

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

2/7/18 Barron County Government Center, Barron, WI

Present at the meeting: Liz Osborne – TMLIA; Lindsay Olson, Dan Prestebak – Dunn County Land Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Alyssa Quelling – UW Stout; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Restoration; Randy Eide – City of Menomonie; Brad Luedtke – 3M; Gerry Johnson – Red Cedar Lakes Association; Chris Wilger – WDNR; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda: Outcomes from the December meeting were presented and discussed. The current agenda was reviewed and discussed with no changes.

Grants Discussion: Several grants were discussed by the Partnership. Dunn County submitted a lake protection grant application to WDNR on February 1. The grant would be for \$200,000 over two years, and is titled “Red Cedar Soil Health Education and Outreach Initiative”. Funding will go mostly to a position to coordinate outreach regarding soil health, and also to establish some demo farms in the county and also provide an incentive payment to producers willing to adopt soil health BMPs on their operations. Barron County may use Dunn County’s application as a template for applying for a similar grant for Barron County in 2019. We should know about this year’s application by May or June.

Dan P also mentioned that Dunn County has been given preliminary approval on their NRCS National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) grant. This grant is for \$50,000 to be used as additional cost-share money for practices. First initial award of \$5,000 should be coming soon.

TRM grants from DNR were also discussed, which are due in mid-April. It doesn’t look like anyone in the watershed will be applying for a TRM grant this year, but many ideas were discussed. Dan Z. told the group that he participated in discussions with DNR staff about the under-utilization of TRM and NOD grants, and that DNR wants to get more counties to apply for these grants.

US EPA environmental education grants were discussed. These are due on March 15th. Most people thought the turn-around time on this would be too short to get something lined up, but ideas were tossed around, and in discussions with Nels Paulson later that day, Stout may be more interested than others in pursuing this, but nothing for sure yet.

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

Rod: Met with people at the Jenny O plant in Barron and discussed ways for them to build better relationships with their farmers, and work on lease agreements that feature soil health BMPs. They seemed receptive to the idea. The Barron County farmer led group had a meeting recently that attracted about 40 people. Tyler presented to that group about lease agreements, and it went well. Rod

would like to work with Tyler on refining lease agreements. One of the other speakers was Keith Berns from Nebraska, who is a farmer from Nebraska, and was quite good. Rod also met recently with Jim Yach who is the new director for the northern region.

Alyssa: Chris Ferguson and Nels are working on community capacity, and neither will be mentoring any REU students this coming summer in hopes to work on other priorities. Economic data for all counties in the Red Cedar watershed have been obtained, and this will help Chris to produce more and detailed information about the economics of clean water. Current review of student applicants for this summer's REU work are underway, and project topics have been sketched out.

Brad: Five Star Dairy will be rotating alfalfa into no-till corn fields on the leased 3M land beginning in 2019. The annual Earth Day event for employees will be May 1 this year.

Randy: Still working on mapping the City of Menomonie's phosphorus contribution to Lake Menomin. The City is also still exploring phosphorus trading for their waste water treatment plant.

Dan P: He and Ruth King recently met to talk about a bad barnyard issue in the watershed. Hay River Farmer Led Council had a meeting recently. They decided that \$2,000 of their incentive money will go toward seeding of covers on frozen ground. The County has also heard from some folks interested in renting the County's no-till drill.

Tyler: Barron County is allocating \$20,000 this year toward cover crop cost share. Some of the department's state funds will be used to target areas where grass waterways are needed. The County has issued 198 Certificates of Compliance for operations in compliance with farmland preservation guidelines.

Liz: TMLIA will be doing some student scholarships for the upcoming Red Cedar River Conference (March 8). Ten students from Colfax will be attending, and possibly 13 from Menomonie (with 3 of those paid for by TMLIA). Many community events have occurred or are coming up at which TMLIA will have a presence or an active role in planning/participating. A Stout student, Ryan Stewart, will be speaking at upcoming TMLIA meeting about media coverage of water issues. TMLIA will be applying for an Xcel Energy Foundation grant to be used for signage at the Lakeside Park rain garden. St. Croix County is now working on the update of their land and water plan. It will include a section on the Red Cedar TMDL. Liz sent some phosphorus load reduction numbers to Dan Z from St. Croix County's portion of the Red Cedar watershed. Through work the County has done with producers, 1,600 lbs of P has been reduced from entering the waterways.

Gerry: Is focusing on developing an AIS prevention project through applying for several grants aimed at control and prevention of curly leaf pondweed. There is also a need to update the aquatic plant management plan for the lakes. Have been doing a lot of monitoring on the tributaries to Red Cedar Lake, Big Chetac, and some of the smaller lakes.

Lindsay: Looking to get some local landowners to do some monitoring. A cover crop transect survey will be done soon. Working on getting more organized on tracking practices in Dunn County.

Chris: Mostly came to observe today.

Andy Bensend (via e-mail): We had an awesome presentation at our Barron County Farmer Led Watershed group meeting from Keith Berns from Nebraska. I would highly recommend him for a speaker if you ever need one for an event. I also have been talking with others about a strategy of frost seeding cereal rye into soybean stubble for a twist on covers before corn. Someday we can share the strategy and I am hopeful to get a few acres done this spring to see what we might learn.

Kris Olson (via e-mail): We submitted a Healthy Lakes grant application for 11 sites. Our goal was to prioritize those worst hit by the tornado and a couple projects of interest that could up BMPs (ex: removal of sea wall and using native plantings and fishsticks instead of riprap). We will be taking another year to prepare the dredging grant app. Since we have the time now, the board wishes to do RFPs on the construction dredging to make sure we are now looking at best possible options. I still believe we will probably come back to the original plan but this will be good to do regardless to be thorough. If anyone has any dredging contractor contacts for me, please pass them along. Otherwise, I will begin the search. Thanks for any input you can provide! Rod and Tyler, would like to touch base with you soon in particular on a couple items. Excited to hear about the education grant. We have to amp up our education efforts in our area. I am always amazed that even though everyone who pays taxes gets a newsletter and as often as we are in the paper at times, so few take the time to see or even care that we are trying to do good things for the Lakes which also means good things for the area.

Ted Ludwig (via e-mail): Only monitoring over the winter is road salt in Menomonie and so far, levels exceeded impaired levels on one occasion.

Andrew Norman (via e-mail): WWLT has sent a letter to the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program in support of Minnesota Land Trust's (MLT) grant proposal entitled "*Developing Standards for a New Working Grassland Easement Program in Southeast Minnesota.*" MLT will develop conservation grazing protocols useful in a conservation easement program, including model conservation easement language applicable throughout the region, including Wisconsin. MLT will also develop monitoring protocols, which are clear for both the landowner and the easement holder, and create a network of grazing producers, agency staff and non-profit conservation practitioners to facilitate information exchange. I sent an email out to WWLT's 6 agricultural producing easement landowners within the Red Cedar Watershed. I provided them with information regarding sustainable agricultural practices and invited them to the 2018 Red Cedar Conference. Lastly, some of the Red Cedar Partnership may have heard that West Wisconsin Land Trust and Bayfield Regional Conservancy have officially voted to merge our two organizations. After a thorough exploration of our resources, the conservation challenges ahead, and our commitment to in-perpetuity conservation, the board came to the conclusion that a larger, more robust organization was needed for greater impact and long-term sustainability. This new entity will combine the service areas of both organizations to form a single 20 county service area in western and northwestern Wisconsin.

Evaluation: All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Everyone ranked the meeting as a 5.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next regular meeting date is Wednesday, April 4, in Menomonie.