

## **Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes**

**6/5/19 Dunn Co Community Services Building, Menomonie, WI**

**Present at the meeting:** Randy Eide – City of Menomonie; Pat Richter – NRCS Barron Co; Liz Usborne – TMLIA and DNR; Jessica Schoen, Dan Prestebak – Dunn County Land Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Rod Olson – Desair Lake; Andy Bensed – Barron Co farmer; Alex Smith – WDNR; Dick Lamers – TMLIA; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

**Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda:** Outcomes from the April meeting were presented and discussed with no changes. A brief discussion of finding money or a grant to hire someone to help with water quality monitoring occurred, and it was decided to put this on the agenda for the February meeting.

### **Discussion of McKnight Grant for hiring a Farmer-Led Council Coordinator for the four original**

**FLCs:** Through Wisconsin Farmers Union, the four original pilot FLCs in Polk, St. Croix, Pierce and Dunn Counties applied for a grant from the McKnight Foundation to fund a coordinator for two years. The grant was awarded and the position will be advertised in the next week or so. The Partnership discussed ways to work with the coordinator, much as we did with Julia Olmstead when she was the original coordinator (under Extension) for these FLCs. We hope to have the new coordinator be a member of the Partnership, and hope to be able to work through this position to help forward some of the goals in our Strategy for the Red Cedar watershed.

### **Discussion of possible NRCS funds to help coordinate the further development of demo farms**

**in the watershed:** This discussion was begun at the last meeting, but was revisited here because of the new FLC coordinator position mentioned above. The Partnership was generally in agreement that we'd still like to pursue the possibility of getting either a Contribution Agreement or a Cooperative Conservation Agreement with NRCS to fund more demo farm creation and management in the watershed. Contribution Agreements can be negotiated with NRCS at any time (if funds are available), and Cooperative Conservation Agreements are more of a formalized grant program, with applications due in May 2020. The next steps in this effort is to have further discussions with River Country RC&D and West Central Regional Planning to see if they would be interested in being the grant writer and hosting the position (Regional Planning has already expressed preliminary interest). Match for such funds would have to be found as well. The Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition has also expressed some desire to pursue such funding, and the group discussed the pros and cons of having just one position to cover both watersheds, and decided against that idea in favor of pursuing a position for only the Red Cedar watershed. Dan Z will pursue some conversations with the possible partners.

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

Randy: The MS4 compliance plan approved by DNR shows steps the City of Menomonie will take to meet TMDL requirements. The City applied for a DNR Urban NPS grant to get funds (\$30,000) to remodel the City's runoff influence on Lake Menomin. Another dredging permit application was submitted to DNR by the City for dredging another part of Wolske Bay. The City's waste water treatment plant did some tests using sand filters to try to remove more phosphorus from their effluent. There have been talks between the City and UW-Stout about doing some creative art work at storm water inlet sites.

Dan Z: Wisconsin Farmers Union and other organizations are bringing "Women Caring for the Land" events to the state. One of these events will be held on July 15 at EB Ranch near Ridgeland. The Year Three Plan Update has been finalized and is posted to the Red Cedar River Watershed website. Some data from NRCS is still missing, but decided to finalize what we had and publish it.

Rod: Has done some shoreland protection and streambank projects in the Rice Lake and Desair Lake areas. Some attendees at the Red Cedar River Conference in March suggested more presentations at the conference regarding river history and recreation.

Pat: Conservation Stewardship Program signups have been happening. 35 applicants applied for Barron and Rusk Counties. The third EQIP signup of the year is coming up soon.

Tyler: For Farmland Preservation compliance, Barron County is requiring a nutrient management plan and checklist. Minnesota Public Radio has a podcast called "Fieldwork" that is very good, and had a guest on from the Nature Conservancy who stated that, as a landowner, you need to invest in the maintenance of your land like you would invest in maintaining a building you owned, like an apartment building. Is encouraging farmers to do prevent planting this summer to try to get things planted in time to at least get crop insurance.

