

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

8/7/19 Barron County Government Center, Barron, WI

Present at the meeting: Dan Prestebak, Jessica Schoen, Steve Olson – Dunn County Land Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Alyssa Quelling – UW Stout; Alex Smith – WDNR; Liz Osborne – TMLIA/WDNR; Nick Stadnyk – Rusk County Land Conservation; Rod Olson – Desair Lake; Gerry Johnson – Red Cedar Lakes; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda: Outcomes from the June meeting were presented and discussed with a minor change to Liz's TMLIA check in. The current agenda was reviewed and discussed with no changes.

Discussion of Possible Presentation to Legislative Water Quality Task Force: On September 4, the special Task Force on Water Quality convened by the state legislature will be having one of its hearings in Menomonie. The hearing structure is such that a few "invited" speakers are featured, followed by public comment period. Invited speakers have roughly 20 minutes. The Partnership discussed possibly trying to get an "invited" slot at the hearing. Some contacts were made with various people before today's meeting to try to determine how to go about doing this. However, after today's meeting it was discovered that Dunn County has been invited to speak, and some of what we wanted to communicate to the task force could be done through that presentation. Also, it was discovered later that Wisconsin Lakes was invited to speak as well, and Executive Director Mike Engleson suggested that some of their time be given over to someone representing the Red Cedar Partnership. So, some follow up conversations will be necessary to see how this will all unfold. Dan Z asked everyone to get him some bullet points of interest for such a presentation. He has to determine if his program will allow him to speak. If not, he can put together information for others to communicate to the task force, if that works out as the best option.

Regional Farmer Led Council Coordinator Position: The four original pilot farmer led councils (FLCs) in northwest Wisconsin (in St. Croix, Pierce, Polk and Dunn Counties) decided a few months ago to apply for a larger McKnight Foundation grant to be used for hiring a coordinator for the four FLCs. This would be done through Farmers Union, who agreed to apply for the grant and house the position. The grant was awarded, interviews took place, and Bill Hogseth has been hired as the new FLC coordinator. He will start in September. The Partnership talked about ways to work with Bill, much in the same way as we used to work with Julie Olmstead, the original coordinator for the FLCs. Bill has agreed to attend our meetings and work with us as his position comes on line.

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

Dan Z: In past meetings, seeking funding from NRCS for multi-county projects was discussed. In talks with both River Country RC&D and West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning, as well as some counties, it was determined that this is not the best time to be pursuing this option, but the door is left open to perhaps collaborate on such funding requests in the future. Attended the farm field day at Jeff Lakes' farm on 8/6. Was a great turnout, and many good presentations and conversations.

Alyssa: LAKES REU forum was held the previous week, and was a successful presentation by the students of their research. Attendance was a bit lower than years past, but the research was very well done and will be useful for the Partnership and our goals. Dunn County News will feature the students' research in coming editions. Stout staff is working on another grant application to fund the LAKES REU program for another three years. The forum organized by Buzz Sorge a few months ago regarding the possibility of starting some sort of institute at Stout to forward work being done to increase community capacity toward cleaner water and healthier soil may lead to another discussion of how to move forward at this time. Today was Alyssa's last meeting with the Partnership, as her position is ending soon.

Tyler: Land and Water Board of Barron County approved the new Land and Water Plan, which now goes to the full County Board for approval on 8/21. Is hoping to do more groundwater testing in the county. Also wants to form some sort of producer-led group in a region of the county where there are poor soils due to glacial outwash. Had a lot of grass waterways go in this year. This year in Barron County, 21 dairy farms have been lost thus far.

Rod: Later this month he is going to Stout Island on Red Cedar Lake to meet with others and discuss ways to tie history into water quality in the region. One idea is to make a stretch of the Red Cedar River from Red Cedar Lake to about Cameron, into a National Heritage Area. Just finished a 100' stream bank erosion project on Desair Creek.

