

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

8/4/21 Meeting held via Zoom due to Covid19 pandemic

Present at the meeting: Chase Cummings, Heather Wood – Dunn County Land Conservation; Liz Osborne – DNR; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Jamey Ladeen – Chetek Lakes Association; Megan Hines – City of Menomonie; Nick Stadnik – Rusk Co Land Conservation; Tara Daun – WI Farmers Union; Lindsey Ketchel – Landmark Conservancy; Tina Lee, Nicole Hayes – UW-Stout; John Sippl – NRCS; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

Review of minutes of last meeting and current agenda: The outcomes from the June meeting were discussed with no changes and the current agenda was discussed with no changes.

DNR Surface Water Grants discussion: DNR's Surface Water Grant program has changed its application procedure. Preapplications are now due on September 2, and the final complete application is due November 1. Although the Partnership has made great use of the surface water grants in the past (with one grant currently still active in Dunn County), It appears no one within the Partnership is interested in applying for a surface water grant on this cycle. Liz shared some educational materials about the grant program and the new deadlines, etc.

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

Dan Z: Extension employees are back to normal office and field operations as of July 6, though with Covid surging again, things could change. Shared info about two field days with the group...one in the Osceola area on August 28 (involving many of the area's farmer led groups), and one in the Winona, MN area on August 10th (featuring former Dunn Co employee Lance Klessig). The Red Cedar Conference Planning Committee has new bylaws and committee officers, and has begun to plan for next year's conference.

Tyler: Is exploring doing a drinking water study in collaboration with folks from Stevens Point, modeled after some of the work done recently in Chippewa County. Barron County's cover crop cost-share program is underway again this year.

Megan: Had a stormwater education booth set up at Menomonie's Night Out earlier this week. Construction on the Wakanda Park stormwater pond is continuing after it suffered a blowout earlier this year during a heavy rain event. An educational environmental newsletter will go out to city residents soon. City will soon be doing a QA/QC on stormwater outfall maps for the city.

Tina: Starting to do preliminary work to begin recruitment for REU students early next year and is looking for ideas for topics of research for the students next summer. Working on curriculum for the

human aspects of watershed management in hopes to add such an academic program at Stout sometime soon.

Nicole: Has been doing some water quality monitoring, though not as much as she would like, but has collected some data on microcystin. Will be going out on Lake Menomin later this week.

Lindsey: The Dunn County Health Done Right group is working on engaging the community on environmental issues, and will soon be facilitating a conversation for nonprofit groups on what sorts of organizational issues they may need assistance with. Landmark will be having its annual meeting on September 8 in Menomonie. Have been working on some issues regarding the development of mobile home parks in environmentally fragile areas, such as wetlands, where many septic systems could create water quality problems. Also exploring some easement possibilities on some land that is part of the Birkebeiner ski race to keep it available for use, but to also pay attention to the natural condition of such lands.

Chase: NR 151 is now incorporated into Dunn County code, as it was adopted recently by the County Board. The budget for 2022 goes before the County budget committee next week. Funds heading to the county from the multi-discharge variance (MDV) program look like they may be increasing this year.

Heather: Working on groundwater issues including in the Colfax area, based on the recommendations of the groundwater ad hoc committee who closed out their work a few years ago in the county. Much of the current work involves education and outreach. Is hoping to get a website up that has maps of areas where groundwater testing has taken place, and what those tests show, while being sensitive to landowner concerns.

Jamey: The Chetek Lakes group is applying for a grant to advance their aquatic plant management plan. There is ongoing work on the lakes to update signage at boat landings. The Association has shown some substantial membership growth recently, but are still struggling with recruiting officers and volunteers. Had some questions for the group about no-wake issues, and others offered advice and some resources.

Tara: Is working to expand “field-side chats”, a more informal type of outreach to farmers. The Hay River farmer-led group is doing some virtual outreach with educational materials and events. Is trying to focus more on outreach and education that involves profitability rather than just yield.

Liz: Gave the group a good education about the MDV program and some information about preliminary figures of the dollars that may be coming to counties in the watershed in this next MDV cycle (possibly in excess of \$20,000 for some counties). Urban NPS grants were recently awarded, and two grants in the watershed...one for Menomonie and one for Rain to Rivers...were not awarded, though they scored high (limited funding kept many projects from being funded). Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) grants were also awarded. Dunn and Rusk Counties had both applied, and both were not awarded. Comments have been taken on the economic impact of possible nitrate rules under discussion, and a few members of the Partnership, Andy Bensed and Tyler both offered comments. A more open public comment period for all comments will be happening soon. Three enforcement cases in the watershed are in various stages of stepped enforcement. Two involve Notice of Discharge (NOD) grants.

New DNR communication efforts relevant to the Red Cedar Water Quality Partnership and recent conversations; one is the announcement of the Safe Water for All campaign. This piece includes 3 panel discussions ranging from an agricultural theme, and a discussion on how marginalized communities are more likely to have unsafe drinking water, to a broader discussion of DNR's mission for safe water and some proposed solutions. See the press release: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/newsroom/release/47606>. The second release is a webinar series co-hosted by DNR, UW Extension, and UW College of Ag and Life Sciences on nitrate in groundwater. The series touches on the science and economics around a number of workable approaches for farmers that are shown to minimize nitrogen losses to groundwater. The webinars will discuss some concepts proposed, such as the NR 151 update to include a nitrate targeted performance standard. These webinars will also be recorded and posted for later viewing: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/newsroom/release/47586>

Gerry Johnson (via e-mail): * RCLA has scheduled an RCLA Lake Education & Resource Meeting for Saturday, Aug. 28 at the Cedar Lake Town Hall in Mikana. Refreshments start at 8:30 AM, with the meeting from 9:00 - 11:00 AM. The agenda includes Water Quality Monitoring Results, AIS Plan Objectives and Results, Lake Shore Restoration and Management, Property Owners Resources and Opportunities, Q & A. We will share date and results with our memberships, and propose action plans moving forward. Everyone on the Red Cedar Water Quality Partnership Committee is welcome to attend.

* All committees are actively engaged in implementing their plans for the summer, with minimal results documented yet. This includes Aquatic Invasive Species, Water Quality and Shoreline and Island Restoration. Outcomes from their work and future recommended plans will be addressed at the Aug. 28 meeting.

Nick Stadnik and John Sipp had to leave before doing a check-in.

Evaluation: All attendees still remaining at the end of the meeting ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best, with all present ranking the meeting as a 5.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next regular meeting date is **Wednesday, October 6**. Dan will check with everyone a few weeks before the meeting to see if meeting in person is possible, and if so, where the meeting should be held. If not, it will be via Zoom again.