

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

10/2/19, Dunn County Community Services Building, Menomonie, WI

Present at the meeting: Dan Prestebak, Jessica Schoen, Steve Olson – Dunn County Land Conservation; Bill Hogseth – Farmers Union; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Arthur Kneeland – UW Stout; Alex Smith – WDNR; Liz Osborne – WDNR & TMLIA; Lindsey Ketchel – Landmark Conservancy; Brad Luedke – 3M; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda: Outcomes from the August meeting were discussed with one change to add TMLIA to Liz's attendance credentials. The current agenda was reviewed and discussed with no changes.

Introduction of Bill Hogseth of Farmers Union (new Farmer Led Council Coordinator) and time for discussion of his role: Bill was hired under a two-year McKnight Foundation grant to help facilitate and coordinate efforts between the four pilot farmer led councils in Dunn, St. Croix, Polk and Pierce Counties. He's been on the job about a month. He shared ideas for what he'd like to do and the group offered ideas as well. One issue is that the McKnight grant is only for two years, and after that, no further money will be available from McKnight for his position, and McKnight will also no longer be granting any money to the Councils. So other funding sources will be needed.

Discussion of Legislative Water Quality Task Force hearing in Menomonie in September: Several members of the Partnership spoke at the Task Force hearing in Menomonie on September 4. Dan Prestebak and others from Dunn County were invited speakers, as was Rod Olson (along with Dick Lamers). Others from the Partnership spoke later during public comment. The Task Force heard many of the same things from us as they did from people around the state. Some of the common themes included Land Conservation Departments being understaffed for much of the work needed for one-on-one interactions with farmers; more testing and research into groundwater issues; the effectiveness of farmer led councils and demo farms; etc. The Task Force seemed open to many of the issues and possible solutions brought up at the hearing. We believe the messages we wanted to deliver were given adequate time.

Discussion of Possible Subcommittee of the Partnership focusing on farmers and farm issues: Jessica had suggested at the previous meeting that a group of farmers and those who work closely with them would be a valuable subcommittee of the Partnership, if there was interest. Dan Z had invited Jeff Lake (Dunn Co farmer) to join the Partnership but he did not attend this meeting. Andy Bensed (Barron Co farmer) has been attending in the past, though not present today. Those two people, along with some others would be a good starting group. Jessica, Bill and Steve agreed to lead an effort to explore this possibility.

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

Dan Z: Green Lands Blue Waters Conference will be held Nov 19 and 20 in Minneapolis. Sent the conference link to everyone. DNR Lake Planning and Management grants are due December 10. Small (\$3,000 max) and large (\$25,000 max) are available. Larger Lake Protection grants (\$200,000) are due on Feb 1. Had some contact with members of “Friends of the Red Cedar” at an event with Senator Tammy Baldwin. They seemed interested in the Partnership, and Dan will follow up with them to see if they’d like to join.

Bill: Nothing more to add.

Tyler: The Jenny O turkey operation in Barron can no longer burn their manure in Minnesota. A manure digester was being proposed for Hammond, but that did not materialize. So they are looking for participating land owners for spreading. Will be a lot of manure. Many new turkey barns going up in Barron County just under CAFO standards. Nutrient management is an issue, and Tyler wants to organize some sort of meeting with barn operators with Jenny O’s participation.

Jess: There will be a presentation by Dr. Mark Borchard on Oct 17 at the Dunn County Judicial Center on “Cows, People and Groundwater Quality” sponsored by Dunn County League of Women Voters. Jess will be meeting with town boards on the issues of groundwater and water quality.

Alex: Nothing more to add.

Dan P: There may be a little money for practices available in Dunn County through the multi-discharge variance for the Red Cedar watershed (HUC 8). Liz shared a spreadsheet showing that the dollar figures are pretty small for counties in the Red Cedar. Dan did not attend the meeting with Tammy Baldwin on Lake Menomin but did meet with her staff people later, and found them receptive to input from the County. Attended the NRCS working group meeting, and one of the things discussed was changing CSP program to recognize improvements in soil organic matter.

