

**MEETING MINUTES - WESTERN REGION RC&D COUNCIL**  
**Iron County Courthouse, Crystal Falls – October 4, 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; Bob Black-Iron Co; 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 (Harmon/Black).

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

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Anton Pintar presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the checking account as of September 30, 2012 is \$510.64. The report will be placed on file (Black/Harmon).

**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 Ontonagon County in the Western region. Both the ED and Bob Black attempted to contact John Pelkola, Ontonagon County appointee, but he did not respond to messages.

**Change Regional Council Structure?** Marshall reported that the UP RC&D Council members had begun a discussion of possibly reconfiguring the regional councils from 3 to 2. Members present had no issues with this possible new configuration, however they acknowledged that most of the change would occur in the Central region with those council members having to travel further in some cases. There was also some discussion as to how to divide the central councils between East and West with no obvious boundaries. The ED reminded the group that the Marquette and Alger CD's share a district conservationist and a forester so those two counties should probably stay together.

**Status of Michigan Assoc. of RC&D Councils:** Larson reported that the UP Council had some discussion about the status of the MARCDC and a motion was made and passed that the UP Council was in favor of the dissolution of the MARCDC which is not very functional at this point.

**REPORTS:**

**Baraga County:** No reps present

**Baraga Conservation District:** Bob Larson reported that the old jail in L'Anse is being torn down and that there is a lot of movement between building spaces by various entities in the downtown L'Anse area. He reported that the courthouse now only houses court functions.

**Gogebic Conservation District:** Dave Harmon reported that the district has a new executive administrative assistant, Patricia Kotcon who has been hired to help with office responsibilities and grants. The Black River Narrows project is now on hold until 2013 due to a lack of funds and some contractor issues. They are doing well with their invasive species grants and really appreciate the help they get from Ian Shackelford, botanist with the Ottawa. The county soil and erosion control office was busy with gravel pits and construction start-ups have been good. They did well on their tree sale, although they had some trouble with conifer die-offs. They would like to expand their offerings in 2013. Their finances are tight as usual this year. They have a MiCorps grant and stream monitoring will be done in October 2013. He has been attending the bio-fuel meetings in Ontonagon County, but may not be able to continue because of limited travel reimbursement. This venture will probably not be successful without private investment. Dave reported that he is not going to be on the board next year and this will be his last meeting. Everyone expressed their appreciation for his faithful meeting attendance and contributions to the Western Council.

**Gogebic County:** Dennis Jacobson reported that due to county board redistricting they lost two board seats, but that he is running unopposed. He is on the RAC committee and 15 proposals were received, and 10 were funded for \$87,000. The 5 projects that were rejected did not qualify because they didn't enhance the Ottawa.

**Houghton County & Conservation District:** Anton Pintar reported that the county approved their 5 year Master Plan. They have a task force which is trying to establish a recreational authority. A historical trail loop will be the initial project with the Keweenaw National Historic Park, MDNR, MDOT, and other trail groups working with the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. The conservation district recently took bids for remediation at Central 1 ½ and 2 and also completed their annual Beach Clean-up at Bete Gris. This year they did not find as much litter.

**Iron County:** Bob Black reported that the Iron Conservation District has a new administrator, but he has not met her yet. The Iron Chamber of Commerce is working with the Heritage Trail Group to connect all trails in the county. Bob proposed some new ideas to the county board of commissioners: A snowmobile drag race at the county airport, a sled dog race on county trails (possibly expanding to the NF trails in the future), and approval of a new ATV trail. He has been working with Senator Casperson to get more ATV use on state trunk lines and reciprocity of ATV licensing in WI and MI. He reported that Stambaugh Township wanted to charge \$5 to use the lake and put those funds towards control of milfoil, but found out this was illegal.

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

**Keweenaw County:** Steve Siira reported that they are still working on the Master Plan which will include mining (Kearsage Mine Tour). Don Keith suggested using the old radar base for a Veteran's Memorial park. The county is correcting errors on their land use map, and two new cell towers will be up and running soon, however, the proposed tower for Brockway Mt. is still up in the air (no pun intended!).

**Ontonagon County: No reps present**

**Ontonagon Conservation District: No Reps Present**

**MSUE: No Reps Present**

**Keweenaw Bay Indian Community:** Ken Marshall reported that KBIC has hired a new Natural Resources Director. Her name is Laurie Sherman and she has a MS in technical writing. The windmill feasibility study is finished and none of the sites tested were deemed feasible. They also did a solar feasibility and no sites were found to be feasible. He attended a conference where Consumers Energy reported that they are meeting their quota of 10% renewable energy sources through wind and hydro, but so far this is not really cost-effective. He reported that the National Association of RC & D Councils received a Homeland Security grant related to fire prevention in the Wildland Urban Interface. Baraga, Ontonagon, and Gogebic counties all have some townships that qualify as WUI lands. He is waiting on more details about this source of funding.

**USFS:** Barbara VanAlstine reported that there are two new cell towers in Kenton which are not online yet. They are on private property near the Ottawa NF lands. The OHV Connector Environmental Assessment (EA) is out for the third time, and the federal mineral EA is out for comments. In the Ottawa, 83% of the sub-surface rights are not owned by the USFS. Sometimes the rights are owned by the state of Michigan and some of them are privately owned. This is different from the western forests where most of the surface and sub-surface rights are federally owned. The Ottawa sold 6 stewardship sales last year. In this case the logger keeps the timber but does some work on the forest in exchange. For a regular timber sale, the funds go to the US treasury. On a stewardship sale, the value of the timber stays in the local forest but does not count toward the "25% county funds". Six additional stewardship sales are going on bid this year. They sold a record 51 million board feet of timber last year and are shooting for 60 million this year. The Gogebic and Ontonagon County RAC's met (authorized for 1 more year but new formula, less funding).

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

**PROJECT UPDATES:**

**UP-wide Invasive Phragmites Proposed Project:** The proposal for \$458,000 was successfully funded and work will begin in 2013. Most of the funds will be spent on herbicide treatments and follow-up mowing of phragmites. Darcy will have to complete NEPA documentation prior to the start of this project.

**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. This project will continue for one more year.

**Pulling Together Grant Proposal:** This new proposal if funded will provide grant 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 proposal would also provide funds for a weed crew for KISMA and a part-time coordinator for WePIC (both in the Western Region). The total grant request is \$51,466. We will not be notified until late November as to whether or not we were successful in getting this funding.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 pm**

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held at 10 am (Eastern Time) on Thursday, March 21, 2013 in Baraga County.