

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Minutes

4/8/15 Barron County Government Center, Barron, WI

Present at the meeting: Dan Prestebak, Amanda Hanson – Dunn County LCD; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County LCD; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Association; Randy Eide – City of Menomonie; Cassandra Beckworth, Nels Paulson – UW Stout; Julia Olmstead, Dan Zerr-UW-Extension.

Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda: Meeting minutes from the March meeting were reviewed, with no changes. Agenda for the day was also reviewed with no significant changes.

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

- Dan Z: Discussed the budget situation with the group, mentioning that several of the partners have written letters to legislators about water quality issues and resources in NW Wisconsin.
- Tyler: Talked about the new plan for the Chetek Lakes chain. It is written to focus on the EPA's Nine Key Elements. Work on controlling phosphorus in these lakes would be beneficial to the watershed below, since about 30,000 lbs of phosphorus goes over the Chetek Dam annually. Also, should we discuss any "in-lake" solutions in our plan? There is also a lot of controversy in the Chetek region about the Lake Association becoming a District. Tyler shared a newspaper ad against the idea.
- Amanda: Met with the Hay River farmer-led council. Incentives for the season are almost finalized for the council, and will include soil testing, and including a soil health test called the Haney Test, that is expensive and is about \$70-\$80, so can't be used on every field.
- Randy: 200 acres of city cropland has been leased and will be no-tilled. Troy Behling is the person leasing the land. The City of Menomonie has authorized the pursuit of an urban non-point source grant from DNR to divert water now going to Jarret Creek, into a storm water retention pond. Also the City's MIDS-LID ordinance rewrite is moving forward.
- Dan P: The farm near the Health Care Center will be soil sampled, and Ray Archuleta provided some funding for the Haney Test on all plots. Dan and Amanda presented information about work in the Red Cedar and farmer-led councils at the Wisconsin River Symposium on March 19th. They got good feedback and questions from those attending. Also Dan sent a letter to Sen. Sheila Harsdorf of the Joint Finance Committee talking about the work of the Partnership, and also pointing out the need for continued funding and resources for conservation in the region, for farmer-led councils.
- Rod: In the previous days' election, Rice Lake elected a new city council member who is more attuned to conservation issues. Farm Bureau is meeting with farmers in Barron Co to try to set up a Discovery Farm.

- Cassie: There will be an elected official's forum about Red Cedar issues coming up soon, likely on May 1.
- Nels: Prep work for the summer REU students is underway. Matt Kuchta has begun collecting stream data. Nels needs input from the group on a sampling strategy for surveying farmers in the watershed. He will consult with Dan P, Tyler, and Dan Z.
- Julia: A grant has been received from USDA to do no-till comparisons to conventional tillage on the farms within the farmer-led council watersheds. It's a two-year project that will also explore the economics of no-till versus conventional. Also Tom Quinn and Julia are meeting with the McKnight Foundation to explore ways to get outside investment for some demonstration farms in the region.
- Mike Wendt: Mike was not at the meeting but sent a report via e-mail, indicating that 3M's Earth Day event for employees on 4/7 was a great success. Also 3M is close to having a lease agreement with 5-Star Dairy in Elk Mound for the 3M land in Menomonie. They may start with some cover crops this year.

Discussion of Red Cedar Conference: The group took some time to discuss the Red Cedar Conference which was held on March 12th. Feedback was very positive. There were a few issues with the Conference, such as microphones needed in the breakout rooms, and more buffet lines needed at lunch. But generally people thought the Conference was a great success. Rod took notes for the Conference Planning Committee.

Discussion of Chapter 5: A new draft of Chapter 5 was distributed to the Partnership the previous week, and discussion took place. Dan Z took comments and edits and made notes. Edits will be made to the draft, and the Chapter 5 team (Buzz, Paul, Dan Z, Nels and Andrew C) will discuss as well. It is hoped to have a final draft of the Chapter 5 by the May meeting.

Discussion on Moving Forward From This Point: The plan will be done in the next few months. The group discussed issues moving forward. Some of the things mentioned include:

- More detail may be needed on the positions needed in the plan, and how they will be structured and funded. But such detail may be impossible to describe at this point.
- Do we want to get an active farmer to come to Partnership meetings? Tom Quinn comes to some, but do we need more?
- Budget uncertainty looms large for the group and for planning issues.

Evaluation: An evaluation of the meeting was conducted, with each Partnership member rating the meeting from 1 (worst) to 5 (best). If anything less than a 5 was given, the person was asked to elaborate on the gaps that caused a lower rating. Most everyone rated it a 5, with a few 4.5 ratings, mostly focused on budget uncertainties, and the need for more detail in Chapter 5.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next meeting will Wednesday, May 13th, in Menomonie.