent to the county land, and the DNR has offered that trails may also be placed on adjacent state land. There is a total of more than 1000 acres at this site.

Baraga Conservation District: Bob Larson reported that the district will not be holding a tree sale due to a lack of manpower. They do plan to hold a native plants sale in conjunction with the Trout Festival.

Houghton County & Conservation District: Anton Pintar reported that the Houghton County Planning Commission is in the process of updating their master plan. The district Annual Meeting is scheduled for March 8th at 6 pm at the Lakeshore Center. Their tree sale will be the first week of May. Bruce Petersen was attending this meeting on behalf of Portage Twp. and reported that he sits on a trail group and they recognize a great need to protect and enhance the Rails-to-Trails system. Many of the trail easements are not legal easements. They hope to move forward with a recreational authority (that would have taxing authority) and possibly hire a trails manager in the future. Bruce also mentioned that Alex Mayer from MTU is putting together a stormwater run-off ordinance, and that there are very few similar ordinances in the UP. This might serve as a model for other jurisdictions.

Gogebic Conservation District: Dave Harmon reported that their Annual Meeting took place in November and he and Dan Perotti were re-elected to the district board of directors. They have had a lot of turnover in the County forestry department with two foresters with 30+ years each of experience retiring. They are now a little short-handed with only 1 ½ positions being filled. Two RAC proposals were approved (although not at the funding level requested): Invasive Plant Management for Gogebic County and Narrows Creek Restoration. The district received a \$3000 appropriation from the county board. They have begun working with USFWS, DNRE, NRCS and USFS on a proposal for stream crossing remediation in the Ontonagon River Watershed. A group of stakeholders (including the district) heard a presentation on the potential for a woody biomass district heating project by MSUE forester Bill Cook. The district is submitting a proposal to MiCorps for a volunteer stream monitoring project. They are working with the USFS to put together an application for a field demonstration site for the RRIP-IT-UP project.

Gogebic County: Dennis Jacobson reported that he is a member of the Gogebic RAC and they received 19 proposals for possible funding. Three of the proposals were rejected because they did not enhance the Ottawa NF. Several of the remaining proposals were funded, but not all of them at the funding level requested. Ten projects were approved totaling \$222,000 and they are subject to approval by the Ottawa supervisor. None of the projects were funded at 100%. The next meeting will be held in May to distribute the remaining funds. (BEGINNING BALANCE \$394,000, RELEASED \$222,000, ENDING BALANCE \$172,000).

Iron County: Wayne Wales is the new chairman of the Iron County Board of Commissioners. Wayne stated that the county would like to appoint Bob Black to represent them at the Western UP RC&D Council meetings even though Bob is no longer a commissioner. Wayne will be an alternate. Wayne reported that the county owns a 40 acre parcel on the Paint River and that Bates Township is interested in putting a park on that property. The county is in discussions with the township about transferring the property. The park would include river access. Bob Black reported that he attended the Western UP Citizens Advisory Council to the DNR and told that group about some of the activities that RC&D is involved in. He requested that the UP RC&D provide him with copies of the Annual Report to take to the next meeting of that group. He is still involved with trying to develop a reciprocal agreement with Wisconsin for ORV regulations. Since Bob is still appointed to represent Iron County on the Western UP RC&D Council, he agreed to continue to be a representative for the Western Council at the UP RC&D Council meetings.

Iron Conservation District: Dave Stanek reported the district held its reorganizational meeting in November and he is the chairman. Work on the 2 mile stretch of the Iron County Bike Trail that goes west along US 2 from the city limits was concluded with blacktop, and reseeding along the trail. One of their directors, Jerry Divine, was chosen as a member of the Western UP Citizens Advisory Council. Jerry is a retired DNR forester. The district sent out their tree order forms and the deadline for ordering is March 31, 2011 with delivery in late April. Soil and sediment program issued 49 permits, and 15 exemptions. Permit fees totaled \$13,855 and expenses totaled \$8698. The district continues to work on the RRIP-IT-UP program with focus on glossy and common buckthorn along with spotted knapweed. They are hoping to get a demonstration project funded for invasive plant control along the Apple Blossom Trail.

Keweenaw County: Steve Siira reported that the EDC and WUPPDR had a joint meeting and they have put together a 20 year Master Plan. They were using input from five townships.

Ontonagon County: Barbara VanAlstine reported that the Smurfit Stone mill was sold to a company that will sell it for scrap, which is discouraging to the county. It is hoped that there is still potential for re-use of the facility in some fashion.