Liz (DNR): Started her new job recently as regional NPS coordinator. Will be working on issues pertaining to NR151 and NR243. Will be working with various grant programs including Urban NPS grants (only 1/2 to 1/3 of these will be awarded this year, as there were a large number of applicants). There has been a notice of discharge for an operation in part of Chippewa County that is in the Red Cedar watershed, dealing with unconfined liquid manure. There were a record low number of applicants this year for TRM grants. DNR is under constraints for how they can use TRM and NOD grants due to funding sources and regulations. Chippewa County as submitted their new Land and Water Management plan, with a strong focus on Little Lake Wissota and its TMDL.

Liz (TMLIA): Wisconsin Wildlife Federation published a resolution proposed by TMLIA to control phosphorus in Wisconsin's waters. TMLIA recently worked with Menomonie middle school on some BMPs. AJ Leiden from Beaver Creek Reserve recently presented to TMLIA on aquatic invasive species. The welcome reception for the LAKES REU students will be coming up soon as the students arrive. The Menomin Meander bike ride will again be sponsored in August.

Dick: The Legislature's "Groundwater Task Force" is scheduled to have a meeting in Menomonie sometime this summer, but now it's not for sure if that will happen. Stout and other organizations are sponsoring "Health Dunn Right", a celebration of the Community Health Coalition with action planning, capacity building and a health needs assessment will be held at Stout on July 16.

Andy: Will be speaking at a field day on June 11 sponsored by the Western Wisconsin Conservation Council, on the topic of dairy operations. Farmers of Barron County farmer led council is still waiting for their soil probes to arrive. Has been experimenting with different methods and timing of manure application. Has seen some corn planted under plastic in the county that is growing quite well.

Alex: Code revision for surface water grants is underway with a public comment period coming up soon. Healthy Lakes shoreland grants will be extended to river shoreland as well. Northwest Lakes Conference is coming up on June 21 in Hayward, and will feature NRCS rainfall simulator.

Jess: The newest farmer led council, "Red Cedar Conservation Farmers", are working with her to try to line up field days and other activities. They have budgeted for some groundwater sampling. A group of

service learning UW-Eau Claire students produced some PR materials for the Dunn County demo farms. Jeff Lake's demo farm will be having a field day sometime this summer. The Red Cedar demo farm is doing some paired demo sampling of soil microbiology. So far no-till samples are showing better results, though the test design is not rigorous enough for published research. The Dunn County ad hoc groundwater committee is wrapping up their final recommendations soon. Handed out a brochure advertising the Water Matters Tour sponsored by the Professional Dairy Producers, with an event scheduled in the Lower Chippewa River watershed on June 26. Environmental education field days were held in May for 5<sup>th</sup> graders. There is a growing interest in area farms for composting manure.

Dan P: Red Cedar Conservation Farmers field days have been very impromptu, which has been good for getting people to come see something quickly without having to put on a big event. Dunn Co Alliance of Sportsmen's clubs are having a fishing day called "Sharing Our Resources" on June 7. The County's no-till drill is being used a lot in spite of weather conditions making many things difficult on farms. County applied for an NRCS Cooperative Conservation Agreement to extend the soil health position.

Andrew Norman (via e-mail): Landmark Conservancy is working on acquiring 145 acres that we are calling the Red Cedar Ferry Pit located in Colfax. The property is currently owned by the county and if we are successful in the acquisition we may transfer it to the Town of Colfax to be managed as a park.

Alyssa Quilling (via e-mail): We have the Water, Land, and People workshop on Friday. It will hopefully be able to start a conversation about continuing to grow community capacity and brainstorm about the possibility of having a rural community institute at Stout. Buzz Sorge was a driving force in organizing it and Aaron Thompson will be there to facilitate parts of it. The LAKES students are arriving this coming Sunday and we are looking forward to having them here for 8 weeks of research. The community forum is set for Wednesday, July 31. Save the date, we would love to see you all there.

**Evaluation:** All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Rankings were all fives except for Andy, who rated it 4.5 because he was late getting to the meeting.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership's next regular meeting date is Wednesday, August 7, 2019, in Barron.