

**HOUGHTON KEWEENAW
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
NATURAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT
&
LONG RANGE PLAN**

**PREPARED AND ADOPTED BY:
HOUGHTON KEWEENAW
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

October 30, 2001

DISTRICT PERSONNEL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Heath, Chairman
Thomas Tervo, Vice-Chairman
Mark Weber, Secretary
Gary Palosaari, Treasurer
Marsha Klein, Director

DISTRICT STAFF

Tami A. Anderson, Executive Director
James Sweeting, CRMI Resource Prof.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Bruce Peterson, District Conservationist
Barry Bubolz, Soil Conservationist

VISION

The residents/landowners of Houghton and Keweenaw counties will understand and appreciate our reliance on the area's natural resources and manage them wisely both individually and collectively.

MISSION STATEMENT

The District will advise and assist the people of Houghton and Keweenaw counties to wisely manage and use our natural resources through education, information, and technical assistance.

HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT

The Houghton Soil & Water Conservation District was organized in 1951 by agricultural leaders and other landowners of Houghton County who were concerned with soil and water problems in the county. It was determined at that time that these soil and water problems mainly revolved around erosion, drainage, farm ponds, reforestation, windbreaks, and weed control on farmland. Sometime between 1964-68, Keweenaw County was added to the district.

Over the past 50 years, the number of farms in these two counties has decreased significantly and conservation district programs have changed accordingly. The emphasis is no longer just on soil and water problems relating to agriculture, but also on issues and problems relating to all natural resources – soil, water, air, plants, and animals. Because of our expanded programs, the district now serves all landowners and residents of Houghton and Keweenaw counties.

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Houghton County is located on the Keweenaw Peninsula in the western part of Upper Peninsula of Michigan bordering Lake Superior. It has an area of 667,904 acres, or about 1,044 square miles. The population of Houghton County is approximately 50,000. The city of Houghton is the county seat and is approximately 480 miles north of Lansing. About 82 percent of Houghton County is forested. Only about 7 percent is classified as farmland. A state university, retail trade, forestry & wood products, as well as the service industry are the major employers.

The four seasons of the year generate drastic changes in temperature. The average summer temperature ranges from a high of 78 degrees to a low of 62 degrees, and the average winter temperature varies from a high of 20 degrees to a low of -10 degrees. The annual average snowfall is 210 inches.

Approximately 18,722 acres, or 3 percent of the land area in Houghton County, is used for the production of agricultural products. Of this acreage, about 10,000 acres is classified as cropland and the remainder is used either as permanent pasture or for specialty crops. The predominate form of agriculture in Houghton county is dairy farming, although there are some small livestock operations. The county also has numerous strawberry and raspberry growers. Only a few potato farms remain.

Houghton County has 139 inland lakes with a surface area of about 20,899 acres. The three largest lakes are Otter, Portage, and Prickett Lakes. The soil conditions in the survey area are conducive to the construction of ponds, and over 350 have been constructed. The county also has 50 miles of Lake Superior shoreline.

The table below contains land area data (source – 1996 MDA County Agricultural Statistics)

Houghton County Land Area Data

AREA	ACRES
Land Area	667,904
Water Area	19,338
Total Area	647,503
State Owned Land	
Federally Owned Land (?)	

Keweenaw County is located in the extreme northwestern region of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Keweenaw County is itself considered a peninsula. The county is bounded by Lake Superior on the north, west and east and Houghton County on the south. Keweenaw County also includes one of the few biospheres in the world, Isle Royale, an island owned by the National Park Service. The island sits 50 miles northwest of the Keweenaw Peninsula in Lake Superior.

Eagle River, the county seat, is approximately 515 miles north of Lansing. The population is 2,301 (2000 census data). Retail trade and the service industry are the major employers.

Woodland is the dominant land use. About 60 percent of the county is forested, 0 percent is in cropland and pasture, 9 percent in water and 31 percent is in other land use. Approximately 1 percent of the county is owned by the state and 35 percent is owned by the National Park Service.

The four seasons of the year generate drastic changes in temperature in Keweenaw County as well. Bordered by Lake Superior, a micro-climate is created. The area is heavily affected by the temperature variances of Lake Superior creating heavier snowfall patterns and milder temperatures as compared to Houghton County just to its south.

The table below contains land area data (source - 1992 SCS National Resources Inventory):

Keweenaw County Land Area Data

AREA	ACRES
Land Area	362,705
Water Area	16,674
Total Area	379,379
State Owned Land	3,077
Federally Owned Land (National Park Service)	133,786

**NATURAL RESOURCE CONCERNS
STAKEHOLDER SURVEY
May 2001**

(HKCD Resource Assessment Survey Results – A Summary of Findings attachment enclosed)

The Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District conducted a survey of stakeholders to help identify and prioritize natural resource concerns in the two counties. The stakeholders who participated in the survey included:

Copper Country Trout Unlimited
Keweenaw Land Trust
Western U.P. Center for Science Education, MTU
Torch Lake Project Advisory committee
MI Audubon Society
Gratiot Lake Conservancy
Houghton Keweenaw Township Supervisors
Houghton & Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners
Michigan State University Extension Service Advisory Council
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Houghton and Keweenaw County landowners and land users

Using information from this survey, from the district work plan, from the CRMI work plan, and from data available in the office, district directors and staff discussed and prioritized the natural resource concerns of the county, and set goals to address these concerns. Following is the list of goals that was developed by the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District (in order from highest priority to lowest priority):

