Ottawa Resource Advisory Committee

PUBLIC MEETING

October 6, 2026 | 08:40 AM – 13:30 PM (CT)

MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT

Unabridged[1]

Each SRS RAC is established pursuant to the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 as amended, 16 U.S.C. sec. 7125, hereafter referred to as the SRS RAC Act as amended; codified in Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334)., and in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, as amended, 5 U.S.C. 10.

In accordance with the established provisions, the Ottawa Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) convened for this public meeting on 10/6/2026, 8:40 AM CT. The meeting was held at the Watersmeet Ranger District office at E23979 US-2 E, Watersmeet, MI 49969, and was open to the public in person or to join virtually via Microsoft Teams (Meeting ID: 248 770 518 250 58, Passcode: 4XT35Bs9) and phone (202- 650-0123, phone conference ID 892 777 239).

A *Federal Register* notice was published on September 9, 2026, providing general information and public participation details for the meeting.

Committee website: www.fs.usda.gov/r09/ottawa/working-with-us/committees

General inquiries: Ian Shackleford, RAC Coordinator, ian.shackleford@usda.gov, 906-285-6911.

[1] This version of the meeting minutes has additional content not included with Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) records.

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS 2
MEETING AGENDA 2
MEETING ATTENDENCE 3
PUBLIC COMMENTS 4
MEETING MINUTES 5
ADJOURNMENT 10
CERTIFICATION 10

ACRONYMS

- **AIS –** Aquatic Invasive Species
- **CCROA –** Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association
- **DFO** – Designated Federal Officer
- **ISCCW** – Invasive Species Control Coalition of Watersmeet
- **RAC** – Resource Advisory Committee
- **USDA** – United States Department of Agriculture

MEETING AGENDA

Item #	Topic
1.	Introduction & roll call.
2.	Review status of the 13 RAC projects approved in 2025.
3.	Presentations by applicants.
4.	Public Comments
5.	Discuss project proposals as a whole group.
6.	Divide into three groups, if desired.
7.	Full RAC discission. Deliberation/Voting on Proposed Recommendations.
8.	Adjourn

MEETING ATTENDENCE

A quorum must be present to constitute an official meeting of the committee.

References: Charter, **5 USC Ch. 10: FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES, 16 U.S. Code § 7125 - Resource advisory committees.**

Committee Members: Complete Log (addendum 1)

Name	Category/Represented Industry	Attendance	Attendance Type
Evelyn Ravindran	A1. Non-timber forest product harvester groups	Present	Virtual
Daniel J. Gardner	A2. Developed outdoor recreation.	Present	In-person
Sarah Topp	A3. Recreational fishing interests	Present	In-person
Amber L. Marchel	A4. Commercial timber industry.	Absent	
Donald Helsel	A5. Non-industrial private forest landowner.	Present	In-person
Emily M. Clegg	B1. Nationally recognized environmental organizations	Present	Virtual
Theresa Pitts	B2. Regionally or locally recognized environmental organizations.	Present	Virtual
Connie Julien	B3. dispersed recreational activities	Present	In-person
Lindsay Hiltunen	B4. Archaeological and historical interests.	Present	Virtual
Pete Heidemann	B5. nationally or regionally recognized wildlife or hunting organizations.	Absent	
Greg Markkanen	C1. State elected office.	Present	In-person
Dan Siirila	C2. County or local elected office.	Absent	
Alina J. Shively	C3. American Indian tribe.	Present	In-person
Marlene Broemer	C4. Area school officials or teachers.	Present	In-person
Rachael A. Guth	C5. Affected public-at-large.	Present	In-person

USDA Staff

Name	Position/Title	Attendance	Attendance Type
Trevor Hahka	Interim Forest Supervisor and Ottawa RAC Designated Federal Officer	Present	In-person
Ross Mielke	Interim South Zone District Ranger	Present	In-person
Amber Tembreull	North Zone District Ranger	Present	In-person
Ian Shackleford	RAC Coordinator and Botanist	Present	In-person
Emily Braker	Note Taker and Forest Technician	Present	In-person

