

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

October 5, 2022 Meeting held virtually

Present at meeting: Megan Hines – City of Menomonie; Keith Gilland – UW Stout; Becky Brathal – USFW Service; Jamey Lideen – Chetek Lakes Association; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Don Erickson – speaker on National Heritage Area designation; Liz Osborne – DNR; Chase Cummings – Dunn Co LWCD; Dan Zerr – UW Extension

Meeting started at 10:08am. Dan Zerr started meeting but needed to leave due to illness, Liz Osborne led the remainder of the meeting; Chase Cummings took notes.

Review of last meeting's outcomes and negotiate current agenda: no discussion or changes.

Grant Updates:

Jamey and Tyler worked together to submit a pre-application for a DNR Surface Water grant to complete a sediment study on the Chetek chain of lakes. Hoping to get a better handle on the nutrient content and the amount of sediment. "Legacy phosphorus" in the sediment. Tyler informed the group that several years ago they tested lake sediment samples for nutrient content and the results came back with a similar analysis as liquid dairy manure.

Keith mentioned they received a \$110,000 grant from the Freshwater Collaborative to continue their monitoring program on lakes and streams. Intend to hire 5 students to conduct this work. Will be developing a plan to address a HUC 12 approach in the next 10 year 9 Key Element Plan. Nicole Hayes (UW-Stout) will be continuing her under-ice research on nutrients and algae.

Chase mentioned both Farmer Led Watershed Groups in Dunn County applied for 2023 Producer Led Grant funding through DATCP. Dunn County also received a NOD grant award in the amount of \$796,000 to address compliance issues on a farm on the Barron/Dunn County line, within the Red Cedar Watershed. Funding will be in cooperation with NRCS-EQIP funding and hope for construction in 2023.

Megan applied for a DNR Urban Non-point Source Grant to improve their tree program within the City of Menomonie. They are currently growing approximately 90 trees in their gravel bed and hope to relocate and improve that set up, in addition to additional outreach and education.

Liz discussed the state Land and Water Conservation Board meeting held yesterday. DNR reported the final allocation rank list for NPS Grants. Over 200 surface water grant applications totaling more than \$6M. Rusk Co. applied for a Large-scale TRM grant, but project isn't in RC watershed. Liz also discussed that lake sediment treatment projects will only be an eligible practice in a Small-scale Agricultural TMDL TRM grant. She also mentioned that any fields covered by a CAFO's nutrient management plan are not eligible for TRM funding even if land is not owned by CAFO.

Discussion with Don Erickson about Natural Heritage Area for the Watershed

Don introduced himself as the Study Group Coordinator for the National Heritage Area (NHA) designation effort for the Red Cedar Watershed. National Heritage Areas are part of the National Park Service and if designated as such can bring economic benefit to the area, among other things. Conservation is a component of the NHA designation. One of the goals would be to reduce the amount of phosphorus in the watershed. Don described the study group and the advisory group working on the application for such designation. Tyler is on the advisory group and would be a common link between our two organizations. They are hoping to collaborate with the RCWQ Partnership in the future. If designated, federal funding could be directed to the watershed. Tyler will share Don's presentation slides with our group.

Check In's: Everyone share new information pertinent to the Red Cedar Watershed effort.

Chase: Continuing to work on ag performance standard compliance cases. Summer inter (Calvin) developed a better/more complete inventory of manure storage facilities in the county. Workload to follow in evaluating many of them for potential closures. Several field days took place recently: two in the Hay River Farmer Led Councils area and one at the Red Cedar Demonstration Farm. Attended a local Farm Bureau meeting to discuss programming and ag performance standard ordinance. Met with the Dunn County Historical Society, who own cropland near Tainter Lake. Opportunities for a change in management from traditional row crop agriculture are being explored. Were able to back fill a vacant Conservation Planner position once held by Steve Olson. New planner will start the end of October. The Tainter Lake Rehabilitation District petition will be moving to full County Board for consideration.

Jamey: Continuing to work with Tyler on the Surface water grant mentioned earlier. Also participating in a group with Chase looking to start a Red Cedar Watershed Food Alliance. This is in collaboration with UW-Stout and Grassland 2.0. They will also be installing 13 new "fish sticks" over the winter.

Becky: Discussed the potential for the Eastern Pipistrelle Bat (aka the Tricolored Bat) will likely be on the endangered species list soon. <https://www.fws.gov/species/tricolored-bat-perimyotis-subflavus>. The bat's range is typically in the southern part of Dunn County, but could be in other parts of RC watershed. Its listing could have impacts on project approvals, etc. They also established 8 new acres of pollinator habitat and are wrapping up their fiscal year. <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/er/ER0706.pdf>.