Steve: Working on about 35 acres worth of CREP contracts in the Hay River watershed. Met with Red Cedar River Farmer Led Council about trying to get some younger farmers involved in that group. Has been working to get about 2,000 acres of cover crops flown in in the County. Testing of soil CO₂ is now being done on Jeff Lake’s farm.

Liz (TMLIA): Gave a presentation to 250 Menomonie 8th graders this week. The school has nearly a decade of water quality data for Jarrett Creek showing phosphorus levels declining, no detection of ammonia, and recently the highest biotic index they’ve ever detected. One student said no-till doesn’t work because it dries out the soil (probably heard at home, so more education needed). Menomin Meander bike ride was a success with double the participation of last year. Working with the City of Menomonie to find grants to help implement two Stout student capstone projects focused on water quality. Looking to do prescribed burns at Dobbs Landing this weekend. Also participated in the meeting with Tammy Baldwin and communicated 319 funding needs. 2020 TMLIA calendars are ready for purchase at the Annual Meeting, Tuesday, October 8 at Dunn County Fish and Game Club at 6 PM. Jeff Lake will be awarded the Good Neighbor award. Participated in Farm City Day at Denmark Dairy on Sept 7. Accepted a \$5,000 Community Foundation of Dunn County grant to support the 2020 Red Cedar River Conference. Liz, Rod Olson and Dick Lamers will be doing a plenary presentation at the Upper Midwest Planning Conference later this week.

Liz (DNR): Public comment period on the state's five-year NPS management plan is now closed. Is following up on some runoff (NR 151) complaints in Dunn County. None of the applicants in the Red Cedar were awarded Urban NPS grants. Rain to Rivers fell one ranking short of making the cut. Had some discussions with Kyle (St Croix County), Eric (Polk County) and Ruth King about options for funds to keep farmer-led council coordinator position funded.

Lindsey: First time at a Partnership meeting. Landmark has one project in the Red Cedar at this time, the Ferry Pit project near Colfax, with a former gravel pit that may be converted to public land (though still owned by Landmark). Looking at a possible EPA project on forested land in the St. Croix watershed.

Brad: 3M has some erosion issues on their property, though all the runoff goes to their detention pond. But still looking to curb the erosion issue. Did a burn on 5 acres of land last year. Five Star Dairy still contracting for their farmland. Is working with some of Arthur Kneeland's students on some capstone projects dealing with wetland issues.

Arthur (had to leave early): REU grant is being submitted for another three year project, but not starting until summer of 2021. Currently it's difficult to find someone to coordinate the project, with Alyssa no longer working on it, and faculty busy with their regular work. But hopefully will be able to keep attending meetings.

Rod Olson (via e-mail): Our soils in Barron County are saturated and the creeks and rivers are running high. Harvesting has been delayed and in danger of not getting completed. The Desair Creek streambank projects have been well tested and are holding. I am curious what might have come of our Legislative Task Force presentation? What did the members attending think of our efforts? Did a message get through? Liz, Dick and I are making a similar presentation describing the success of the Red Cedar River Conference and Partnership in Eau Claire Friday. We have been invited by Cedar Corp to speak at the plenary luncheon to the Midwest Chapter of the American Planning Association. The title of their conference is "Innovation Planning on the Edge".

Gerry Johnson (via e-mail): Board is waiting for the fall CLP bed mapping results, the water quality summary report for the season and the shoreline habitat study report. Hopefully, I will have this information to report on at the Dec 4 meeting.

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 Lindsey rating the meeting a 4 because of a lot of jargon that she didn't understand, and Brad rating it at 4.5 for the same reason. For those not involved in the ag sector regularly, we need to be conscious that not everyone knows all the acronyms, agencies and regulation language.

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