General Audience

Name	Position/Title
Travis Kilpela	Submitted Proposal 25
Kyle Kilpela	Family of Travis Kilpela
Lars Kilpela	Family of Travis Kilpela
Paul Kilpela	Family of Travis Kilpela
Kevin Magee	AIS Manager, Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association
Rick Redmond	President, Invasive Species Control Coalition of Watersmeet
Eugene Clark	President, Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association
Debra Kessler	Land O'Lakes Fish & Game Club
Steve Chandler	Land O'Lakes Fish & Game Club
Norm Nass	Land O' Lakes Fish & Game Club
Michelle Kanipes	Secretary, Invasive Species Control Coalition of Watersmeet
Jon Snow	Student, Northern Michigan University
Jen Ricker-Feak	Manager, Iron Baraga Conservation District and Western Peninsula Invasives Coalition
Max Ramsay	Manager, Gogebic Conservation District

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments received.

MEETING MINUTES

Welcome and Opening Remarks

RAC Chair Connie Julien called the meeting to order.

Ian Shackleford provided updates of the SRS program activities and new SRS Title II funding of $121,653.35. Congress reauthorized the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Act and the President signed in December 2025. We now have $121,653.35 of new SRS Title II funding available. The Ottawa NF invited project proposals in June 2026. They were due to Ian 9/4/2026. The purpose of this meeting was to review nine project proposals and make recommendations on how to use the Secure Rural Schools Title II funding, received from Fiscal Year 2025. All RAC members received the proposals on September 10.

Ross Mielke the local wildlife biologist and Interim District Ranger shared important housekeeping information.

Connie Julien initiated rollcall.

Trevor Hahka the interim forest supervisor and Ottawa RAC Designated Federal Officer (DFO) welcomed everyone and thanked them for their service.

Updates were given regarding the thirteen projects recommended for funding at the previous RAC meeting on 1/22/2025 and approved by the DFO on 2/18/2025.

Project 1. Lac Vieux Desert Water Quality and Wildlife Enhancement Project. Awarded $40,000. Project was proposed by the Lac Vieux Desert Lake Association but is being implemented through an agreement with Many Waters LLC (25-PA-11090700-013). $17,976.56 spent. $22,023.44 remains. On 10/5/26 Barb Gajewski emailed Ian, “For 2026, we spent 9 days (~66 hours) hand removing EWM from the Michigan side of Lac Vieux Desert. Most efforts took place in Rice Bay along the north shore (USFS land and tribal), regions around the islands, and we did find a new colony along the west shore out from North Shore Campground. I don't have the plant tallies added up.” Plans for the experimental wild rice exclusion fences are being developed.

Project 2. Gete Miinikaanan. Agreement 26-PA-11090700-003 with Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians. Awarded $110,197. $12,289.17 spent. $97,907.83 remains. On 10/4/26 Brian Hockaday wrote, “So far we have planted 1,790 plant starts, cultivated at Toumey over the season, as well as 33 seed plots sown, at 16 stands. The latter are small areas (10ft diameter) surface sown near to plug plantings to see if it would make more sense to simply go that route. These represent 9 target species. We still have some planting to do yet, so those numbers will get a bit of a bump by end of season.” Several pictures shared.

Project 4. ISCCW & USFS Partnership for Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention. Awarded $10,000. Agreement 25-DG-11090700-007 with the Invasive Species Control Coalition of Watersmeet. A photo of the new trailered pressure washer was shared. Funding is 100% spent. Number of people contacted, boats inspected, and boats washed in 2026 will be ready soon.

Project 5. Twin Pines Canoe/Kayak Landing. Awarded $200,000. Agreement 25-CS-11090700-017 with Ontonagon Valley Sportsmans Club. No invoices yet. Tree removal in the road corridor was performed and completed over the past winter. Contractor is working on design. Austin Walworth reported, “On the ground progress this year was delayed due to wetland delineation and EGLE permitting. Looking to begin construction end of next June if conditions are favorable.”

