

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

6/1/22 Meeting held via Zoom due to Covid19 pandemic

Present at the meeting: Chase Cummings – Dunn Co LCD; Liz Usborne, Alex Smith, Andrew Schneyer – DNR; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Brad Luedtke – 3M; Jamey Ladeen – Chetek Lakes Association; Tara Daun – Farmers Union; Tina Lee – UW-Stout; Gerry Johnson – Red Cedar Lakes Association; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

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

Discussion of Grants: The pre-approval date for DNR Surface Water grants is September 2, and final applications are due November 1. The group discussed a few ideas for these grants, but no one is committed to applying for one at this point. Other grant ideas were discussed, including the possible funding of a Learning Hub by Grasslands 2.0 in the Red Cedar watershed. That grant has been submitted but no decision will likely be available until fall. If granted, both UW-Stout and Farmers Union may be part of that grant. UW-Stout has also applied for funding focused on monitoring through the Wisconsin Fresh Water Collaborative.

This discussion led the group to talk about the updating of the watershed plan which is due in 2026. Liz pointed out that we should begin the process of exploring the needs for such an update. It may be necessary to secure some sort of planning grant to complete the next plan, and also some additional modeling may be necessary, which may also require a grant. The group agreed to a meeting sometime in July to discuss the needs for a plan update. Dan will send out a Doodle Poll to get everyone's availability.

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

Dan: Had a meeting recently with Rachel Rushmann who, until recently, worked for DATCP on their producer-led grant program, and has now taken a position with Extension's Ag and Water Quality section, and is based in Eau Claire. She showed interest in much of what's happening in the Red Cedar and may contact some partners, and may attend some future meetings. Also shared with the group a web address for a new tool created by Grasslands 2.0 and UW-Madison called the Heifer Grazing Compass, designed to help producers figure out the needs, costs and benefits of raising heifers on pasture. <https://grasslandag.org/the-heifer-grazing-compass/>

Liz: Nick Stadnick from Rusk County did submit a small TRM grant for a project in the Red Cedar back in April. There are also some other NOD grants in the Red Cedar including one in Chippewa County for which the proposed project is currently out for bid. There are currently more NOD funding requests than there are available funds. Has also been involved in some enforcement actions in Dunn County.

Andrew: Fairly new to his position with DNR, and is available for TMDL assistance, modeling, etc. A 5-year study is underway in Vance Creek and Big Beaver Creek with 16 sites of water quality monitoring. Working on establishing a gauging station on the Yellow River in addition to stations on the Hay and Red Cedar. There are currently some supply-chain issues with nutrient preservatives used for water testing, so testing may not be happening as quickly or readily as usual.

Gerry: Curly-leaf pondweed continues to be a major problem in the Red Cedar Lakes area, but levels of growth are down with only 3.24 acres in need of treatment this year. Was recently granted an extension to the end of 2023 for CLP management and AIS education. Hemlock Creek is considerably higher in phosphorous concentrations compared to 2003 data from USGS. There may be CLP farther up that creek that needs treating. Murphy Flowage (on Hemlock Creek) may be added to the scope of the Red Cedar Lakes Association. There are creeks flowing from Rusk County that have high concentrations of phosphorus, and there is opportunity there to perhaps work with farmers on that issue. Big Chetac Lake still delivers larger amounts of phosphorus downstream, and not much is being done by people on that lake, some of it due to local politics.

Chase: NOD issues (as mentioned above) are moving forward. Has been busy responding to rain events that are causing erosion issues on fields that have little or no conservation practices installed. Has also seen wind erosion taking away soil from unprotected fields. The County's no-till drill is getting more use, with increased use in the Red Cedar watershed as well as further south. Tension lysimeters are being installed at the Red Cedar Demonstration Farm to help better understand soil conditions there. Has acquired some funds from other counties to help with cost share for nutrient management, and is still in need of more.

Tara: A field day was held last week by the Hay River farmer-led group, with about 40 attendees. 2021 incentives have been paid out to producers, and applications for 2022 are now being taken but are slow in coming. As mentioned above, if the Learning Hub is established in the Red Cedar watershed by Grasslands 2.0, Farmers Union will likely seek some of that funding for a grazing specialist in the watershed. Is in the process of doing some burying of underwear in the watershed to be used for educational purposes.

Tina: LAKES REU students will be arriving on June 12, with many projects awaiting including a faculty psychologist proposing to look at barriers to engagement. The students will do their final presentations on August 11th at the Raw Deal in Menomonie. Funding from the Fresh Water Collaborative is helping with work on course development for social science issues. The Center on Rural Sustainability and Opportunities is looking for funding beyond what may come from the proposed Learning Hub.

Alex: Cumberland and the Beaver Dam Lake folks are wrapping up a project on Library Lake, and will also be updating the City's storm water management plan. Although they do not participate in the Partnership, they are doing some innovative and comprehensive work to manage all the storm water from the city that drains into their lakes.

Jamey: Aquatic Plant Survey is starting next week. There are also 8 Healthy Lakes projects happening this summer. The last of the updating of landing signage is wrapping up. June and July are full of many fundraising events on the lakes.

Tyler: To add to what Alex said, Cumberland has dedicated a substantial amount of funding to their conservation budget. Has been dealing with some large runoff issues with all the recent rains, including a large one in the Vance Creek watershed. Mary Anderson will likely be writing a grazing plan to address this issue. There are not very many dairy operations that have severe runoff issues, but there are beef cow operations that are having problems. The new demo farm in the County has been planted. The soil conditions there are poor, so it will be interesting to see how it goes. Collected nearly 400 groundwater samples for a study similar to what Chippewa County has done. May have some extra nutrient management funds to pass to Chase. DATCP Secretary was supposed to visit the County earlier, but it got postponed, but now may be coming in July. Has seen a few waterways being put in recently.

Brad: Had to leave before check in.

Becky Brathal (via e-mail): Since our last meeting there haven't been very many projects on my end that are in the red cedar watershed. I have been working in the willow, apple, and kinni watersheds.

Evaluation: All attendees 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 with comments about attendance and that we should find a way to meet in person.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next regular meeting is **Wednesday, August 3**, and will be in person if possible. Another meeting will likely be held in July with a single agenda item to discuss the plan update (see above).