Tyler: Continuing to work with farm in SW part of Barron County to develop options for compliance. Economic challenges causing difficulty in a solution. Barron's cover crop program has been successful, likely more interest that funds available. Rye cover crops are growing after corn silage harvest already. Still need to construct a few waterways and manure storage closures. Most CAFO's in county are injecting manure and Barron will be hosting the West Central Area WI Land + Water Conservation Association Summer Tour in 2023, looking to highlight manure injection. Liz mentioned she has the ability to access GIS shapefiles of all CAFO nutrient management plan fields. Barron and Dun

Megen: Completed the City Clean Sweep program. Good turnout, 121 cars, 35 more cars than last year. Their environmental newsletter sent out in September, it included MS4 permit and leaf clean up information. City Council approved a contract with Cedar Corp to work on watershed delineation within the City and assess phosphorus reductions for MS4 permit. Hoping their work will help guide toward TMDL compliance and goals. Looking to complete project in 2023. Conducted several private stormwater pond inspections. She is also “in a sick way” looking forward to a DNR audit of their MS4 program in December.

Liz (present, but notes below are from an e-mail sent before the meeting): I am actively working on 8 enforcement cases in three counties within the Red Cedar Watershed, all in various stages.

- 1 process wastewater (feed pad runoff) Notice of Noncompliance (NON)
- 1 Notice of Discharge (NOD) grant for manure storage structure wrapped up at the end of Sept. and are working on finalizing reports and reimbursing invoices.
- Meeting with one facility to determine the need to require a WPDES (CAFO) permit next week
- Close to resolving one Notice of Violation (almost referral to Dept. of Justice)
- Issued one new NON primarily for barnyard runoff, and is already meeting first deadlines
- One new NOD grant awarded for manure storage
- Requesting one NON escalate up the stepped enforcement to a Notice of Violation (NOV) on cropland erosion
- One NOD grant that has stalled and expires at the end of the year, so did a follow up site inspection but still no progress. If this continues, funding will expire, compliance will still be required, and enforcement will escalate.

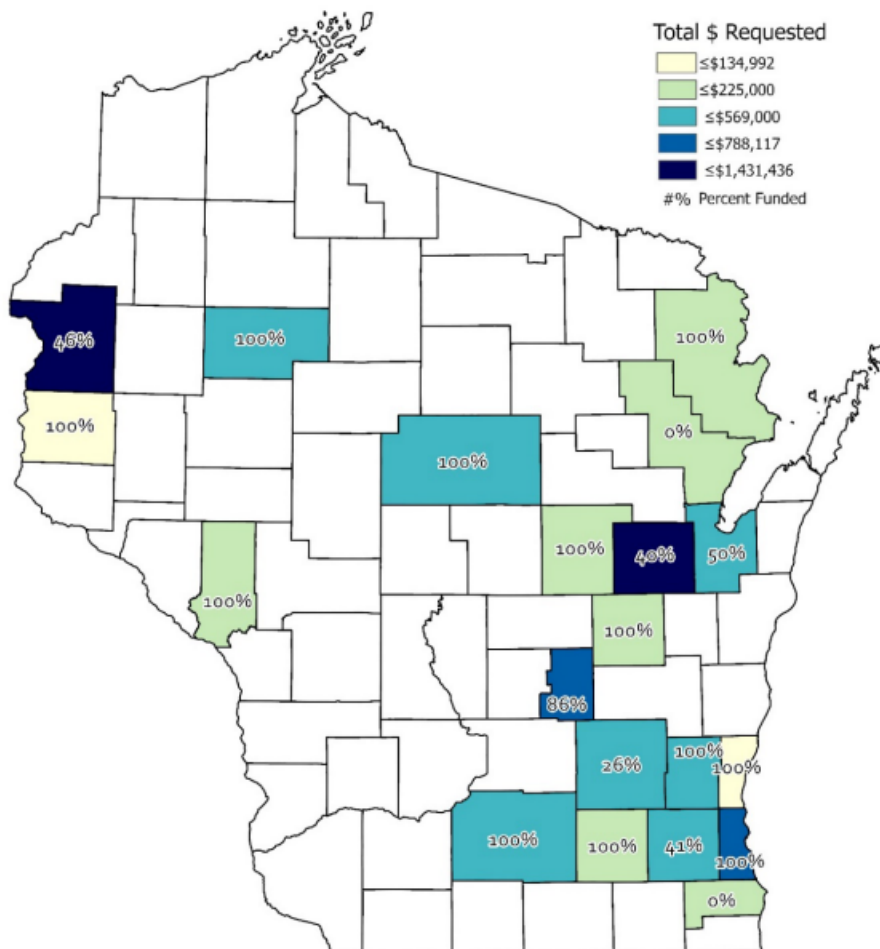
It was reported to the [Land and Water Conservation Board in today's meeting update](#) that DNR expects over 200 Surface Water Grant applications totaling over \$6M.

