

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

12/1/21 Meeting held via Zoom due to Covid19 pandemic

Present at the meeting: Chase Cummings – Dunn County Land Conservation; Liz Usborne, Alex Smith – DNR; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Jamey Ladeen – Chetek Lakes Association; Nick Stadnik – Rusk Co Land Conservation; Megen Hines – City of Menomonie; Tara Daun – Farmers Union; Lindsey Ketchel – Landmark Conservancy; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

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

Passing of John Haack: Dan took a few moments to talk about the recent death of former Extension natural resource educator John Haack, who many in the Red Cedar watershed knew. John, who retired in 2017, passed away this week. Others added their thoughts and experiences with John. Even though he was retired, he was still very active in wild ricing, bee keeping, lakeshore protection, and many other interests. His work and presence will be very much missed in NW Wisconsin.

Discussion of EO Browser and possible use of new satellite data for tracking cover crops: Tyler had sent around a link in past weeks for EO Browser, a GIS-based website that allows users to look at imagery from different satellites and using different spectral frequencies, some of which look like they could work to track how much cover crop acreage there was in the watershed year after year. Tyler walked through some of the imagery for everyone to see. It appears that, if someone had the software and skills to extract the data for the Red Cedar watershed, it could prove a reasonable way to estimate cover crop coverage. Lindsey suggested contacting Mike Koutnik with Gathering Waters about such work, and others suggested perhaps some REU students or interns involved with the Fresh Water Collaborative programs at UW-Stout or UW-Eau Claire. Dan agreed to make some contacts. Alex believes that surface water grants from DNR could be used to pay for such work.

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

Dan: Reminded everyone of events coming up...cover crop conference, Red Cedar Conference, Land and Water Conference, etc. Also reminded everyone that he will be asking soon for year-end summaries from everyone so he can put together a year-end report for the Partnership.

Tyler: Recently conducted a survey of farmers regarding the use of cover crops which included 27 responses out of nearly 300 surveys sent via e-mail (about a 10% response rate). Just from those 27 responses, there were about 12,700 acres of cover crops planted this year in Barron County. Will be working to close 14 manure storage facilities in 2022.

Megen: The storm water pond at Wakanda Park is now completed, and the City is starting design on the next one on the north side of Menomonie. Recently completed a storm water outfall inventory and inspection. Also looking at and mapping privately owned urban best management practices. Recent Saltwise training went well with good attendance. At a hazardous waste collection for the City in September, 84 people came through with items for disposal.

Jamey: Wrapping up year end work including winterizing the algae skimmer. Submitted surface water grant application in Nov to help fund a new aquatic plant management plan. 2021 was completion of year two of a three-year plan to update signs at landing sites on the lakes. There's been an increase in interest among residents in Healthy Lakes projects, some of it due to many new, younger homeowners. They want to automate more of their Lake Association paperwork, and asked for suggestions. Tyler suggested they contact Gerry Johnson with the Red Cedar Lakes group (not present at today's meeting).

Tara: Hay River Farmer Led group met near the end of summer. Polk County group did some infiltration and runoff testing on some fields, and the no-till sites showed considerably less runoff/soil loss compared to conventional fields. Submitted a surface water grant application to DNR focused on furthering and expanding the work of the councils and her position. Many members of the councils are discussing more one-on-one recruitment to try to bring more farmers into the groups. Also had some questions about Extension staffing in the region, and Mike Geissinger's name was mentioned as the new crops and soils educator for Barron and St. Croix Counties.

Chase: Lots of end of year administrative work right now including wrapping up reporting for their Lake Protection grant. Has had a few manure storage closings this year. Nutrient management funding was pretty much all spent on over 500 acres of land in the Red Cedar watershed within the county. Recently had a good meeting with some partners about how to better manage and utilize the Red Cedar Demo Farm just east of Menomonie.

Alex: A lot of time spent lately reviewing grant applications. DNR is undergoing a code update for aquatic plant management. Will soon be hiring a replacement for Kristin Rathbun who had been working in a TMDL support role. Chris Willger has recently installed some new equipment to monitor chemistry and flow of several tributaries of the Red Cedar. Also mentioned the new Office of Ag and Water Quality at DNR and how they are still working out just what that office will be working on.

Liz: Also talked a bit about the Office of Ag and Water Quality which will be working a great deal in the realm of liaison to other agencies and partners. The attempt by DNR to develop a statewide nitrate standard has been scrapped, mostly because they don't believe they can meet deadlines set by recent legislation for the rule-making process. Recently submitted work to include in DNR's report to EPA on how Section 319 funds are spent, which included reporting the meetings of the Red Cedar Water Quality Partnership. Ruth King also reported that a NOI was satisfied in Barron County through a manure storage facility closure project in cooperation with Barron County through NRCS cost share incentives. DNR also has a contract with DATCP to spend Conservation Engineering Section (CES) field staff time in 319 watersheds. In the Red Cedar Basin 8 practices were installed with CES technical assistance support. Also the TRM and NOD grant program is in the process of trying to alter some of the grant guidelines to

help the program run smoother and make it easier for counties to apply/manage the grants. Also had a prereferral meeting recently regarding an NR151 runoff violation in the watershed.

Nick: Had to leave the meeting before check in.

Lindsey: Had to leave the meeting before check in.

Gerry Johnson (via e-mail): The Red Cedar Lake Association's water quality monitoring grants are wrapping up this year, with analysis of the data from the past four years underway. The objective is to update the 2004 USGS report, and develop an action plan to address the largest contributors of phosphorous loading coming into our lakes. The estimated timing for data analysis is Q1, 2022, with the action plan recommendations scheduled for Q2, 2022.

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 most ranking the meeting a 5, with a few ranking lower, mostly because of low attendance at the meeting.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next regular meeting date is **Wednesday, February 2, 2022**. 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.