- 1) Increase public awareness of district programs and services
- 2) Serve as a clearinghouse for landowner inquiries (GATEWAY requirements)
- 3) Promote wise land use management by providing education, information, and technical assistance
- 4) Work to protect and manage the water resources in and around Houghton and Keweenaw counties
- 5) Expand district tree sale
- 6) Promote agricultural practices in both counties
- 7) Support and promote efforts to maintain access to public lands in Houghton and Keweenaw counties
- 8) Support and promote sound waste management practices in the district
- 9) Develop a stronger more comprehensive organizational structure with clear policies and procedures

**HOUGHTON KEWEENAW CONSERVATION DISTRICT
LONG RANGE PLAN
2001-2006**

The following plan outlines the long-range goals and objectives of the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District, and targets the concerns that were identified by our Resource Assessment completed in October 2001:

GOAL - Increase public awareness of district programs and services

1. Continue to publish the district newsletter, *The Conservation Quarterly*
2. Provide news articles to local newspapers and radio stations on current district programs and projects
3. Continue to maintain and update the District web site *hkconserve.com*
4. Place Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District signs on major highways entering the counties
5. Continue communicating/collaborating with other conservation organizations on potential projects and issues in the district
6. Offer scholarships to high school students participating in special conservation related educational programs in the area (such as the Biennial Lake Superior Youth Symposium)
7. Promote the Envirothon and encourage high schools in the county to participate
8. Assist in advertising and supporting informational meetings on current natural resource issues
9. Assist in sponsoring and volunteering at the U.P. Conservation District booth at the U.P. State Fair
10. Participate in the local Home Show with a District booth whenever financially feasible
11. Continue sponsoring a Conservation District booth at the Houghton County Fair
12. Support Michigan Association of Conservation Districts
13. Support the National Association of Conservation Districts
14. Provide representation (board or staff member) at a minimum of half of all county commissioners meetings (alternating counties each month)
15. Provide representation (board or staff member) at a conservation related events and meetings in the district
16. Support the efforts of other conservation related agencies whose mission and activities are in keeping with the district's

GOAL – Serve as a clearinghouse for landowner inquiries (GATEWAY requirements)

1. Make referrals to other agencies and private sector
2. Maintain and expand our resource library

GOAL – Promote wise land use management by providing education, information, and technical assistance

1. Through the Cooperative Resource Management Initiative (CRMI), provide technical assistance to landowners on forestry and wildlife management

2. Promote use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for timber harvesting and roads
3. Work to maintain access to public lands for recreation and timber harvesting when appropriate
 - a) Support legislation to maintain such access
 - b) Keep informed of plans and projects which impact access
4. Promote land use practices and policies to minimize land fragmentation

GOAL – Work to protect and manage the water resources in and around Houghton and Keweenaw counties

1. Continue efforts to secure grant funds to hire a watershed project manager for the Otter and Traprock River watersheds
2. Respond, when necessary, to applications for permits through the MDEQ that affect shorelines, wetlands, water quality, adjacent property, and landowners' rights
3. Support efforts to maintain public access to lakes and streams
4. Work with Natural Resources Conservation Service to increase participation in the Wetland Reserve Program
5. Support the other local organizations/agencies in obtaining grants and other funding for cleanup, restoration, and preservation of rivers, streams, and lakes
6. Actively oppose any and all attempts to divert water from the Great Lakes Basin.
7. Actively oppose any attempts to drill under or near any of the Great Lakes for the purpose of exploration for or the extraction of petroleum or natural gas products.

GOAL – Expand the District's annual tree sale

1. Expand the mailing list for order blanks
2. Encourage customers to access tree sale information and order blank via the web site
3. Offer more native trees and shrubs
4. Offer new items relating to forestry and wildlife
5. Promote windbreak plantings to protect fields and farmsteads from wind erosion

GOAL – Assist in efforts to promote agriculture in Houghton and Keweenaw counties

1. Keep informed on current issues affecting agriculture, such as the Bovine TB issue in Michigan
2. Cooperate with other agencies to promote informational workshops
3. Provide information and technical support to local farmers through NRCS Farm bill programs
4. Provide information and support to the small scale grower such as organic growers and/or fruit producers

GOAL – Support and promote efforts to maintain access to public lands in Houghton and Keweenaw counties

1. Provide support and assistance to all land-use planning groups in the district
2. Assist counties in seeking funding to purchase lands for public access

GOAL – Support and promote waste management practices in the district

1. Provide the public with information on waste management facilities available in the district for disposal of a variety of wastes
2. Coordinate efforts with private companies, the DNR, county and local municipalities to develop a more centralized means of collecting and disposing of various waste materials

GOAL – The District board of directors will develop a stronger more comprehensive organizational structure

1. District board of directors and staff will become better informed of the policies and laws governing conservation districts
 - a. Directors will review as a group the Director’s handbook
 - b.
2. The District board of directors and staff will develop a set of policies and procedures specific to the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District
 - a. The district board and staff will put these policies and procedures in writing in a HKCD handbook
 - b.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS:

- Preserving native animal and plant species and the invasion of non-native plant and animal species in the counties
- Gradual decline of young forests (such as aspen) as a component of our forest landscape
- The loss of grassland areas due to decreasing agriculture and the resulting loss of bird species diversity

The above HKCD Natural Resource Assessment and Long Range Plan was reviewed and approved by the full board of directors at their November 14, 2001 monthly board meeting.

Approved by: David Heath, Board Chairman

Date

Prepared by: Tami A. Anderson, Ex. Director

Date