Project 6. Black River Cleanup. Awarded $32,713. Agreement 25-PA-11090700-010 with the Gogebic Conservation District. $31,713 spent. Just $1,440.74 remains. Five junk vehicles removed in September 2026: three at Poleface Creek (plus two partial vehicles) and two near Kirby Creek on the east side of the Black River. They also installed boulders at two locations attempting to block motor vehicles from fording across the Black River. The Forest Service assisted the Conservation District with seeding and planting trees on 9/24/2026. Photos shared. Max Ramsay will use remaining funds to work on the two collapsed bridges across Poleface Creek.

Project 8. Cisco Chain of Lakes Invasive Species Control Project. Awarded $33,200. Agreement 25-PA-11090700-008 with the Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association. All RAC funds used in 2025 & 2026. $19,553.96 remaining the agreement will be invoiced soon. Many Waters LLC removed small locations of Eurasian watermilfoil throughout the Cisco Chain. Barb Gajewski emailed Ian and highlighted spots off National Forest land, including infestations in Big Africa Lake, Record Lake, and Indian Lake.

Project 9. Courtney Lake Boat Ramp and Access Improvement. Awarded $80,000. The Ottawa NF awarded contract # 12445526F0105 to M Jolma, Inc. for $87,013, to complete the work. The Forest Service augmented the RAC funding. Work is expected to occur in 2027.

Project 10. Courtney Lake Toilet Buildings Replacement. Awarded $68,167. Contract # 12445526P0064 awarded on 9/29/26, also to M Jolma, Inc. Work is expected to occur in 2027.

Project 12. Ontonagon County Aquatic Invasives Species Education. Awarded $9,300. Agreement 25-PA-11090700-014 with Ontonagon Conservation District. All $9,300 remains; no invoices yet. Anne Kretschmann from the Ontonagon Conservation District emailed Ian a report to share. “Worked towards completing the UPPCO grant (potential local match). Technician completed an inventory of signage at 99 boat and canoe landings and replaced signage as needed. She took comprehensive photos of each and tied them to a coordinate in an inventory system for future reference. The boat wash unit was used as a 'float' in the Bruce Crossing 4th of July parade and won 3rd place!”

Project 14. Black River Recreation Area Trails Revitalization Project Scope 1: Bear Track Trails. Awarded $55,000. No signed agreement with the Sisu Dirt Crew yet. We are still working on project details and had a field meeting on 9/21/2026. This winter we will continue work to prepare an agreement, evaluate the proposal, and submit to the District Ranger for a decision.

Project 15. Collaborating to Create a More Resilient North Country Trail and Ottawa National Forest. Awarded $73,444. Agreement 25-CS-11090700-018 with Superior Watershed Partnership (SWP). No invoices yet. Tyler Penrod emailed Ian results from work in 2026, including a map and photos. Tyler wrote, “During seven weeks of work in the Ottawa National Forest during the 2026 field season, the GLCC crew completed trail maintenance and limited reroute work across segments of the North Country National Scenic Trail, including the entire McCormick Wilderness segment. Work included using chainsaws to clear fallen trees, brushcutters to remove tall grass and shrubs encroaching on the trail tread and corridor, and completing limited trail reroutes in coordination with North Country Trail and Ottawa National Forest recreation staff. The crew has completed 33 miles of trail work during the 2026 field season, with several additional miles expected to be completed by the end of this week.”

Project 18. Crooked Lake Eurasian Watermilfoil Control. Awarded $48,000. Proposed by Crooked Lake Homeowners. Agreement 25-PA-11090700-012 with Many Waters LLC. $26,637.37 spent. $21,362.63 remains. 13 days of work in June and July 2026, including hand-pulling and scuba diving.

Project 20. Trailhead Boot Brush Stations. Awarded $15,250. Agreement 25-PA-11090700-009 with the Ontonagon Conservation District. All $15,250 remains; no invoices yet. Anne Kretschmann from the Ontonagon Conservation District emailed Ian a report to share. Technician completed an inventory of ~25 boot brush locations and took comprehensive photos of each trail boot brush station that she was able to find. She took notes on their condition and what kind of repair is needed. As time permits this fall, she will complete as many repairs as possible.

