

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

12/4/19 Barron County Government Center, Barron, WI

**Present at the meeting:** Dan Prestebak, Jessica Schoen – Dunn County Land Conservation; Bill Hogseth – Farmers Union; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Liz Osborne – WDNR & TMLIA; Gerry Johnson – Red Cedar Lakes Association; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Association; Bryan Crum – DNR; Nick Stadnyk – Rusk County LCD; Jamey Lideen, Gary Luepke, Jack Rusch – Chetek Lakes Protection Association; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

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

**Discussion of monitoring and modeling meeting regarding Corps of Engineers/DNR funded – project:** A meeting was held on November 8<sup>th</sup> of the advisory committee for the 3-year project funded by Army Corps of Engineers, DNR, and match from various Red Cedar stakeholders, more or less wrapping up the project. The main focus of the meeting was the monitoring done over the last 5 years by Bill James of UW-Stout, and the new CE-QUAL-W2 lake model created for Tainter/Menomoin Lakes by Jim Noren of COE. Both presented at the meeting, and while we couldn't get them to come to today's meeting, Dan and a few others who were present used their PowerPoint presentations to brief the Partnership on results. One highlight; there appears to be about 80,000 lbs less of phosphorus loading to the watershed compared to the data collected in the 1990s (going in the right direction!). This means the TMDL goal of reducing 300,000 lbs of phosphorus can reasonably be assumed to now be down to about 220,000 lbs, though this will have little effect on how the Partnership continues to approach phosphorus reductions. Recommendations from the monitoring study for management changes are to do all we can to reduce particulate phosphorus erosion from soil, and to decrease the amount of phosphorus applied to fields as fertilizer.

The CE-QUAL-W2 modeling work basically created a model of lake loading, and offered some possible outcome scenarios. For instance, the model shows that if 50% of the soluble reactive phosphorus in the lakes can be reduced, then a corresponding 50% reduction in chlorophyll content (algae blooms) would likely follow. Further scenarios could be projected by the Corps using this model if requested by the Partnership or others.

It was agreed that having Bill James (who now has moved to South Carolina) speak to the group via phone or web would be a good idea for a future meeting, probably after his final report is released.

**Discussion of DNR Lake Protection Grants:** DNR's Lake Protecting Grant program is likely to have sufficient funding and be underutilized this coming year (applications due in February), so the Partnership discussed possible ideas for using this grant program, since it's likely that a well-constructed application would be funded. Bill posed the question that, since Farmers Union is not eligible for these

grants, would it be a good idea in the future to petition to get the program expanded to farm organizations such as Farmers Union. The group had various opinions about this. It was also suggested that Farmers Union could seek out other entities, such as the Regional Planning Commission or other eligible entities, to help secure a grant. Bill's position is only funded (from a McKnight Foundation grant) for two years. Rod mentioned that Desair Lake was looking at this grant program to help slow the flow in upland dry runs, which cause substantial erosion during heavy precipitation events. Tyler said that, while Barron County would like more funding for soft practices especially on field edges where profitability may be marginal, and also that the county's Land and Water Plan calls for future hiring of a soil health staff member, but that Barron County would likely not be ready to get a grant together by this coming year's deadline. (In an additional conversation, Jessica shared information with Tyler about Profit Zone Manager software, which could help farmers with the field edges issue, and that Pheasants Forever is currently working with that software and some farmers in Dunn County on this exact issue.)

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

Dan Z: Nothing further.

Rod: Exploring the idea of making the Red Cedar River watershed a Natural Heritage Area. Working on getting "Trusty Rusty", a draft horse sculpture, installed in Rice Lake, to join other educational displays and sculptures already on the lake.

Bill: The Hay River Farmer Led Council requested funds from the "Cover Crop Champions" program offered by the National Wildlife Federation, and is waiting to hear if they will receive that funding. According to the NWF website, "A Cover Crop Champion team consists of Farmer Champions and Outreach Champions. Farmer Champions are farmers that are experts in on-the-ground implementation of sustainable farming practices such as cover crops. Outreach Champions are agricultural professionals that work for a local non-profit or government organization." Part of this project, if awarded, would include making a video about cover crops to be shown at screenings for only farmers, and also some signage for producers who are planting cover crops.

Liz (DNR): DNR is struggling to meet matching goals for the Clean Water Act Section 319 funding they get from EPA, and are looking for creative ways to expand how those funds can be spent. Some proposals have been suggested to reduce the cap for large scale TRM grants (to make sure funds get spent rather than projects falling short of spending goals), and also to increase the amount of funding going toward staffing needs. Ashland County is being very progressive in putting the use of climate models into their County planning. Joanna Griffin is now the head of the TRM grant program at DNR Central Office in Madison.

