

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

6/14/17, Barron County Government Center, Barron, WI

**Present at the meeting:** Dan Prestebak, Lindsay Olson – Dunn County Land Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Andy Bensed – Barron Co Farmer; Nels Paulson, Tina Lee, Chris Ferguson, REU Students – UW Stout; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Restoration; Alex Smith, Ruth King, Ben Hartenbower –DNR; Gerry Johnson – Red Cedar Lake Association; Ron Verdon – Tainter Menomin Lake Improvement Association; David Cotts – 3M Company; Ted Ludwig – Red Cedar Basin Monitoring; Randy Eide – City of Menomonie; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

**Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda:** Outcomes from the March meeting, as well as the current agenda, were reviewed and discussed. No changes added.

**Check-In and Discussion:** Everyone shared any new information/developments pertinent to the Red Cedar River Watershed effort

**-Dan Z:** In conversation with Andrew Craig of DNR, it looks like BMP tracking software won't be ready for beta testing until later this summer, and it may not be immediately suitable for the purposes needed by the Partnership. Bill James suggested that we consider pursuing some sort of method to separate the hydrograph for the Red Cedar River into its groundwater and surface water components, considering that there seems to be a good bit of evidence showing bedrock on the eastern edge of the watershed is high in phosphorus. The Partnership will consider this, perhaps for further discussion in the future. Mentioned a field day on April 28<sup>th</sup> that he, Ron Verdon and others conducted at Tainter Lake and at Lakeside Park on Lake Menomin with students from UW-Eau Claire's environmental studies classes. Found out from Bill Miller that Mark Robinson is the new president of the Big Chetak and Birch Lakes Association. Mark was invited to the meeting but did not attend.

**-Andy:** Briefed the Partnership on his operations and farming practices (uses soil health practices such as no-till and cover crops on much of the land he farms). Offered a lot of advice to the Partnership about attitudes among producers about such practices, and also offered ideas for how to overcome obstacles to getting producers to adopt these practices. Principle among these is the need for someone the producer trusts, to work with and offer advice (and even the actual labor) on how to farm with no tillage and to incorporate cover crops and other soil health practices. Mentioned that many waterway he planted or helped plant have been washed away this spring from all the heavy rain events.

**-Tyler:** Soil erosion in Barron County has been bad. Waterway issues are a symptom of the larger problem of not enough infiltration. We need to focus on total systems for management that incorporate all the facets of soil health and better infiltration. Has 3 or 4 barnyard projects going on in the county. Cumberland's waste water treatment plant, which was recently upgraded, is having issues removing phosphorus. Cumberland is still doing water quality trading with producers in the watershed, with about 1,000 acres of no-till coming from that program.

**-Ruth:** Discussed some of the grant application/processing that she's working on including some NOD

grants and others to address problem areas. Has also seen heavy erosion damage from storms.

-Alex: Has been attending the meetings of the Big Chetek and Birch Lakes Association, where they are trying to do more outreach to stakeholders about the issues with curly-leaf pondweed, and the need to control that invasive plant. Reminded everyone that the Northwest Lakes Conference is coming up in Hayward this Friday.

-Nels: Brought some of the staff and students from the LAKES REU program to the meeting. A total of 13 students and 6 mentors will be involved this summer. The wrap-up reception for the REU students will be held on Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, at the Raw Deal in Menomonie. Wants to have some sort of similar event farther north, maybe in Chetek.

-Ben: Mentioned that there are some entities in the watershed that may be interested in water quality trading.

-Lindsay: An ag transect survey was recently completed in Dunn County, showing mostly corn and soybeans being planted. An earlier survey in the spring showed that about 20% of acreage had cover crops. Participated in some erosion control training in Rice Lake. Is checking with landowners who have CREP agreements whose land may be coming out of that program, to see if they want to sign up again.

-David: Cover crop (alfalfa) removed from the 350 acres of land near the 3M plant was a good crop. Five Star Dairy will continue to lease this land and farm using soil health practices.