Steve: New to the soil health specialist position with Dunn County. Came from St. Croix County land conservation. Is excited to help producers figure out how to incorporate more soil health practices into their land management.

Gerry: (from an earlier e-mail) Red Cedar Lake Association (RCLA) submitted and was awarded three new grants this spring -- 1) a 2019 - 2021 Aquatic Invasive Species Control Grant, 2) a 2019 and 2020 Water Quality Lakes Planning Grant and 3) a 2019 Clean Boats and Clean Waters Grant. * The \$240,000 AIS Control grant will cover expanded herbicide treatment up to 58 acres of Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) in Red Cedar. Balsam and Hemlock Lakes, pre - and post - treatment lakes studies, continued CLP bed mapping, shoreline habitat study, purple loosestrife monitoring, and monitoring for zebra mussels and Eurasian water milfoil. An emergency action plan is also part of the grant, which allows for immediate remedial action in conjunction with the DNR should a new AIS be detected. * The \$50,000 Water Quality Planning Grant primarily will focus on lakes, streams and shorelines measurements of phosphorous, dissolved oxygen, flow volume and precipitation with the objective of updating the water quality management plan for our area. * The Clean Boats Clean Water grant will help RCLA monitor our four busiest landings, starting in May and continuing through September 15. The program is designed to educate boaters on aquatic plants and animals (both native and invasive), proper bait and bait tank handling, proper bilge tank handling and power loading issues.

Jessica: Dunn County will be doing some well testing in the SE part of the county (outside the Red Cedar watershed). Is working with the newest farmer led council, the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers, to help them apply for a DATCP producer led grant. Talked about the Jeff Lake Farm Field Day (see above).

Proposed the idea of a subcommittee of the Partnership that focuses more on what is being done on farmers and by farmers, which may be a topic for further discussion at a future meeting. The ad hoc ground water committee in Dunn County is working on its final recommendations, which should be out soon.

Alex: Brought up the idea to other DNR staff at a meeting that perhaps streamlining the process of reporting to EPA on how Clean Water Act Section 319 (funding for non-point source pollution), and suggested that something like that may make it easier for us to report our BMPs and other changes on the ground.

Liz (DNR): Urban NPS Planning grants have been ranked. There were more applications than there is money available. A few regional grant applications may have scored high enough to be awarded, but the awards have not yet been announced. The Governor has had meetings with DNR and DATCP Secretaries, discussing the possibility of creating nitrate standards for groundwater.

Liz (TMLIA): Recent fishing event held was well attended and fun. LAKES REU students worked at a TMLIA booth at the Menomonie farmers market and had good interaction with folks there. Menomin Meander bike ride is coming up on August 17th. Had a conversation with Jeff Lake at his farm field day about the possibilities of creating markets for cover crops and small grains. Some fish sticks (trees) have been dropped in the lake to promote habitat, and presented a good educational opportunity for folks who didn't know what this was for.

Dan P: Got turned down for a NRCS Cooperative Conservation Agreement grant that would have helped extend the soil health position in the county beyond its current limited time frame. Both Hay River FLC and Red Cedar Conservation Farmers are applying for DATCP grants. Working on a new lease for Chippewa Valley Technical College regarding the Red Cedar Demo Farm, and hoping to keep that relationship going.

Nick: New in April to Rusk County Land Conservation, and also is now the zoning administrator, so has his hands full. Would like to continue to be a part of the Partnership and contribute whatever he can to the group effort.

Randy Eide (via e-mail): Construction on the Wakanda Regional Pond in Menomonie will more than likely move to 2020. We are waiting on the formal approval from the DNR to start the design.

Evaluation: All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Most everyone rated the meeting a 5, with Jess rating the meeting a 4 because of a lack of farmer presence, and Dan P rating the meeting a 4.5 because of feeling a little ill-prepared to discuss the Legislative Task Force hearing.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next regular meeting date is Wednesday, October 2, in Menomonie. Location will be determined later.