Liz (TMLIA): The Highway M erosion control project is on hold because Dunn County, while initially allocating the 35% of the funding needed for this project (with the Army Corps of Engineers picking up the remaining 65%), has since spent the County share of the funding. TMLIA has gotten several small grants to help with sign installation at the Lakeside Park rain garden. Work has begun to prep the site for such signage (eventually it is hoped to use that area for expanded outdoor education). At TMLIA's annual meeting, Jeff Lake was awarded the Good Neighbor award, and Lake Family Farms has since also received the Wisconsin Leopold Conservation Award. Jeff's wife Kelly has agreed to be on the Red Cedar

Watershed Conference Planning Committee. 2020 calendars are now available from TMLIA. Their December end-of-year social is happening at Brewery Nonic in Menomonie on December 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM. Postcards advertising the Red Cedar Watershed Conference have gone out in the mail. Liz participated in a Clean Water Panel at UW-Stout which also included Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes, State Senator Patty Schachtner, Bill Hogseth, Scott McGovern from UW-Stout, Thomas Bilse from Friends of the Red Cedar, K T Gallagher from the County Public Health Dept., and Tina Lee from UW-Stout. TMLIA received a \$500 grant for the Wild and Scenic Film Festival which they will host at the Mabel Tainter Theater in November of 2020.

Gerry: Submitted 2020-24 aquatic plant study/plan to DNR for approval, which is necessary for an AIS grant. At last check there were about 70 acres of invasive curly leaf pondweed in the three lakes, with 28 acres of that considered as medium to high density. No new infestations have been observed. Did a shoreline study of properties, looking to see which ones may need more work to avoid harmful runoff/erosion into the lakes. A fairly low percentage of properties appear to need such work. Also doing some work to control invasive purple loosestrife, with the charter school in Birchwood helping to raise and release beetles. Hosted an educational meeting for members in August with about 70 in attendance. In their first year of grant-funded water quality monitoring, phosphorus levels are in the mid-20s (ppm) in Red Cedar Lake, with 17 ppm as the goal. Clean Boats Clean Waters program this past season reached many people at four boat landings.

Dan P: Jeff Lake, when awarded the Leopold Conservation Award, asked many of the partners he works with to be present as well. Cover crops were a challenge this fall again with the wet weather. Dan believes more incentive toward aerial seeding would be helpful. Had a meeting with Rob Summerfield, Assembly representative from the Bloomer area, who was promoting the idea of Tainter/Menomoin forming a lake district. Three towns in Dunn County have town zoning, and that is where most of the farmland preservation in the county is located.

Jamey, Gary, Jack: Want to stay involved with the Partnership. Education is a focus for them this year. They currently have a Healthy Lakes Grant from DNR but will not be applying for any additional funds this time around. This is the third year they've been doing weed harvesting on the lakes with success being shown in the amount of weeds and algae removed. A tree service company has been taking the removed plant mass and composting it. The success of that program has increased donations to the Association, as well as kudos from residents. They have started using a barge to help haul the plant material, as well as to help move the harvester from one place to another more quickly. They also have a more convenient online sign-up for the crews who run the harvester.

Bryan: First meeting with the Partnership. New DNR employee working on NR 151 issues in NW Wisconsin. Has been working closely with Ruth King and Alex Smith, and so far has mostly been responding to complaints.

Tyler: Lots of manure leaving the Red Cedar to MN and other counties in WI (turkey manure). Jenny O will be having a meeting with their contractors soon, and Tyler will attend and present some educational information from the County's perspective regarding manure and nutrient management. Trying to get farmers to participate in nutrient management can be frustrating, especially when they're told that once a NM plan is in effect on their land, it will be that way forever. Perhaps something can be done to relax some of those restrictions.

Jessica: The Red Cedar Farmer Led Council did some groundwater sampling including 26 samples. A hot

spot for nitrates was found. She helped write the group's year-end report which is now available. More work needs to be done toward ground water and surface water testing. They will be hosting a winter workshop Dec 17<sup>th</sup> in Bloomer. The Dunn County ground water ad hoc committee disbanded earlier this year, but their recommendations also addressed some surface water quality issues. Recently uranium was found in groundwater in the Ridgeland area. This may be due to some underground rupture that released some uranium. Resources will be available to help anyone affected.

Nick: Is working on a DNR River Planning grant to help with some issues of runoff in the western part of the County. Recently used LIDAR data to help redraw the boundary (in Rusk County) of the Red Cedar River watershed, with some notable changes in some areas compared to current HUC 12 maps. Had an issue with an aerial cover crop applicator having his plane shot it from the ground. Turns out it was an illegal marijuana grower, thinking he was being spied on.

Randy Eide (via e-mail): Still planning on constructing the 2nd Storm Water Regional Pond in Wakanda Park in 2020. Bids should go out in January of 2020. Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade bids will be open on Dec 19, 2019 -- Improve and Upgrade existing processes at the Plant. Phase II of the upgrades will take place in 2021/22 and will bring Wastewater Treatment Plant into compliance with new permit criteria for Phosphorus limits. Annual 2020 Stormwater Utility budget approved by the City Council on Dec 2, 2019. Includes \$15K support to Dunn County for Water Quality Specialist and Annual Red Cedar Conference sponsorship. Working with Beaver Dam Lake Association to develop a breakout presentation for the 2020 Red Cedar Watershed Conference.

**Evaluation**: All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Everyone ranked the meeting as a 5, but some comments from newer attendees indicated that 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, February 5, in Menomonie.