

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

**12/6/17 Dunn County Ag Service Center, Menomonie, WI**

**Present at the meeting:** Liz Osborne – TMLIA; Lindsay Olson, Dan Prestebak – Dunn County Land Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Nels Paulson, Alyssa Quelling – UW Stout; John Sippl – NRCS; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Restoration; Alex Smith, Ruth King –DNR; Ted Ludwig – Red Cedar Basin Monitoring; Randy Eide, Lee Schwebs – City of Menomonie; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

**Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda:** There were not outcomes from the October meeting. The current agenda was reviewed and discussed with no changes.

**Discussion of End of Year 2 of Plan – How are we doing?:** The Plan was approved in January of 2016, so this month marks the end of year 2 of implementation. A discussion of this year’s accomplishments, and review of the plan, took place.

Several people had already submitted some year-end summaries of their activities to Dan Z. He shared those with the group. Others talked about some of the accomplishments of their constituencies over the last year, and others agreed to send Dan a summary.

According to the plan’s timeline for implementation (Table 5.1 on page 54), there should be tracking of engagement and participation by stakeholders, as well as tracking of best management practices installed by the end of year two. The group discussed a few possible methods for tracking of BMPs, and although there may be some software packages coming from both DNR and some folks working with the Fox Wolf Watershed Alliance (Green Bay area), the group decided to work with John Sippl for now on some tracking ideas. John can sort all NRCS projects by HUC12, and can also use the NRCS Toolkit to track data from the counties. So, the counties will work with John to establish a form of tracking BMPs that captures as much as is reasonably possible.

Capturing the engagement and participation of residents of the watershed was discussed. Nels believes that some of the work done through Stout and through the LAKES REU program, that some of this data can be collected for a sample portion of the watershed, and assembled in a “community capacity report”. The group agreed this was a good approach.

Water quality monitoring in year 2 was also discussed. The two-year focused monitoring done by Bill James, to establish some new baselines, and to be used in new modeling, was completed this year. DNR collects periodic grab samples on the Red Cedar River in Menomonie, and that will continue. Ted Ludwig will be giving up some of his volunteer monitoring on lakes, and this may cause some holes in some long-term data sets. So the group discussed ideas for finding others who may be interested in taking over some of Ted’s work. Dan Z will contact Peggy Compton of the WAV program for ideas and

maybe to possibly speak with the group. Others will brainstorm possibilities. Beaver Creek Reserve may be a resource in this area as well.

The group also had a discussion about farmer-led councils, as the plan emphasizes the need to develop more of these. The consensus of the group seemed to be that great difficulties exist with trying to create such councils without someone truly working on this as a major portion of their duties (as Julia Olmstead used to do in our region). Beyond that, farmers are more scattered, less connected in person, but more connected online, and many farms are not farmed by the owners of the land. So the group thinks that other routes to connecting farmers may be just as valuable, and agreed to brainstorm on such methods. One possibility is that the lake protection grants from DNR being discussed for application by Feb 1, will likely involve hiring coordinators to create demo farms in the region, and this will be a good method of bringing farmers together. The plan will likely need to be modified at the end of next year, to reflect such changes.

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

Alex: Has been promoted to Buzz Sorge's old position. Will still be in Spooner but will be working with all things TMDL in the Red Cedar River Watershed and its lakes, as well as the St. Croix River Basin. The Red Cedar Lakes Association is applying for a grant to do some tributary monitoring in their area. The purpose of the monitoring will be to try to understand the system of lakes there a little bit better. A huge bit of their P load comes from Big Chetac Lake, but how P moves through the other lakes, and how much comes from the tributaries, is not fully understood. Big Chetac is looking to get a grant to help them with building capacity within their lake association.

Nels: The LAKES REU team is setting up projects for next summer's students. He and Chris Ferguson will be working on a community capacity report early next year. Dunn County has decided to dedicate a little bit of money to funding a report on the first 4 years of activity from the REU students.