Addressing Public Comments

No public comments received.

Deliberations/Voting

Nine new project proposals were presented. RAC members were given project proposals on September 10, prior to the meeting to review.

Project 25. Hunter Access Improvments presented by Travis Kilpela.

- Travis Kilpela requests $23,220 to repair Forest Roads 737 and 737C.
- Committee members did not recommend this project.
- Project was not funded.

Project 21. DNA Based Identification of Heritage Apple Trees presented by Jon Snow.

- Jon Snow requests $8,669 to sample old apple trees and identify variety through DNA testing
- Helsel Motion, Topp 2nd, none abstained, none recused.
- Project was funded for $8,669.00

Project 22. O Kun De Kun Trail Accessibility Improvement.

- No one was available to present a proposal. The RAC reviewed the written proposal.
- The Ontonagon Conservation District requests $15,625 to improve the O Kun De Kun Trail.
- Helsel Motion, Topp 2nd, none abstained, none recused.
- Project was funded for $15,625.

Project 23. UPPCO Camp Lease Cabin Removal presented by Max Ramsay.

- The Gogebic Conservation District requests $30,300 to remove an abandoned cabin in Gogebic County.
- Committee members did not recommend this project.
- Project was not funded.

Project 24. ISCCW Enhanced boat washing unit and boat washers/educators Project presented by Michelle Kanipes and Rick Redmond.

- The Invasive Species Control Coalition of Watersmeet requests $32,200 for another trailered pressure washer.
- Helsel Motion, Topp 2nd, none abstained, none recused.
- Project was funded for $32,200.

Project 26. Regional Native Milfoil Weevil Rearing & Biological Control Capacity Program presented by Dr. Lara Jacobs.

- The Lac Vieux Desert Bank of Lake Superior Chippewa Natural Resources Department requests $20,651 to raise milfoil weevils for Eurasian watermilfoil control.
- Helsel Motion, Topp 2nd, none abstained, none recused.
- Project was funded for $20,651.

Project 27. IBCD & WePIC: Four County Invasives-Manual Removal & Control of Purple Loosestrife presented by Jennifer Ricker Feak.

- The Iron Baraga Conservation District requests $15,000 to control purple loosestrife using manual methods.
- Helsel Motion, Topp 2nd, none abstained, none recused.
- Project was funded for $15,000.

Project 28. Cisco Chain of Lakes Invasive Species Control Project (2026-2027) presented by Kevin Magee and Eugene Clark.

- The Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association requests $25,000 to control Eurasian watermilfoil.
- Committee members did not recommend this project.
- Project was not funded.

Project 29. Agonikak National Recreation Trail Maintenance, 2026/2027 presented by Norman Nass.

- The Land O'Lakes Fish & Game Club requests $29,557 to work on the Agonikak Trail.
- Helsel Motion, Topp 2nd, none abstained, none recused.
- Project was funded for $29,508.

Public Comments

The agenda included 15 minutes for public comments, but none were offered.

Discuss project proposals as a whole group.

RAC members discussed their views on each project.

The open discussion included the following:

- Project #21 would depend on strong consultation with the Ottawa heritage staff, as increasing visitation to some historic sites (in which old apple trees reside) is discouraged due to resource protection. Coordination with Ottawa staff would also need to be inherent with any education or preservation projects, such as stem collection for grafting. RAC noted few proposals in Ontonagon County.
- ADA compliance is not a goal of project #22, however improved trail conditions do increase the ability for a wider audience to enjoy the trail. Recommendation to apply for funds from

Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund to assist in longer term maintenance. RAC noted few proposals in Ontonagon County.

