

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Minutes

10/7/15 Barron County Government Center, Barron, WI

Present at the meeting: Dan Prestebak, Lindsay Olson – Dunn County Land & Water Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County LCD; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Restoration, Inc; Gerry Johnson – Red Cedar Lake Association; Bill Miller – Big Chetac and Birch Lake Association; Alex Smith, Buzz Sorge – WDNR; Randy Eide – City of Menomonie; Nels Paulson – UW Stout; Ron Verdon – Tainter Menomin Lake Improvement Association; Dan Zerr-UW-Extension.

Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda: Meeting minutes from August meeting, along with agenda for current meeting, were handed out and reviewed.

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

- Lindsay: Has been on the job just a few weeks as a conservation planner with Dunn Co Land and Water Conservation. This was her first meeting with the Partnership.
- Tyler: Barron Co has completed their Farmland Preservation update. Is wrapping up a large barnyard project near Rice Lake that will reduce phosphorus runoff. Attended a recent meeting of the “Soil and Water Stewards of Barron County”. This group is organized with a “farmer-led council” thought process, and is using leftover funds from Barron County’s Farm Tech Days event to bring in speakers in order to learn more about soil health, cover crops, etc. About 40 farmers attended, representing a good portion (maybe near 30%) of the ag land in the county. The group is mostly organized by Farm Bureau.
- Ron: TMLIA showed the three keynote presentations from this year’s Red Cedar River Conference at the Raw Deal restaurant in Menomonie. TMLIA has been engaging with Colfax regarding their waste water treatment issues, and Colfax looks like they will be able to get their phosphorus discharge down to 0.1 ppm without additional facility construction. Ron also expressed gratitude for the support that 3M Corporation is providing TMLIA, and suggested that maybe folks in Barron Co could work to get similar levels of cooperation from the 3M plant in Cumberland.
- Gerry: His first meeting with the Partnership. The Red Cedar Lakes Association represents three lakes; Red Cedar, Balsam and Hemlock. It has about 650 members, and several well-staffed and functional committees. Their AIS and Shoreland Restoration committees work on water quality issues. They have some areas of curly-leaf pondweed, but it’s not a major problem at this point. They are getting a lot of cooperation from the Blue Hills Charter School, with students helping remove CLP from areas of the lakes. There is a Clean Boats Clean Waters effort at the lakes, mostly involving Scout troops. The Shoreland Restoration Committee is working with both private and commercial property owners on efforts to control runoff to the lakes.

- Bill: His first meeting with the Partnership. The Big Chetac and Birch Lake Association is working on finalizing their lake management plan with help from Alex. Once they get more feedback from DNR there will be another public meeting. Several units of local government in their region have passed non-binding resolutions saying that the Association should not use herbicides to treat the infestations of CLP in the lakes. People opposing herbicide use always come to the meetings and voice their opposition. Recently the third year of chemical treatment for CLP at the north end of Lake Chetac was completed. Once the CLP is under control, the Association would like to move toward an alum treatment to control phosphorus in the lake sediments. CLP and phosphorus in the sediments are the two major sources of phosphorus that cause the lake's algae blooms, and also send P downstream to the Red Cedar Lake chain.
- Alex: Some DOT money from the settlement coming from the Haugen highway construction incident is being used for some stream restoration, retention ponds and other work, including some work at Bear Lake landing.
- Randy: Work is happening on some regional retention ponds in the city funded by a \$140,000 DNR grant, including some work near the County Fairgrounds that drains to Jarrett Creek. City's LID/MIDS ordinance is now heading to DNR for their review. There is a second site on Jarrett Creek in need of bank stabilization work. The City has voted to allow the Mayor to apply for some dredging permits for small areas of Lake Menomin.
- Nels: Briefed the new attendees on the LAKES/REU project. Is thinking about doing some modeling work as part of next summer's REU work. Has heard that there are out-of-state investors looking to buy lots of ag land in Barron Co. Is considering some sociological survey work to gauge local opinions of this.
- Rod: Presented some slides of various projects he's working on, many in the Rice Lake area; installing rain gardens, stream stabilization, check dams, and other practices to stop erosion and promote infiltration. One project was very innovative, and involved a "water bar" which is sort of a speed bump that moves water off impervious surfaces to an area where it can infiltrate. He has a student at UW-Barron County working with him as an intern.
- Buzz: see below.
- Dan P: The Dunn Co farmer-led council did some seeding of cover crops in some test plots. About 15,000 acres of cover crops were air-seeded in the county recently. Dunn Co has applied for a US Fish and Wildlife "Fishers and Farmer" program grant, to be used for work on Wilson Creek for stream habitat and water quality practices. The Dunn County Fish and Game Association talked recently at a meeting about doing tree drops in the county to improve fish habitat.
- Dan Z: From communications from Andrew Craig, it was learned that the Implementation Strategy created by the Partnership has not yet been reviewed by DNR, and subsequently has not been sent on to EPA. Also talked to Kristina Olson, president of the Chetek Lakes Protection Association about attending the meetings. She was interested but may not be able to get off work to get to the meetings.

Discussion of US Army Corp of Engineers Funding Possibility: The A subset of the Partnership has had a couple meetings regarding a program through the US ACE known as “Section 22”, or “Planning Assistance to States and Tribes”. Buzz briefed the Partnership on this effort. The program can match monies already being allocated to water quality work. It’s fairly unrestricted funding, as compared to other grants, and the Partnership could use it to enhance work done by the REU project, to pay for more monitoring work, and possibly other work such as the farmer-led councils. It provides a 1-to-1 match for such funding, and has the possibility for extensions beyond one year. The Partnership discussed possibilities, and also stressed that we should link it to our Implementation Plan as best we can. Another meeting will take place with ACE staff on Friday, October 16th at the Dunn Co Ag Center.

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. Ratings were in the 4-5 range, and the gaps listed were mostly pertaining to the meeting going over the extended time, and the check-ins taking a long time. But most understood that this was a product of so many new people at the table, causing some learning curve issues for everyone present.

Next Meeting: The Partnership’s next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, December 2nd, at 9 AM in Menomonie.**