Lindsay: Is wrapping up many year-end projects. Recently presented to the Sunshine Rotary Club on the topic of the TMDL and water quality. Participated in a field day for UW-Eau Claire environmental studies students in October at the Red Cedar Demonstration Farm, discussing water quality, soil health, and best management practices. Dunn County now has 21% of crop acres in nutrient management plans. Provided some year-end stats including data about CREP: 17.7 acres of new 15-year contracts and 95.4 acres of renewed 15-year contracts in the watershed equaling the following environmental benefits: P loss reduced in TMDL: 473 lbs, N loss reduced in TMDL: 254 lbs, Sediment loss reduced in TMDL: 222 tons.

Ted: This past year 66 total phosphorus samples were taken from waters in the watershed, and only 12 met state standards. Ted will be retiring soon from some of the volunteer monitoring he's been doing.

John: Is working with some folks on a workshop aimed at CAFO operators, and focusing on how various manure pumping and application equipment works. Has been hearing a lot of farmer testimonials on how cover crops and no-till work well. Maria Bendixon from Chippewa Valley Technical College will be giving a presentation to some agency folks on January 4<sup>th</sup> on the economics of moving from conventional tillage and farming, to a soil-health focused management.

Rod: Listed many of the accomplishments and projects undertaken over the last year by he and others

working on runoff control in the Rice Lake area. There is a project now underway to control feed storage leachate on a farm in the Desair Lake watershed. Also mentioned that the Red Cedar Conference slate of presentations is pretty much set for the conference, which will be March 8, 2018.

Dan P: Presented a resolution regarding the desired Lake Protection grant to the county land conservation committee. Worked with John S on applying for a technical assistance grant from NRCS for \$50,000 for EQIP projects. No word yet. Did a lot of work on the county budget recently. Rick Inqli, former conservation technician for the county, left and went to St. Croix County. That position will remain open for now. The county is working with others to reclaim a gravel pit near Colfax, and do some restoration to native habitat.

Randy: Storm water budget for the City was passed. City now also has a fully trained erosion control inspector. The City waste water treatment plant's four-year report will be due in 2019. The City may investigate water quality trading a bit more before that report comes out. They are looking for trading opportunities, and perhaps ways to use the multi-discharge variance.

Liz: Provided a list of TMLIA's accomplishments over the last year. Presented to Menomonie 8<sup>th</sup> graders on the subject of water quality. Also participated in a field trip for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Is working with the group "Let's Go Fishing Menomonie" to put on some events for disabled people. Also in her job with St. Croix County, is looking for ways to report on BMPs installed in the county. Also will be working on the Land and Water Plan for the county in 2018.

Tyler: An update of Barron Co's manure storage ordinance is likely going to happen. Their Land and Water Plan is due in 2019. Weather caused a lot of problems with trying to get some projects done this fall. There aren't too many classic barnyard runoff issues left to address in the county, but lots of need for grassed waterways, as the large rain events are creating a lot of erosion and many gullies. Will be attending the producer-led grant workshop next week in the Dells.

Ruth: Wrapping up some work on a lot of grants, many of them urban non-point source grants, including ones for both the City of Menomonie, and the City of Rice Lake. It appears Washburn County may be turning more of their focus on managing ag land runoff. A new LTE in the DNR Spooner office will be working on manure audits for small, non-CAFO farms.

Kris Olson (via e-mail): I am working on the grant app for the dredging feasibility study to be submitted on Dec 10th. We will be applying for a Healthy Lakes grant on Feb 1st with numerous lakeshore owners, those especially affected by the tornado and some who wish to remove their retaining walls adding buffer native plantings. And more fishsticks projects for habitat and wave dispersion. We will continue with CLP and algae harvesting in 2018. Working on designing a barge to reduce the amount of traveling the Skimmer needs to do. Very proud of our community working together to accomplish all they have started and where we are headed.

**Evaluation:** All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Rankings occurred at the following frequency:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No.</u>
5.0	2
4.75	1

4.5            5  
4.0            5

Most of the reason for the lower rankings was that we went about 15 long with the meeting, and that we got sidetracked talking a bit too long on some things that should have been more brief.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership's next regular meeting date is Wednesday, February 7<sup>th</sup> in Barron.