- The accomplishment proposed in project #23 seems expensive and incomplete relative to the number of cabins that would remain on the landscape. Recommend seeking Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund dollars.
- Project #24 seemed to be a continuation of Project #4 from 2025 to purchase another much-needed washer and support staff and more public education. The funding appears to have had measurable, continuing benefits.
- The RAC discussed Project #25 and what segment would be improved. Questions arose on the benefit to the public behind this locked road to private holdings, only open to OHVs.
- Projects #26, #27, and #29 had support from every committee member. #26 is a new approach to the ongoing problem of Eurasian watermilfoil. Project #27 includes purple loosestrife control in Ontonagon County. #29 cited ecological and safety benefits to proposed trail repairs. Committee made suggestion to apply for longer term maintenance from Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund, which group was in favor of pursuing. A professional trail contractor may produce longer-lasting results. Whoever is awarded the trail contract must follow trail specifications, not road specifications.
- Project #28 was redundant to last year's award. RAC members were disappointed that CCROA separately sought and received an EGLE permit and applied herbicide to the Cisco Chain after the previous RAC award for non-chemical treatment.

Proposals #23, #25, and #28 had the least support. One RAC member noticed that if those three were dropped the total of full funding to the remaining projects was within $50 of the available funding. The RAC supported proceeding in that fashion and chose Project 29 to be reduced by just $49.

The RAC considered breaking into three groups (A, B, and C) but after the whole group discussion resulted in a consensus, the members saw no need for the break-out groups. Therefore items 6 and 7 on the agenda did not occur.

Donald Helsel motioned to vote funding six projects:

- Project 21 at $8,669 (full funding)
- Project 22 at $15,625 (full funding)
- Project 24 at $32,200 (full funding)
- Project 26 at $20,651 (full dunging)
- Project 27 at $15,000 (full funding)
- Project 29 at $29,508 ($49 less than full funding)

The total ($121,653) is the amount of funding available. Sarah Topp seconded the motion. All committee members voted in favor at 12:54 CT. See Table 1 (attached) for details on all nine project proposals.

Closing Remarks

Committee discussed items to consider implementing for future meetings. Committee members were advised of the expiration of terms on 2/12/2028. The Ottawa NF anticipates recruiting new members in 2027 and invites current members to reapply and assist in recruiting for the next RAC.

Other thoughts discussed by the RAC included:

- People proposing projects should be mindful when claiming another organization supports their project. Any claims of support or cooperation should be accompanied by a letter of support from the official leaders of that organization.
- Bring a lunch. There is not time to leave the meeting to get something to eat.
- One RAC member suggested the meeting should be with a land acknowledgement and Pledge of Allegiance.
- Time Keeping: Ahead of presentations, applicants should be notified their time limit is firm and will be offered a warning by the designated note keeper when they are nearing the end of their allotment.
- Some of the presenters were somewhat quiet. Information may be missed if presenters do not speak loud enough for the room.
- The virtual option worked well.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 13:30 CT.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes and Committee attendance log are accurate and complete.

Reviewed by: Trevor Hahka

Designated Federal Officer and Interim Forest Supervisor

Certified by: Connie Julien

Chair, Ottawa Resource Advisory Committee

Table 1. Proposed Projects 2026

Proposal Number	Project Title	Proponent	Funds Requested	RAC Recommend	Match	Proposal POC	FS POC
21	DNA-Based Identification of Heritage Apple Trees within the Ottawa National Forest	Jon Snow	$8,669	**$8,669**	$6,026	Jon Snow	Greg Swallow
22	O Kun De Kun Trail Accessibility Improvement	Ontonagon Conservation District	$15,625	**$15,625**	$1,500	Anne Kretschmann	Aaron Woof & Bradley Biggs
23	UPPCO Camp Lease Cabin Removal	Gogebic Conservation District	$30,300	**$0**	$1,700	Max Ramsay	TBD
24	ISCCW Enhanced boat washing unit and boat washers/educators project	ISCCW	$32,200	**$32,200**	$7,000	Michelle Kanipes	Ian Shackleford
25	Hunter Access Improvements	Travis Kilpela	$23,220	**$0**	$30,040	Travis Kilpela	Eric Koppana
26	Regional Native Milfoil Weevil Rearing & Biological Control Capacity Program	Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	$20,651	**$20,651**	$20,000	Dr. Lara Jacobs	Ian Shackleford
27	IBCD & WePIC: Four County Invasives-Manual Removal & Control of Purple Loosestrife	Iron Baraga Conservation District	$15,000	**$15,000**	$5,000	Jen Ricker Feak	Ian Shackleford
28	Cisco Chain of Lakes Invasive Species Control Project (2026-2027)	Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association	$25,000	**$0**	$5,000	Kevin Magee	Ian Shackleford
29	Agonikak National Recreation Trail Maintenance, 2026/2027	Land O'Lakes Fish & Game Club	$29,557	**$29,508**	$7,674	Norman Nass	Kyle Offerman
			$200,222	**$121,653**	**$83,940**		

