County Hazard Mitigation Plans Will Be Updated

On behalf of the six western counties of the Upper Peninsula, WUPPDR successfully authored two Federal Emergency Management Agency grants in the field of hazard mitigation in 2010. Now, WUPPDR staff is currently assisting Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw and Ontonagon Counties in the process of updating their respective county-wide hazard mitigation plans. In addition, under the Gogebic County update, a Flood Mitigation Plan will be developed for the City of Ironwood.

Hazard mitigation describes actions taken to prevent or reduce the long-term risks to life and property from natural, man-made and technological hazards. Pre-disaster mitigation actions are taken in advance of a hazard event and are essential to breaking the typical disaster cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. With careful selection, mitigation actions can be a long-term, cost effective means of reducing the risk of loss.

Committees in each county and the City of Ironwood have been formed to start the planning process, which includes public involvement, hazard profiling, risk and vulnerability assessments, identifying mitigation activities and developing a prioritized project list for each plan. Online surveys and community meetings will be occurring this spring and summer and the public is encouraged to participate. For more information please contact Meg Pachmayr (Gogebic County and the City of Ironwood Plan) or Lori Hauswirth (Baraga, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw and Ontonagon Counties Plans) at (906) 482-7205.

WUPPDR is currently working toward funding a pre-implementation due diligence phase which will secure U.P. Link host sites and further define operating procedures. As early as fall of 2011, WUPPDR will look to EDA to fund implementation of the $1.6 million system. Following the initial investment, the Network promises to be self-sustaining and will hopefully serve as a model of best practice for connected video conferencing systems across the nation.

Visit www.linkupmichigan.com for more information or to download the Study.
The Internet has the potential to become a vital asset for many rural businesses. For example, it can assist them to reach customers that were previously inaccessible due to geographic or resource restrictions. In addition, a carefully planned web presence can enable businesses to better serve their existing customers. Unfortunately, in too many cases a lack of awareness, knowledge and expertise causes smaller rural-based businesses to miss out on the opportunities the Internet can present.

To help remedy this problem, WUPPDR organized two workshops entitled “Improving your Business Through the Internet” for Baraga and Ontonagon County businesses. The workshops were held at the Baraga Lakeside Inn for Baraga County businesses on February 15 and 22. They were then repeated for Ontonagon County businesses on February 16 at the Ewen-Trouse Creek High School and February 17 at the Ontonagon High School. A total of 42 businesses and organizations, 25 were from Ontonagon and 17 from Baraga, participated in the workshops delivered by Monte Consulting of Houghton. Topics covered in the first session included understanding how buyer behavior is changing, the myths versus realities of Internet-based business, overcoming technical challenges and the importance of proper website design. The second session addressed issues such as using analytical tools including Google Analytics to increase your website’s effectiveness, search engine optimization (SEO), utilizing shopping carts and PayPal, and integrating social media into your web strategy.

For several weeks following the workshops, Kevin Manninen from WUPPDR and Laura Burke from Burke Design in Ontonagon will be meeting individually with the participants to coach them on their Internet strategies, to lend technical assistance wherever possible, and to guide them on where to find additional help and resources.

The workshops were funded through a Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) from the U.S.D.A. For more information contact Kevin Manninen at kmanninen@wuppdr.org or by phone at (906) 370-4438.

New Staff: Laura Nakkula Joins the WUPPDR Team

WUPPDR is pleased to welcome Laura Nakkula as a Housing Specialist to our Housing Program Team. Laura, originally from Chicago, comes to WUPPDR with a wealth of experience working with at-risk populations and rural communities. Laura graduated from St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin with a B.A. in Elementary Education. Laura moved to the Copper Country in 2001 and has worked for a number of human service agencies in the region. Laura will be working with MSADA’s Housing Choice Voicher Program (HCV) and Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP) maintaining day-to-day operations and processing paperwork. These programs provide rental assistance in the form of sub-leases to low-income households. WUPPDR serves as the contract housing agent for Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon Counties in our region. Laura lives with her husband and son in Calumet and enjoys 4-wheeling, hunting, camping, fishing, and reading. Laura can be reached at (906) 482-7205, ext. 312 or at lnakkula@wuppdr.org.

Welcome to WUPPDR Laura!

WUPPDR staff continues to expand on the methods we use to reach out, promote, and involve the citizenry of the Western Upper Peninsula in our work for the region. In 2009, the agency redesigned its website in Word Press, a content management system (CMS), allowing staff to update information daily and host a newsfeed to keep website visitors up-to-date on available funding opportunities, projects impacting the region, and other planning activities. In 2010, WUPPDR began using Twitter to let followers know upcoming meetings, events, and new information posted to the website. Just recently WUPPDR began using Facebook as an additional tool for communication helping us to build a stronger social connection to the citizens we work with.

Overall, Facebook offers a number of unique advantages in helping local governments do a better job of listening to constituents. Worldwide the social networking site has more than 500,000,000 users. Social media is not a replacement for traditional media and methods of communication. However, as information (including, and perhaps especially government information) begins to be shared and used in an infinite variety of ways online, municipal governments should watch how communication, too, is evolving. Pay attention to the new ways in which citizens are connecting – with each other, and with their governments.

Houghton County:

Homebuyer Purchase Rehabilitation Program

The Homebuyer Purchase Rehabilitation Program enables income eligible families to become successful home owners with down payment assistance and rehabilitation funding. Through a targeted Michigan State Housing Development Authority to Houghton County, existing homes in the City of Houghton, City of Hancock, Huron, town and Quincy Location, will be eligible for grant assistance. Up to $20,000 is available for rehab and up to $10,000 in down payment assistance, per project. Homebuyers must be between 40-80% of the area median income based on family size and have less than $10,000 in liquid assets. Rehabilitation repairs can include: repair or replace heating system; electrical wiring; repair or replace roof; installation and/or repair sanitary water and disposal systems together with related plumbing and fixtures; repair or replace deteriorated siding, porches, etc; alteration to interior or exterior to provide handicap accessibility; energy conservation measures such as insulation; and energy efficient windows.

For more information on this program contact Lori Hauswirth at (906) 482-7205, extension 315 or at lhauswirth@wuppdr.org.

WUPPDR Commission Meeting Schedule

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