-Dan P: Working with the Army Corp of Engineers to fix bank erosion problems on the Red Cedar River by Highway M near Colfax. The Corps will fund 65% of this work, with the remainder to be picked up by the county. The Livestock Study Group in Dunn County is continuing their work, and the moratorium on CAFO operations has been extended to mid-July. The group is starting to assemble recommendations. Dunn Co will be purchasing a no-till drill to make available to producers for renting. The Lower Chippewa Invasive Plants group is having an invasives tour tomorrow.

-Randy: The City of Menomonie's waste water treatment plant upgrade plan goes to the City Council next week. The City will have to get down to 0.1 ppm phosphorus (from the current 1.0 ppm). A consultant will be coming to test a process to use algae to remove P at the plant. Water quality trading is still an option they are considering. The City will be doing studies of all the subwatersheds that flow to Lake Menomin, as a "report card" for their MS4 permit.

-Rod: Gave an update on the Red Cedar Conference planning process. Working on securing keynote speakers. Is working on several projects with the Rice Lake District including diverting storm water to a rain garden along the beach walk on Rice Lake. Other smaller rain gardens, diversions and prairie restoration as well.

-Ted: First phosphorus sampling done in streams this year. Of the ten sites sampled within the TMDL area, only 2 of the 10 met standards for P.

-Ron: Being on the Livestock Study Group for Dunn Co has been very informative, and the group has worked through some tough issues with civility and cooperation. Has found that other counties are also being creative in how they work through these issues. The Lakeside Park rain garden is being used by groups as a teaching tool. 3M is providing financial support for signage at the park.

-Gerry: Provided a lot of background on issues in the upper lakes of the watershed, mostly dealing with the problem of curly leaf pondweed. Hand pulling of CLP is continuing with the help of students from the Birchwood Charter School. Boy Scouts are helping with the Clean Boats Clean Waters program, spending 9 weekends this summer educating people at boat landings. Red Cedar Lake Association has

four Healthy Lake grants from DNR for rain gardens, and some of these will be used as education/demonstration sites.

**Discussion of possible Lake Protection Grant for the watershed:** Alex mentioned at the last meeting that there will be a larger pot of money in the Lakes Protection Grant program from DNR for next year (due date is Feb 1) due to underutilization of that program this year. We have a competitive advantage with our approved 9-Element Plan. The group began brainstorming ideas for how we could use such a grant. The maximum amount would be \$200,000 and the guidelines for how this money could be used are fairly broad. There is a 25% match requirement. The group talked extensively about needs, with Andy Bensed contributing much to the conversation from his perspective of how a good percentage of farmers likely know the pros and cons of converting to no-till, and that what is likely needed are people who can help guide them through that process. He actually contracts his services out to producers to plant in their fields using no-till techniques, but is maxed out in terms of his available time. So we need to determine what is needed in this regard, and find a way to match a Lake Protection Grant to those needs. The group will be formulating ideas along these lines, to be discussed and hopefully finalized at the next meeting in August.

**Discussion of a possible “Conservation in Action” tour in the watershed:** Buzz Sorge suggested via e-mail that a tour of conservation practices and operations that incorporate soil health techniques into their management, could be organized in the watershed. The group is in favor of such an idea, but tabled any sort of planning for it at this time.

**Viewing of the Lakeside Park Rain Garden video:** Chippewa Valley Community Television filmed the planting of the rain garden at Lakeside Park on Lake Menomoin in October. The video was completed recently, and the group watched and reviewed the video. A few comments for possible changes were made, and those will be forwarded to CVCTV to see if they can be incorporated into the video. Overall, people were pleased with the result.

**Evaluation:** All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Everyone rated the meeting as a 5, with many good comments about the meeting and the progress of the Partnership.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership’s next regular meeting date is Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is the same day as the LAKES REU reception at the Raw Deal in Menomonie. So the Partnership will meet at 3 PM that day in Menomonie, and then people will be free to go to the reception afterward.