Katie Keller, Planner, resumed full-time employment with WUPPDR in October. She spent her summer as a Park Ranger at Isle Royale National Park, as well as working part-time for WUPPDR on Byways projects. Upon her return, Katie helped develop and submit the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) application for 2015, as well as assisting with the completion of projects for RPI 2014. Welcome back, Katie!

WUPPDR applied for and successfully received funding from the Michigan Department of Transportation to fund three separate projects for the region's Byways in 2014. The first, the Copper Country Geo-Trail, is a 17-site geocaching adventure that introduces residents and visitors to the sites the Copper Country Trail National Byway (CCTNB) has to offer. With an official launch in 2015, geocachers will have the opportunity to obtain "passports" from local visitor centers that they will fill out with code words found in the respective hidden geocaches throughout Houghton and Keweenaw counties. If enough geocaches are found, geocachers will be eligible for a special edition CCTNB lapel pin (while supplies last).

To help visitors further discover the history behind the Iron County Heritage Trail's (ICHT) beauty, a suite of brochures about the natural and cultural resources of Iron County has been developed. Visitors are able to use them to learn more about the area and further connect to sites that are a part of the ICHT. In addition, the ICHT website has been updated to include comprehensive information, a mobile-friendly design, and an attractive layout that showcases Iron County's best attractions. The new brochures and website can be found at: http://www.ironheritage.org.

On December 10, 2014, the Western U.P. Regional Prosperity Collaborative, facilitated by WUPPDR, adopted the 2015-2019 Western U.P. Regional Prosperity Plan. The plan is the product of nearly a year’s work to encourage better communication and regional collaboration between organizations in economic and workforce development, education, transportation, and other areas.

The Regional Prosperity Plan proposes six priority projects for regional progress:
1. Regional Alliance of Chambers of Commerce
2. Economic Development Service Delivery
3. Career and Technical Education/Asset Mapping
4. Connect Michigan Technology Action Plans
5. State Trunkline Winter Road Maintenance Feasibility Study
6. Regional Housing Plan

State funding was requested to implement these projects beginning in 2015. More information about the projects is available in the plan document at http://www.wuppdr.org/rpi/documents.

The plan’s progress will be monitored through a performance dashboard that includes annual goals. The dashboard is available at http://www.wuppdr.org/rpi/dashboard.
In an effort to effectively communicate the impact/intentions/ideas of the Regional Prosperity Initiative for the Western Upper Peninsula, the following agencies: WUPPDR, Western U.P. Michigan Works!, Northern Initiatives, MTEC SmartZone, Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA), Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), put together the above handout (see also page 3) for the six Boards of Commissioners meetings in Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw and Ontonagon Counties.


**WUPPDR Commission Meeting Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 19</td>
<td>Full Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>March 16</td>
<td>Full Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>Full Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 17</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
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<td>September 21</td>
<td>Annual Meeting-Iron County</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 21</td>
<td>Full Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SBDC**
- Business plan development
- Financial management
- Business workshops
- Raising capital
- Export strategy
- Technology commercialization

**MTEC SmartZone**
- Business planning & consulting
- Office and lab space
- Start-up training programs
- Networking
- Funding

**KEDA**
- Retain and expand regional companies through outreach and support services
- Provide assistance to companies looking to locate in the region
- Assist regional companies with alternative financing options
- Identify opportunities to improve infrastructure to support business
- Work with communities to plan and implement improvements to support growth and development
- Work collaboratively with regional, state, and federal partners and service providers
- Provide leadership and support to initiatives designed to advance the region’s economy
- Provide information on issues and activities relevant to our region’s development

**PTAC**
- Assist businesses in locating, obtaining, and performing on local, state, and federal government contracts
- Help businesses determine their suitability for government contracting
- Assistance securing necessary registrations for government contracting
- Perform market research of the government market
- Offer bid matching service
- Locate specifications, standards and drawings for government opportunities
- Provide training and networking opportunities
- Offer one-on-one counseling

**MI WORKS**
- Utilizes a demand-driven workforce development system that identifies the employer as the primary customer
- Job seeker services are based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of each unique individual
- Focus is on matching talent with the right skills and credentials to employers at the right time

**Northern Initiatives**
- Capital to expand and launch businesses
- Market expansion guidance
- Counseling for financial and operational aspects of business
- Online marketing services
- e-Commerce solutions
- Training
- Process support for manufacturers
- Profitability improvement programs

**WUPPDR**
- Economic development administration planning
- GIS/geographic services
- Hazardous mitigation planning
- Economic planning
- Housing services
- Regional planning
- Transportation planning
- Information services

All meetings are held either by video conferencing or at Thun’s Bar & Grill in Bruce Crossing, MI, except the September Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee meet at 4:00 PM (EST) and the Full Commission meet at 5:00 PM (EST).

Minutes & records are available for inspection at the WUPPDR office.