Itasca County residents to develop responses to extreme weather in Itasca Climate Dialogue, May 14-16, 2015

Itasca County community members will come together May 14-16 in Grand Rapids for an in-depth three-day deliberative forum to study and discuss changes in the area's climate and weather. Participants in the Dialogue will develop a community-based response outlining concerns, opportunities, and actions to address challenges the community faces.

The Itasca Climate Dialogue is open to the public and is being organized by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Jefferson Center. The Dialogue will invite a randomly selected but demographically balanced group of 18 individuals from the county. Participants will have access to resources and experts to produce their own independent recommendations that respond to Itasca County's needs, priorities, values, and ambitions.

Confirmed speakers include Mark Seeley, University of Minnesota Extension Climatologist; Brian Palik, Research Ecologist; Michael Duval, Department of Natural Resources; Tim Goeman, Department of Natural Resources; Megan Christianson, Visit Grand Rapids; John Latimer, local phenologist; and Julie Kennedy, Grand Rapids City Engineer.

Grand Rapids High School students have helped assemble data for the Dialogue by collecting community surveys assessing local concern about climate and weather issues. Students also hosted a panel of 9 local experts in March to discuss the local impacts of climate change. After the panel, students identified their top climate concerns: impacts on wildlife habitat and migration patterns, new diseases that will impact the forests and local residents, and water quality in local lakes and rivers.

This Rural Climate Dialogue is the second in a series of Dialogues happening around the state. The Dialogues are intended to spur rural leadership and build resiliency in the face of extreme weather conditions and a changing climate.

The event will be held at the Timberlake Lodge (144 SE 17th Street, Grand Rapids, MN) from May 14-16, 2015. Please contact Andrew Rockway (arockway@jefferson-center.org or 651-209-7672) for more information.