

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**Gogebic County Resource Center – May 24, 2012**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Steven Siira-Keweenaw Co Planning Comm; Bob Larson-Baraga CD; Barbara VanAlstine-Ottawa Natl Forest; Dave Harmon & Marvin LaGrew-Gogebic CD; Dennis Jacobson-Gogebic Co Comm; Anton Pintar-Houghton Co Comm; Ken Marshall-KBIC; Darcy Rutkowski-UP RC&D Council

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:06 am. The agenda was approved with no changes (Jacobson/Siira).

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

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Anton Pintar presented the Treasurer’s Report. The balance in the checking account as of April 30, 2012 is \$510.64. Mbank was given meeting minutes and personal information for newly elected treasurer, The report will be placed on file (Harmon/Jacobson).

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**County Dues Update:** Executive Director (ED) reported that the invoices for county dues were mailed March 26, 2012 and to date no dues payment has been received from Keweenaw, Gogebic or Ontonagon County in the Western region.

**2012 Annual Plan of Work:** ED distributed copies of the 2012 Annual Plan of Work at the meeting and briefly discussed the components. This document has a different format from previous years as we no longer have to use the NRCS format.

**WePIC and KISMA:** ED reported that there are two cooperative species management areas in the six counties of the Western UP RC&D and both have a relationship with the Ottawa National Forest. The Western Peninsula Invasives Council (WePIC) covers Gogebic, Ontonagon and Iron counties, has been in existence for about 5 years and is now in the process of updating their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which the UP RC&D Council plans to sign. The Keweenaw Invasive Species Management Area (KISMA) covers Houghton, Keweenaw and Baraga counties and is just forming. They are developing a MOU and the UP RC&D Council plans to join that group as well. The ED is looking at possible grant funding opportunities to assist both groups at this time.

**Strategic Planning Update:** Marshall reported that he is working on a new business (strategic) plan for the UP RC&D Council along with council members Dave Andersen (Central RC&D) and Nathan Fazer (Eastern RC&D). Ken has sent some draft language to Andersen who is in the process of compiling the input from each into one document. The NARDCDC has asked councils to continue to include the 4 elements of the RC&D Program when it existed in cooperation with NRCS: land conservation, water conservation, community development, and land management.

**REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** No reps present

**Baraga Conservation District:** Bob Larson reported that the CD board is meeting on an “as needed” basis and that they have a new board member. The district also plans to join KISMA, and they will be selling plugs instead of trees as a fundraiser.

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Dave Harmon reported that the district annual meeting was held recently and he distributed their annual report. Bill Cook was the featured speaker and spoke on woody biomass. They elected two new directors- Mark Bale and Jim Lynn. They have been working with the Ottawa NF and UP RC&D Council on invasive plant projects and installed the educational sign at the Norrie Park invasive buckthorn demonstration site. They are involved in the UP RC&D Council’s garlic mustard project and Ron Zaleski has been hand-pulling garlic mustard at private residences and they have hired a contractor to spray some of the other infestations in the county. Jim Perkis is doing the soil erosion work for them and has been very busy. They have funding for their Black Creek Narrows project which is still ongoing. They also received a small stream monitoring grant and are looking for someone to lead those efforts. They moved to a new office and still getting re-organized and Marvin LaGrew attends the Gogebic County

Commission meetings. They recently attended the Logging Jamboree which was very good and still have a No Till Drill available.

**Gogebic County:** Dennis Jacobson reported that the county board sent a letter of support to WUPPDR for the biomass crop project, and the board met with a DNR official regarding the extremely high wolf population in the county which is causing problems. Federal officials are reviewing policy for logging in the Ottawa and Hiawatha National Forests. To date no action has been taken on the Cisco Lake dam where the power company wants to take over the dam.

**Houghton County & Conservation District:** Anton Pintar reported that the county is now completing their Master Plan and have just completed their Recreation Plan. The Recreation Plan has two new components-the Pilgrim River watershed project where they are trying to secure landowner easements along the river, and a component related to the Douglas Houghton Falls. The county will have electronic recycling this fall. The Conservation District had a net profit of \$7000 on their tree sale and these funds are used for district administration. They also are continuing their stamp sand remediation work. The county is exploring the possibility of creating a recreation authority with Keweenaw County for trails and looking at a loop from Hancock to Lake Linden to Calumet for both motorized and non-motorized use.

**Iron County:** Bob Black notified the council that he could not attend because he had a conflict with work responsibilities.

**Iron Conservation District: No Reps in attendance**

**Keweenaw County:** Steve Siira reported that they are still working on the Master Plan, a training video, and a Geo Park. He also reported that the cell tower on Brockway Mt. has caused controversy.

**Ontonagon County: No reps present**

**Ontonagon Conservation District: No Reps Present**

**MSUE: No Reps Present**

**Keweenaw Bay Indian Community:** Ken Marshall reported that KBIC and Baraga County are partnering in a 911 emergency response/recreational map. 10,000 will be produced for tourism purposes and the map will have info about ORV trails, camping sites, heritage sites, USFS boundaries, state parks. It will be a 28" x 34" folded and they anticipate a profit of \$16,000 from the map. The tribe is also sponsoring mining forums which will feature academic folks and KBIC mining folks. Work on the transfer station will begin this summer (it will be collecting household hazardous waste as well), and work on the Industrial Park will begin this fall. Ken reported that Todd Warner is out on medical leave right now and that others in the Natural Resources Dept are splitting up his normal duties. If anyone needs something that would have typically been taken care of by Todd, please contact Ken and he can put you in touch with the person who is covering that temporarily.

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine reported that the RAC has not been re-authorized, but the previously authorized funds have all been allocated. She explained that when contractors bid on and are successful in getting jobs on the forest, sometimes there is an invasive plant component in their contracts that they don't have the ability to complete. These components come back to the forest (and the contractor does not get paid for them), and there is the possibility that just that individual component could be put out on bid and another entity (for example, the UP RC&D or one of our partners) could bid on it. She will inform us if any of this work is being advertised.

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

**PROJECT UPDATES:**

**RRIP-IT-UP: Eradicate Garlic Mustard in Michigan's UP-** Darcy reported that this project which began this year is now underway and going well. Partners that are receiving funds from this grant are the CEMCD, Gogebic, Marquette, Alger, Houghton/Keweenaw, and Dickinson CD's. In Gogebic County, up to 25 acres will be sprayed with herbicide utilizing a combination of USFS funds and UP RC&D funds that have been made available to the district.

The spraying will be done next week. Handpulling of GM is also taking place at some private residences in the county. Two new infestations have been found in Keweenaw County on private land, and this is significant because prior to the start of the project we were not aware of any infestations in that county. About 14 infestations are being controlled in Houghton County by handpulling. There are approximately 100 acres of infestation in each of Marquette, Alger and Mackinac counties which are being handpulled for the most part (some spraying in Mackinac county).

**UP-wide Invasive Phragmites Proposed Project:** Darcy submitted the grant proposal for a project to control 400 acres of phragmites throughout the UP in 2013 and 2014. The request was for \$458,000 (most of which would be spent on herbicide treatments and follow-up mowing of phragmites), and the match pledged was approximately \$269,000. If funded, this project could make a huge impact on the invasive phragmites in the UP – with the worst infestations occurring along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Delta and Menominee counties. Darcy anticipates that we will be notified sometime in late July whether we were successful or not.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 pm**

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held at 10 am (Eastern Time) on Thursday, October 18, 2012 in Crystal Falls.