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

**6/3/20 Meeting held via Zoom due to Covid19 pandemic**

**Present at the meeting:** Dan Prestebak, Steve Olson, Heather Wood – Dunn County Land Conservation; Liz Usborne – DNR & TMLIA; Alex Smith, Bryan Crum – DNR; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Brad Luedtke – 3M; Tina Lee, Arthur Kneeland – UW-Stout; Nick Stadnyk – Rusk County LCD; Jamey Ladeen – Chetek Lakes Association; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

**Discussion of meeting format, etc.:** Since the meeting was being held via Zoom, there was some brief issues with getting everyone’s presence and interaction in the room functional. No major agenda topics were listed or discussed. Instead, everyone simply took some check-in time.

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

Dan Z: Extension is still mostly forbidden from travel, with special permissions needed for limited travel events. Most everyone is working from home yet. Attended a webinar for a new GIS-type software application called OpTIS, for use in assessing no till and cover crops using remote sensing. Shared the website for the software with the group: ctic.org/OpTIS.
Liz (DNR): Some aspects of DNR’s work starting to return to normal. Fieldwork will be allowed, but most people still working from home. Targeted Runoff Management grants deadline was extended this year to May 15. There were two applications for work in the Red Cedar River watershed. Statewide, applications were up. There is some discussion happening that may cause some restructuring her work hours to focus more on areas where 319 funds/issues are in place.
Liz (TMLIA): Have been fielding many questions from people about swimming, safety, and other Covid concerns. Will be doing a midpoint evaluation next week to look at what they can accomplish over the remainder of the year. The Menomonie Fire Department reached out to TMLIA to perhaps come up with fundraising ideas to raise money to help them update their water rescue equipment.
Alex: Water quality and biological monitoring will begin soon, with people required to stay at least 6 feet apart in boats and in the water. The state lab now has capacity to handle testing as well. Suggested that TMLIA should consider applying for a $5,000 grant to help with the Red Cedar Conference, but Liz was not sure they had the capacity for that at the moment. Has bee working on some grant reimbursements.
Tina: Not having REU students around this summer is probably good, considering the Covid situation. That program will resume next summer for three more years. The social sciences department at Stout is still thinking about some sort of rural sustainability degree.
Arthur: Many students lost environmental science internships because of Covid. Is currently trying to get some student projects going for restoration ecology. The biology department got permission to search for a limnologist for a faculty position. Someone will likely be starting this fall in that position.
Tyler: His shop has been busy getting some things done. Many grass waterways are being installed in the county. The transect survey will be starting soon. No till adoption in the county seems to be happening, but is very segmented, with some areas of the county showing lots of no till, with other areas showing almost none. It seems some producers are starting to understand that nutrient management plans are to be taken off the shelf, used, and updated…rather than just being done and tossed aside. NRCS, Wisconsin Land and Water, and other forces are starting to talk about developing a nitrate standard for the state.
Nick: Is working on two barnyard projects, and working with Liz on these. The county is looking for a conservation/GIS intern for the summer.
Dan P: Worked to finish up the match requirements for the Red Cedar/Corps of Engineers project that just ended. Finished up the reimbursement request for the Lake Protection grant through DNR. Has two habitat restoration projects happening in the watershed. Wrote a NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts) grant for $50,000 to try to get money to do follow-up work on how well people are installing and maintaining practices under EQIP program. Introduced Heather Wood, new water resources specialist with Dunn County.
Heather: Her first meeting with the group. Just started in the position. Had been working as a lake management consultant in the northern part of the watershed.
Steve: Full season cover crops have been planted at two demo farms in the county, and the Red Cedar Demo Farm will likely be planting some there soon. Working on a CREP project right on the Red Cedar River returning 15 acres to trees. Nitrogen use efficiency plots have been set up at the demo farms, and samples have been pulled.
Jamey: Most projects the Chetek Lakes group are working on are moving forward, but their annual fund-raiser had to be cancelled. Currently exploring doing some sort of GoFundMe event online. About a dozen healthy lakes projects are underway on properties on the lakes. The skimmer/harvester will be out running in the next couple weeks. They are working on more education projects, and also hoping to update their aquatic plant management plan soon.
Brad: Fiver Star Dairy, in keeping with their lease of 3M land, is turning about half the acres from alfalfa to corn this year. Have hired a half-time intern for the summer, working on environmental health and safety issues.
Brian Crum (had to leave early): Still finding ways to help work on TMDL issues in the region.
Gerry Johnson (via e-mail): Volunteers were on the three lakes (Red Cedar, Balsam, Hemlock), doing AIS Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) pre-treatment assessments by throwing rakes in previous year's moderate-to-high density areas. The good news is CLP is considerably lower in acres and density this season, resulting in the need to treat only 6 acres next week. This compares to 20 acres treated last year. According to our AIS Committee Chair Tom Goodwin and consultant Dave Blumer, Lake Education and Planning Services, LLC, the likely causes of CLP reductions is due to consistent previous year's treatment work and the colder water conditions we've experienced this spring. This is really good news, as this will positively affect phosphorous readings this summer and improve water conditions. That said, next year we could see much different conditions and CLP growth could be more robust.

**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, August 5.** This may likely be another Zoom meeting if travel restrictions have not been lifted. If travel is authorized for most people, the meeting will be held in Menomonie, as Barron County has banned any outside groups from meeting at the County for the remainder of the year.