

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**L'anse Village Hall – November 3, 2011**

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

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Larson at 10:05 am. The agenda was approved with no changes (Harmon/Siira).

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

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Darcy presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of October 31, 2011 is \$510.64. Mbank was given meeting minutes and personal information for newly elected treasurer, Anton Pintar, quite some time ago, but to date they have not provided him with the required documents to allow him to sign checks. The bank is in the process of checking to see what the delay is. The report will be placed on file (Harmon/Marshall).

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**Update on Strategic Planning Meeting:** Darcy distributed a copy of the notes which summarized the discussion at the strategic planning meeting (attached). In light of the projected budget deficit of almost \$20,000 the decision was made to cut back the number of regional RC&D Council meetings that the council executive assistant will attend from 4 per year to 2 per year. Darcy pointed out that the Western Regional RC&D Council may still meet 4 times per year if so desired, but the agenda and minutes and other meeting administration would have to be undertaken by the Western Council board officers. A number of short-term and long-term goals were decided upon at the strategic planning session with an immediate focus on continuing the UP-wide invasive plant work that has been started under the RRIP-IT-UP project and will be continued under the new Garlic Mustard Eradication project. The UP RC&D Council will also be developing an "advertising package" which will then be used to promote the Council.

**Set Meeting Schedule for 2012:** Two meeting dates were chosen: April 19, 2012, tentatively in Bessemer, and October 18, 2012, location to be determined.

**Report on NC RC&D Conference/Outstanding Coordinator Award:** Bob Larson reported that he, Dave Andersen and Darcy Rutkowski attended this conference. Former coordinator, Marilyn Shy, was given permission by NRCS to attend so that she could receive the 2010 Award for Outstanding Coordinator for the region. Dave Andersen introduced Marilyn and made some very nice comments regarding what an excellent job she had done while working with our council. Much of the training provided at the conference dealt with increasing the capacity of councils and how councils are adapting to the loss of federal funding.

**REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** Bill Rolof reported that the county (under Bill Menge's direction) is working to establish ORV trails on the Baraga Plains.

**Baraga Conservation District:** Bob Larson reported that the district has basically shut down and they no longer have an administrator in their employment.

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Dave Harmon reported that the district completed their RRIP-IT-UP demonstration project at Norrie Park (glossy buckthorn control) and with increased public education they are seeing increased reports of invasive plants which they are making plans to address. Former administrator Mary Powell has retired and Marvin LaGrew has been selected to fill that position. The district is finishing work on the Ontonagon Watershed Road/Stream crossing inventory, and has facilitated another meeting with the stakeholders in the Narrows Creek Restoration Project. Their annual meeting will be held in the beginning of March 2012 with two director positions open. Staff continues to work on the annual tree sale to be held in early May.

**Gogebic County:** Dennis Jacobson reported that there has been discussion in the county about the ownership of the Bond Falls and Cisco Lakes dams. The county feels that the Ottawa and Hiawatha National Forests are not cutting enough timber. Barb VanAlstine explained that although their forest plans may call for more timber to be cut sustainably, they can only cut the amount that they get funding to cut, so it is usually an appropriation issue. The cross country ski trail in the Watersmeet area has been extended by 1 mile. The RAC committee has been dissolved. If more funding becomes available, they will form another committee.

**Houghton County & Conservation District:** Anton Pintar reported that one year ago a trails task force was formed in Houghton and Keweenaw counties with representation from all trail groups (both motorized and non-motorized). They are now going to receive assistance from the Rivers and Trails program of the National Park Service. They need to determine what entity will have authority over the trails (recreation auth, 501 c(3), etc.). Access is the major concern. He also reported that there are lots of partners in the Pilgrim River Watershed Project and they are working to get easements for access to the river.

**Iron County:** Bob Black notified the council that he could not attend because he has just started a new job as Iron County Chamber of Commerce Director.

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

**Keweenaw County:** Steve Siira reported that they are still working on the 20 year plan as reported last meeting. They have categorized all the potential projects (public safety, recreation, etc), and are prioritizing them.

**Ontonagon County:** John Pelkola reported that Kevin Manninen is no longer working in the county because his position was grant funded (through WUPPDR), so progress has come to a standstill. The Ontonagon Partnership Group is still in place and working. The Smurfit Stone papermill has almost entirely been disassembled. Maple Manor has been looked at as a potential call center and is for sale for \$18,000. There are lots of empty buildings in the county (3 schools, etc), and they are trying to develop a county-wide brownfield authority. Bergland Twp is trying to put in a sewer system (funded by Rural Dev).

**Ontonagon Conservation District: No Reps Present**

**MSUE: No Reps Present**

**Keweenaw Bay Indian Community:** Ken Marshall reported that the tribe has had to make a few layoffs due to federal funding cuts and they have made budget cuts in many departments. He has been appointed to the UP trails committee for technical support.

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine reported that they are trying to implement some stewardship contracting in the Ottawa. They are looking into working with the Wild Turkey Federation on some habitat projects and Kirtland Warbler work on the Baraga Plains.

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

**PROJECT UPDATES:**

**RRIP-IT-UP:** Darcy distributed information about the second annual UP-wide conference on invasive plants which is taking place next week in Marquette. Many of the partners in this project are now turning in final reports on their accomplishments and Darcy will summarize all the accomplishments in a final report. She is shooting to complete the project by December 31, 2011.

**CORRESPONDENCE: None**

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 pm**

**NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held at 10 am (Eastern Time) on Thursday, April 19, 2012 tentatively in Bessemer.**