FS FACA Committee Meeting Attendance Log

Committee: Ottawa Resource Advisory Committee

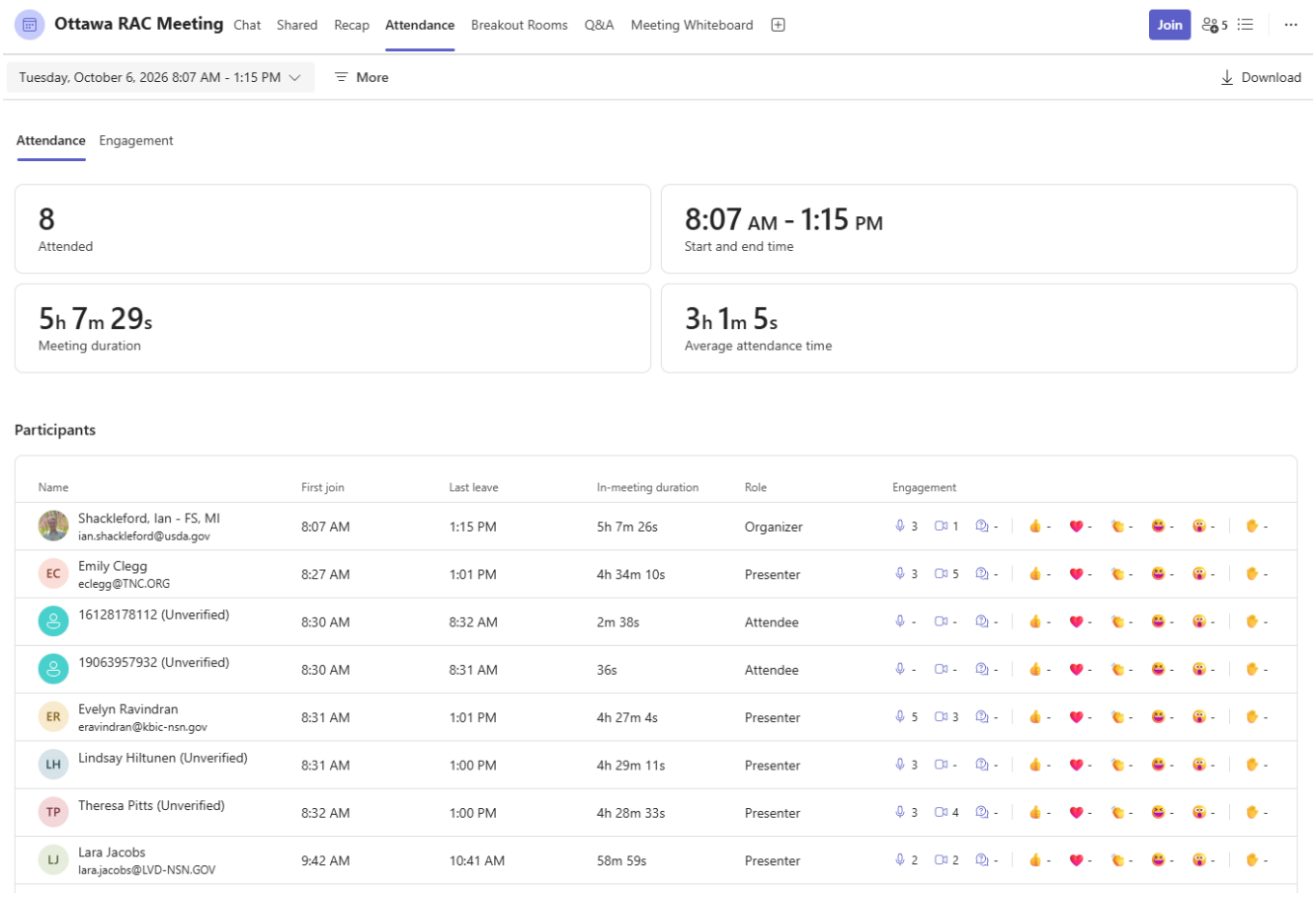
Date of Meeting: October 6, 2026

- Submit a Log is for each day of meeting. This is for Committee Members ONLY.
  - Committee Members attending meeting in person to complete and sign
  - Committee Members attending meeting virtually add information to list and include meeting details (example attached).
  - Committee members attending by phone complete below.

Submit this log with the certified meeting minutes/GSA Database upload.

Print Committee Member Name	In Person: Committee Member Signature By Phone: Incoming phone number Virtual: Committee Member confirm with meeting details sheet	Time In	Time Out (do not complete if duration of Meeting)
Evelyn Ravindran	Virtual	8:40 AM	
Daniel J. Gardner		8:40 AM	
Sarah Topp		8:40 AM	
Donald Helsel	In Person, see sign-in sheet.	8:40 AM	
Emily M. Clegg	Virtual	8:40 AM	
Theresa Pitts	Virtual	8:40 AM	
Connie Julien	In Person, see sign-in sheet.	8:40 AM	
Lindsay Hiltunen	Virtual	8:40 AM	
Greg Markkanen	In Person, see sign-in sheet.	8:40 AM	
Alina J. Shively		8:40 AM	
Marlene Broemer	In Person, see sign-in sheet.	8:40 AM	
Rachael A. Guth	In Person, see sign-in sheet.	8:40 AM	

Microsoft Teams screen shot:



Microsoft Teams Attendance Download

1. Summary	
Meeting title	Ottawa RAC Meeting
