

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Minutes

9/10/14, Dunn Co Ag Service Center, Menomonie, WI

**Present at the meeting:** Andrew Norman, Rick Remington-West Wisconsin Land Trust; Katie Wantoch-UW Extension Dunn Co.; Ron Verdon-TMLIA; John Sipple-NRCS Dunn Co.; Dan Prestebak, Amanda Hansen-Dunn Co. Land Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher-Barron County Conservationist; Buzz Sorge, Paul LaLiberte, Susan Sanford-WDNR; Nels Paulson-UW-Stout; Rod Olson-Desair Lake Association; Randy Eide-City of Menomonie; Julia Olmstead, Dan Zerr-UW-Extension.

Susan Sanford from DNR works as an outreach and education coordinator for the Wisconsin River TMDL efforts, and sat in on this meeting to learn what is being done in the Red Cedar. Additionally, Dan Z discussed with the group the possibility of adding Bill James from UW-Stout to the team. Bill has expressed interest, and the group agreed that he would be a good addition. Dan will invite him to the next meeting.

**Review of Last Meeting:** Dan Z went over a few things with the group regarding the last meeting. One of the things touched on was the civic governance document that was handed out at the last meeting (and e-mailed to everyone since) just to review a few things about how the group functions.

**Check-In:** Everyone shared any new information/developments pertinent to the Red Cedar River Watershed (RCRW) efforts.

- Tyler: His office has had good response from producers on cover crops. They are not pushing no-till very hard, thinking that most people who are willing to do no-till at this time are doing it. At a Soil Health/Pioneer Seed event that he attended, a producer named Andy Bensend from near Dallas, WI, who is also in seed sales, pushed attendees to do no-till. Also, there is a Cover Crop Field Day coming up on 10/8 at the Arlington Agriculture Research Station near Madison.
- Andrew and Rick: They attended today's meeting instead of Bob Fitzwilliam (who had been at the last two meetings), and talked about the McKnight grant that WWLT is working on focused on stream bank easements. They will be targeting landowners with large amounts of stream frontage. Some of the McKnight money is funding some of Andrew's position.
- Paul: He and Buzz did a presentation to the Menomonie City Council several weeks ago about what's being done in the Red Cedar River Watershed. The presentation was well received. There was little time for questions, but some members of the Council had questions about groundwater, and the research in this area is lacking. Paul is going to explore more about what can be done in the way of groundwater research in the watershed. He also agreed to send everyone his updated list of things that have been done in the Red Cedar River watershed.

- Dan P: He presented EPA's Nine Elements of a Watershed Plan to his staff, asking them to determine what they can do to help with regard to these elements and planning. Dunn County is moving forward, slowly, on the idea of establishing a water quality fund, and perhaps funding a position with a title such as water quality specialist. The Planning, Resources and Development Committee has taken initial steps to secure perhaps \$100,000 for this purpose.
- Rod: No much new to report, as he was on vacation.
- John: Spent some time in Burleigh County, ND learning about what folks there are doing regarding soil health. He estimated that farmers there are about 10-15 years ahead of us on this process, and that about 70% of the farmers in that region are in a no-till system. These farmers are producing similar yields to what conventional farmers in WI are doing, yet with only about 15 inches of rain a year and a much shorter growing season.
- Julia: Last week she sponsored a Farmer-Led Council Field Day on a farm in St. Croix County that was attended by about 60 people, mostly farmers. Mark Seely of U of MN Extension spoke on climate change, and Brian Briski of NRCS spoke on soil health. She received good feedback from attendees. Her and Amanda will be meeting with the Hay River FLC later in the week, and corn-stalk nitrogen testing will be a topic of discussion.
- Ron: TMLIA recently presented to the Village of Colfax about the bank erosion study they contracted with Interfluve. He learned that the waste-water treatment plant at Colfax has reduced their phosphorus discharge by 60% over the last 18 months or so. Eighteen Mile Creek near Colfax (tributary to the Red Cedar River) appears to have a huge amount of sediment in it this year, and suspicion is that it may be coming from a sand mine operation in Chippewa County. Upcoming events noted by Ron include a non-partisan political candidates forum at the Dunn Co Sportsman's Club on 9/14 at 1 PM, and also the Red Cedar River Conference in 2015 will be held on March 12. The planning team begins meeting for that conference this month.
- Amanda: Is beginning to collect data from the farmers participating in the farmer-led council in the Hay River watershed. The farmers are somewhat concerned about who will have access to that data and what it will be used for.
- Buzz: St. Croix Implementation Team is working with a software company called Flatrock out of Minneapolis that has developed a GIS-based tracking tool for BMP and load reduction calculations. They are meeting with them next week. It may be something the Red Cedar Team may be interested in at some point.
- Katie: UW-Extension ag staff has been working with federal agencies to educate farmers about many aspects of the new farm bill.
- Nels: The research expo day for the REU students held at the Raw Deal went well, with hundreds of people in attendance and good feedback. A white paper about that research will be coming soon.
- Randy: Was at Paul and Buzz's presentation to the City. Thought it went well. The City has passed a motion of support for a Lake District, and that idea is now being promoted to the townships. The process will all take a while yet, and may or may not reach eventual approval. The City is spending some funding to bring Emmons and Olivier consulting from

Minneapolis to Menomonie to help with low-impact development (LID) concepts and minimal-impact design standards (MIDS) for storm water.

**Discussion of Roles:** Dan Z led a small discussion about roles with the group; what each person's roles are in the group and outside the group with their stakeholders/constituents, etc. The discussion turned toward more outreach, and how we can let others know what we're doing. Ideas included sending press releases out, and also picking some constituent organizations such as Farm Bureau and Farmers Union, and sending updates or minutes from meetings to keep them informed of what the Partnership is doing. Dan will solicit contact information from people for such groups and follow up with those groups to see if they would be interested in attending meetings or receiving minutes.

**Work Plan:** Dan Z went over some ideas for a modified work plan with the group. His initial sketch showed a probable date of six months from now (March, 2015) for completing a draft implementation plan. Some in the group thought sooner would be better, while others were happy with that. Having at least a good PowerPoint presentation on the basics of the plan in place by the time of the Red Cedar River Conference in March would be preferable. Dan will send out a more detailed sketch of a work plan before the next meeting.

The work plan includes having a draft of an introduction and Chapter 1 (EPA Element 1) done in draft form by the October meeting. Dan will work on this, perhaps with help and input from others in the group.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership's next meeting will be Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup> in Barron.