

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

8/3/22 Meeting held at Dunn County Government Center (with some participants attending virtually)

Present at the meeting: Chase Cummings – Dunn Co LCD; Liz Usborne, Alex Smith, Andrew Schneyer – DNR; Jamey Ladeen – Chetek Lakes Association; Tara Daun – Farmers Union; Tina Lee – UW-Stout; Nick Stadnick – Rusk County LCD; 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 has been moved to September 15th, and the final grant submission date has been moved to November 15th. At this time no one present was applying for new grants this year. Nick and Liz mentioned that Rusk Co has been awarded a small-scale TRM grant in the Red Cedar Watershed for a barnyard project. Tina mentioned that they still don't know the status of the University System's Freshwater Collaborative funding, but UW-Stout has applied for funding from that program for extensive monitoring work. There is also no word yet on the funding for a Learning Hub for Grasslands 2.0 in the Red Cedar. Applications for grants for Producer-Led groups through DATCP are due in mid-September. The Hay River group in the Red Cedar is likely to apply for one. Chase mentioned that Dunn Co is working on an NOD grant for an issue in the northern part of the county, but funding may not be adequate to cover it.

Summary of Nine-Element Plan Revision Meeting: Most members of the Partnership met on July 7th to begin discussing needs for the nine-element plan revision which is due 2026. The meeting went well, with great discussions. Andrew Craig from DNR in Madison was online with the group to answer questions. One of the main topics to come out of the meeting was the option to perhaps focus more efforts in smaller areas, such as specific HUC 12 watersheds. It could be that watersheds with farmer-led groups would be a good starting point, but the group agreed to examine more criteria for what watersheds to focus on, and exactly what kind of work and resources should be aimed at those watersheds once we decide which ones. Other criteria include phosphorus loads, capacity for change in land management, and already-established relationships.

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

Dan: Attended a climate change conference in Duluth in July. Lots of good discussion but some harsh realities also discussed, with a great deal of indigenous peoples' perspectives included in the discussions. In June the Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition sponsored tours of the watershed, demo farms and lakes for elected officials, mostly county Board members, in both Eau Claire and Clark Counties. They were well attended with many good discussions and some wonderful farmers who are

doing great things on their land. Shared with the group that the Producer-Led and Cover Crop Conferences will likely not be held next February (as they have in the past few years), and instead will likely be held the day before the Discovery Farms Conference, which will be held in Wisconsin Dells on December 14th. No formal announcement of this has been made yet, but this is the direction planning for those conferences is going.

Tina: LAKES REU students are wrapping up their work and getting ready for their presentations at the Raw Deal in Menomonie to be held on Thursday, August 11 starting at 5 PM. UW-Stout is still hoping to start some sort of center on campus focused on the Red Cedar Watershed, and is waiting on funding decisions from both the Freshwater Collaborative and Grasslands 2.0 (see above). Some sort of alliance between producers and possible consumers may also be part of such work.

Liz (present, but notes below are from an e-mail sent before the meeting):

I am actively working on 7 enforcement cases in the three counties I cover within the Red Cedar Watershed, all in various stages.

A link to the webinar recording on Production Site Contaminant Sources: Case Studies and Discussions from the Field can be found [here](#). The agenda is as follows...

Categorizing and interpreting pollutant sources outlined in Wisconsin Statute.

- Farm production site pollution sources (with visual examples)
 - Unconfined Manure Pile
 - Contaminated Runoff: Leachate; Process Wastewater; Milking Center Wastes
 - Feedlots and how they differ from winter grazing areas or a bare soil area such as a cattle lane, or a supplemental feeding area located within a pasture.
 - Manure storage systems, facilities, structures.
 - “Adequate” self-sustaining vegetative cover, or lack thereof.
- Clarifying factors to consider when making a compliance determination

These tend to be relevant topics that come up frequently with county and agency staff when evaluating sites for NR 151 compliance.

Historical NOD and TRM grant projects are starting to get uploaded into our BITS database. Hopefully this effort will make the determination of “existing” vs. “new” noncompliance easier in terms of meeting our obligation for cost share. This is becoming ever more critical as the NR151 rule gets older and funding dollars are getting stretched thinner.

Megen is letting us use the stormwater Plink-o for the Menomin Meander bike ride event on Saturday, Aug. 20. Speaking of stormwater, do you think we could ask some of our more northern watershed partners to encourage Rice Lake to attend Rain to Rivers meetings more frequently/advocate it as time well spent?

The WI Land and Water Conservation Board meeting was August 2 and the [agenda materials are available](#). Steve Warrner, DNR Site Review Coordinator, gave an overview of the WI septage

program. Here's the [link](#) to his presentation slides. Concerns regarding this issue and it's regulation have come up before in the watershed.