Attended participants	8
Start time	10/06/26, 8:07:51 AM
End time	10/06/26, 1:15:21 PM
Meeting duration	5h 7m 29s
Average attendance time	3h 1m 5s

Microsoft Teams Attendance Download (continued)

2. Participants

Name	First Join	Last Leave	In-Meeting Duration	Email	Participant ID (UPN)	Role
Shackleford, Ian - FS, MI	10/06/26, 8:07:54 AM	10/06/26, 1:15:21 PM	5h 7m 26s	ian.shackleford @usda.gov	ian.shackleford @usda.gov	Organizer
Emily Clegg	10/06/26, 8:27:12 AM	10/06/26, 1:01:23 PM	4h 34m 10s	eclegg@TNC.ORG	eclegg@TNC.ORG	Presenter
16128178112 (Unverified)	10/06/26, 8:30:14 AM	10/06/26, 8:32:53 AM	2m 38s			Attendee
19063957932 (Unverified)	10/06/26, 8:30:56 AM	10/06/26, 8:31:32 AM	36s			Attendee
Evelyn Ravindran	10/06/26, 8:31:38 AM	10/06/26, 1:01:06 PM	4h 27m 4s	eravindran@kbic-nsn.gov	eravindran@kbic-nsn.gov	Presenter
Lindsay Hiltunen (Unverified)	10/06/26, 8:31:39 AM	10/06/26, 1:00:51 PM	4h 29m 11s			Presenter
Theresa Pitts (Unverified)	10/06/26, 8:32:25 AM	10/06/26, 1:00:59 PM	4h 28m 33s			Presenter
Lara Jacobs	10/06/26, 9:42:57 AM	10/06/26, 10:41:57 AM	58m 59s	lara.jacobs@LVD-NSN.GOV	lara.jacobs@LVD-NSN.GOV	Presenter

The RAC members verified Evelyn Ravindran, Emily Clegg, Theresa Pitts, and Lindsay Hiltunen were on the call. The “Unverified” in the above table just indicates that Michigan Teams did not confirm their identity.