Ontonagon Conservation District: No Reps Present

MSUE: No Reps Present

Keweenaw Bay Indian Community: No Reps Present

USFS: Barbara VanAlstine distributed handouts regarding the Gogebic County RAC (minutes of meeting on 1/6/11, projects that were funded, and application for project funding). The Ontonagon County RAC has not decided which projects will receive funding yet – they are a few weeks behind the Gogebic county RAC in the process. Since there is a small amount of USFS land in Baraga County, no RAC will be formed, but the USFS requested input from the Baraga County Commission regarding their resource priorities. They decided to put the funds toward work for the bridge on the Sturgeon River. The OHV Connector Route plan has been signed and the Baraga Plains Restoration Project was also signed. They had a break-in at the Kenton Ranger Station, but nothing was stolen. The Supervisor on the Ottawa has transferred to Washington and they have an acting supervisor for 4 months until a replacement is hired. The Ontonagon District Ranger has also left to take a position in Minnesota.

WUPPDR: Kevin Manninen reported that he has been hired by WUPPDR as the Regional Economic Coordinator for Baraga and Ontonagon Counties. His main focus is job creation and business development. He reported that the Smurfit Stone mill was sold to American Iron and Metals and that company plans to scrap the paper mill side. He is encouraged that company reps attended the partnership meeting and they are looking for an opportunity to develop what remains. WUPPDR received a Community Adjustment Investment Program grant award through the North American Development Bank. The overall goal of the grant includes creating and increasing the production and sale of renewable high-yield fuel crops and combustible fuel pellets in Ontonagon and Gogebic Counties. A second and equally important part of this project will be the formulation of a business plan for a pellet or other biofuel plant in Ontonagon County. They will be mapping idle farm lands to determine the best fuel crops for the land available, identify potential customers and do outreach. Both the supply and the market need to be developed simultaneously. Kevin also reported that WUPPDR is working with a Blue-way planning grant to enhance the coastal zone and they are working with Orvana on a water supply project. They are also working on UPLink (www.linkupmichigan.com) which will have the ability to link the whole UP with video conferencing services.

RC&D Coordinator Report: Marilyn reported that she continues to work with stakeholders in the Manistique area on the feasibility of a district heating plant. The engineering is being completed, and energy audits are being done for all potential partners. She is also working with folks in Ironwood who are beginning to examine the feasibility of a district heating plant for that area. Work continues on the Inland Stamp Sand Project in Houghton/Keweenaw counties. Sites are being remediated as funding becomes available. She is assisting the Gogebic CD in submitting a proposal to MiCorp for a volunteer stream monitoring project. The UP RC&D Council plans to use the carry-over funds received from NRCS to complete some of the RRIP-IT-UP deliverables (restore and enhance 660 acres with a focus on garlic mustard, and to fund the installation of an additional 2 demonstration sites). She distributed the web address for the Readers Digest contest that Grand Marias is competing in to help raise funds and awareness of their need for a new breakwall in their harbor. This is an RC&D project and currently Grand Marais is in first place (winner gets \$40,000 and a story in Readers Digest). She encouraged folks to vote for Grand Marais.

NEW MEASURES:

New Cooperative Weed Management Areas- Ian Shackleford, botanist with the Ottawa National Forest, gave a synopsis of this project which is sponsored by the Ottawa. The project proposes to establish a new Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) covering Houghton, Keweenaw and Baraga counties. These are the only three counties in the UP currently not part of a CWMA. The Ottawa NF expects to have a small amount of funding (dependent on congressional authorization of GLRI funds) for public education, mapping and reporting invasive plant sites in MISIN, and arranging for treatment of priority infestations. The project also proposes to revitalize the Western Peninsula Invasives Council (WePIC) because their MOU has now expired. The project requests assistance with bringing in

partners, facilitating meetings, hiring coordinators and developing the mission of the two CWMA's. The project was approved (Black/Menge).

Copper Country Recycling/Composting Project- Bruce Petersen described this project which is sponsored by the Charter Township of Portage. They are interested in bringing partners together to create a count wide recycling and composting program. Currently there is no infrastructure in the area to handle organic waste. They are requesting assistance in bringing partners together to develop a plan (county, twps, WUPPDR, Waste Management) and with help to find funding for infrastructure. The project was approved (Harmon/Siira).

PROJECT UPDATES: RRIP-IT-UP-Darcy reported that about a dozen letters of intent were received for the Invasive Plant Field Demonstration Projects under the RRIP-IT-UP Project. Applications are due on February 28, 2011. They hope to fund at least 6 projects at \$1750 each. The demonstrations will have to be installed during the upcoming field season.

Other project updates were done under the Coordinator's report.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held at 10 am (Eastern Time) on Thursday, May 5, 2011 at the Gogebic County Resources Center, 500 N. Moore Street, Bessemer.