My program in the DNR also presented the 2023 Joint Preliminary Allocation Plan with DATCP and our runoff grants ranked list during the meeting. DATCP's part of the allocation awards grants in staff and support (looks like this amount increased and will be funding a third county position in the 70 that submitted requests), landowner cost-sharing (this funding also increased), and project grants including nutrient management farmer education training and Innovation Grants. DNR uses its allocation to provide grants in the Targeted Runoff Management (TRM), Urban Nonpoint Source & Storm Water Management (UNPS), and NR 243 Notice of Discharge (NOD) programs.

Department of Administration also gave a presentation on the state's nonpoint program revenue/debts. Basically the entire theme of the meeting was how we need more money.

The [NW WI Lakes Conference](#) has posted select presentation recordings. I specifically recommend the [Hidden Lake Creatures](#), that I thought was very good. Here's the description:

When we hear the word "lake" we often think of fish, frogs, turtles, and plants. However, did you know there is an entire world within each lake that is virtually invisible? Join us to learn about all the critters that play vital roles in lakes that are "hidden" from most eyes. Originally from northern Illinois, Emily Heald has a B.S. from Northland College in Natural Resource Management and a M.S. from the University of Minnesota Duluth in Integrated Biosciences. Emily currently works for the UW Madison Division of Extension – Natural Resources, where she coordinates nutrient monitoring, continuous temperature monitoring, and aquatic invasive species monitoring for the Water Action Volunteers (WAV) program.

A presentation [on how wake boats impact lakes](#) also seemed relevant to some of the issues I've heard lake association partners in this group discuss. There's also the Keynote talk, "[Protecting the Lakes: The Ultimate People Business](#)," and a walk through of [using the DNR's ePermitting system for erosion control projects](#) (which is dry, but a helpful reference).

Western Wisconsin Conservation Council is hosting a [Planting Green and Soil Pit Demonstration Event](#) at 6pm on Aug. 18th in Clear Lake.

Chippewa County Farm Casual Field Day August 11, 1-3pm (and then run right over to the Raw Deal in Menomonie at 5 for the LAKES REU student poster presentations!)

Andrew: Has been busy with field season work. DNR is having some data processing issues which has held up the 2021 monitoring data from below the Menomine Dam, but hoping to have that resolved soon. Helped out with Farm Tech Days booth last month.

Chase: The County's MDV funding is being used for a buffer program, and so far 17 acres of new buffers have been installed with this funding in the Red Cedar watershed. Leftover funds from this may be used for other projects if appropriate. A student intern in the office has been working on manure storage GIS layers for the county. Both the Hay River producer led group and the Red Cedar River producer led

group will be applying for DATCP grants next month to continue their work. A field day was held last week at the Red Cedar Demo Farm with 47 attendees. A few new County Board members attended which was good. The petitions to start a lake district on Tainter Lake have been turned in to the County, and a public hearing on the issue will be held on August 9.

Jamey: Shared some thoughts regarding Chetek's experience with trying to start a lake district. One aquatic plant survey was completed on the lakes in the spring and the second one is almost done. This should lead to the completion of a full long-term aquatic plant management plan before the end of the year.

Nick: Rusk County is funding some shoreland protection projects, and there has been good participation in the program. There is a group of farmers in the County discussing organizing a producer-led watershed group, which is a good sign.

Tara: The Hay River farmer led group has done a lot of soil sampling and cover crops this year. They will be applying for a DATCP grant next month. A possible soil health field day/workshop is being discussed by the group which would feature Kevin Erb from UW-Extension. Has been busy collecting underwear from various farms that was buried in order to compare decomposition rates in conventionally tilled soils with those fields more focused on soil health practices. Generally the results have been as predicted, with more decomposition happening in the more living soils (with some exceptions). Some of these were on display at the Red Cedar Demo Farm field day last week.

Alex: Has been helping in Dunn County with the proposed lake district issue (see above). Chris Willger from DNR has installed a new flow gauge on the Yellow River in the watershed near Barron at an old USGS gauging site.

Gerry Johnson (via e-mail): Curley Leaf Pondweed (CLP) herbicide treatment was completed on 3.4 water acres in the northeast end of Balsam Lake and the channel between Balsam and Red Cedar Lake in June. Purple Loosestrife hand removal and treatment is underway by volunteers in July and August, and beetle raising and release occurred on Red Cedar Lake in July with the help of students at the Birchwood Charter School. Clean Boats, Clean Waters program is in progress on our busiest four landings, with the goal of 400 hours of education and awareness of AIS prevention with boaters. Four Healthy Lakes Grants projects are underway this summer, focused on rain gardens, water diversion and native plantings. The Red Cedar Lake Association Board recommended to its members to change its by-laws to include Murphy Flowage as part of RCLA's scope and management responsibility. The membership unanimously approved this motion at the RCLA Annual Meeting in July. This action was the result of recent water quality studies indicating a significant increase in phosphorous loading coming into Hemlock Lake from Murphy Flowage since 2003 data from the USGS study. Determination of phosphorous sources and development of subsequent action plans are underway.

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 one ranking of 4.5 because of inability to meet in person.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next regular meeting is **Wednesday, October 5**, and will be in person if possible, likely in Barron. If need be, an option may once again be available to attend virtually.