As far as Runoff Grants, we presented the final rank lists for the 2023 awards. Here's some number break downs:

2023 NPS Grant Update (see also Final Ranked Lists and Memos in October meeting packet)

Grant Category	# Eligible Applications	Total Funding Requested \$	# Proposed Grants Funded	Proposed \$ Allocated
Small-Scale TRM TMDL	6	\$1,053,634	4	\$644,667
Small-Scale TRM Non-TMDL	3	\$668,750	2	\$443,750
Large-Scale TRM TMDL	7	\$3,603,657	4	\$1,936,127
Large-Scale TRM Non-TMDL	1	\$404,750	1	\$404,750
UNPS-Construction	26	\$3,260,847	19	\$3,260,847
All Grants	43	\$8,991,638	30	\$6,690,141

Percent of Grants Proposed to be Funded
(All funding sources and grant types combined)



Otherwise, continuing on the Runoff Grants front, some policy and application instruction changes are being planned to be put out to public comment estimated November-ish. Here's the highlights:

- **Disadvantaged Community Bonus Points**

- We are attempting to incorporate environmental justice into the Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) and Urban Nonpoint Source (UNPS) grant programs.
- An equation in DNR's Environmental Improvement Fund (EIF) SFY 2023 Clean Water Fund Program (CWFP) Intended Use Plan will be used to calculate an index score. If the score meets a certain threshold, the application will be awarded 5 bonus points.
- Hopefully this means projects that benefit disadvantage communities will be more likely to get awarded.

- **Lake Sediment Treatment**

- Starting this year, lake sediment treatment will **ONLY** be an eligible practice in a Small-Scale Agricultural TMDL TRM grant. Lake sediment treatments will **NOT** be an eligible practice in a Large-Scale TRM project. The grant application will be scored and ranked based on projects that

can be funded in the two-year grant period. This may not cover the funding for the entire project. Applicants will be able to apply each year, if needed.

- This change is being made for the following reasons:
 - to spread out the eligible funding sources more evenly for non-structural practices and have the ability to fund more grant projects each year.
 - to match funding caps more closely with the Surface Water Grant Program
- **Field Evaluation Monitoring Bonus Points**
- Applicants should work with the Regional Nonpoint Source Coordinator (me) to discuss an optional monitoring plan. This should happen early in the application cycle. Then, I will work with the local Water Quality Biologist to determine the most appropriate monitoring strategy for the particular project. This is an optional section, but points will not be given if the monitoring strategy has not been signed and approved by the Water Quality Biologists and attached to the application and that this process was followed (this was happening a lot).

TRM, NOD, and now Urban Nonpoint Stormwater grant final reports are required to be submitted through BITS.

Section 606(c) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act requires that the State develop an [annual Intended Use Plan \(IUP\)](#) identifying the uses of funds available for its Clean Water state revolving loan program after providing for public comment and review, which is out now. The State of Wisconsin [Clean Water Fund](#) Program is a financial assistance program jointly administered by the DNR and the Department of Administration (DOA) that functions as a low interest, direct loan/principal forgiveness for municipalities to upgrade utility infrastructure to meet environmental standards.

Up to an amount equal to 2% of the annual capitalization grants can be used for the purpose of hiring staff, and DNR is requesting a total of \$1,111,329 of technical assistance funds for 8 full-time and 2 limited-term positions. One of the positions is a full time Non-Point Source Planning and Outreach Specialist that would provide assistance to municipal wastewater treatment facilities on water quality trading plans; assist local governments in identifying agricultural NPS projects that protect their source water and accessing funding for those projects; lead outreach efforts to increase awareness among local governments, the agricultural community (and their advisors), internal and external partners, and other stakeholders; coordinate internal policy development for using funds on agricultural projects; assist municipalities in leveraging funds for wastewater compliance options, such as adaptive management or multi-discharger variance for phosphorus; and integrating funding into the long-term financial planning process for low-income communities unable to afford wastewater facility upgrades mandated by the 2010 phosphorus rule.

I have been attending the Health Dunn Right Healthy Environment Action Team (HEAT) meetings and often site the work of this group.

Liz also shared a map, created by Andrew Schneyer – DNR, of the current 9 Key Element Plan HUC12 map showing the phosphorus loading for each watershed and an overlay of the Producer Led Watershed

Groups. Liz also mentioned some work being done to find a permanent funding source for Producer Led Watershed Coordinators. The current AIS program model may be an example of a funding mechanism.

Evaluation: All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Average ranking was 4.91. Despite several excused absences, most mentioned low attendance as being reasoning for a lower score.

- Everyone gets to rate the meeting on a scale from 1 to 5. Things to keep in mind regarding your rating include:
- Did the meeting meet your expectations?
- Did we stay true to the agenda?
- If rating anything less than a 5, what are the gaps you see?

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 7**. However, Dan will be out of town for Extension meetings that day. So we'll discuss what to do for our next meeting.