

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

4/5/23 Meeting held at Dunn County Government Center

Present at the meeting: Chase Cummings – Dunn Co LCD; Liz Usborne, Andrew Schneyer, – DNR; Megen Hines – City of Menomonie; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Al Brown – Tainter Lake District; Tara Daun – Farmers Union; Becky Brathal – USFW; Brad Luedtke – 3M; Kelsey Hyland, 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 2022 Annual Report and Plan Update: Dan has received input from most all the partners for the 2022 Annual Report, but is still waiting on a few, and will begin putting it all together soon. A better marketing/outreach element regarding the annual report was suggested and will be pursued once complete. Regarding the update to the ten-year plan, it will be due in 2025-26, and the group discussed some ideas. Pros and cons of focusing on HUC 12s were discussed. Dan also needs to have a more detailed conversation with Andrew Craig of DNR about what is expected in this update. Once the scope of what's needed is better understood, it was suggested that, if Dan's time is limited, that West Central Regional Planning in Eau Claire may be able to help, but that would take grant funds.

Discussion of Ideas for 3M Land: Brad asked that the group brainstorm some ideas for how 3M can use the land around the plant that, as of this year, they are no longer leasing out for farming. Several ideas were discussed including more permanent prairie, an outdoor lunch/lounging prairie for staff, some sort of collaboration with Stout to make the land available for education and research, and others. Brad thought that the idea of, at least in the short term, hiring someone to plant it to grasses and clover (and perhaps harvest that) may be the best solution, and will take this idea to the proper people. The corporation isn't quite sure what they want to do in the long term, though they may eventually sell off some parcels of land to the east of the plant while keeping others.

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

Dan: The Red Cedar Conference last month was a success, with about 250 people in attendance. There was a lot of positive feedback from folks, and also some negative comments about Jim Boulter's talk on climate change; mostly regarding his comments about "eating less meat" as a way to decrease carbon emissions from livestock.

Al: His first meeting with the group. The Tainter Lake District was formed and approved this year, so they are still in the early stages of development. He provided a little background on how he came to be appointed to the initial Board, and what his background is, and what he hopes to see with the new District. They have no revenue yet, but are having their first annual meeting soon, and at that time the

Board will be formally seated and then discussions of taxing rates, bylaws, goals, etc., will begin. The preliminary Board is currently 5 people but could go up to 7. Is grateful for things learned at his first meeting with the Partnership and looking forward to working with everyone.

Megen: Attended the Fox Wolf Conference which offered a lot of good information on stormwater management. Is currently working through phosphorus modeling for the City. Recently completed one stormwater outfall repair. The City's annual MS4 report was presented to the City Council. The City is in the process of taking down a lot of trees, some from storm damage, but most from emerald ash borer infestation and damage. Soon will begin work to plant about 100 new trees. There will be an Arbor Day event on 4/28 at the Historical Society, and the City will be present there. The City may be implementing an odd/even watering plan for this year, as City wells are under strain to meet the needs of customers. The City will also be piloting a "No Mow May" program this year to try to promote more pollinator habitat in the month of May.

Andrew: Recently presented to the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers group on water quality and monitoring. Recently he and Chris and others begin a water quality monitoring program targeting five subwatersheds in the Lower Pine Creek watershed, sampling for baseline data to help determine if, over time, land management changes will make a difference in water quality in those watersheds. This will include water chemistry data, stream biology (including fish shocking), invertebrates, diatoms, habitat, and flow data.

Chase: There is one Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP) project being set up in Dunn County, with five landowners signed up to participate. Recently received an NOD grant for a manure violation in the Red Cedar watershed. Submitted a request for DATCP reserve funds to assist with another bad manure site. Two field days are being planned for this year at the Red Cedar Demo Farm. Data from 2022 from lysimeters at the demo farm has been processed with some mixed results on water quality and quantity below the surface. This study will continue. About 1,000 private well monitoring sites have signed up for this year to monitor groundwater. The County's Healthy Environment Action Team (HEAT) is having a community conversation event for Earth Day, and Chase will be presenting. Also will be presenting at the Youth Expo being held on 4/20.

Tyler: Is soliciting well monitoring sign ups for this year. Will be busy this summer with about a half dozen new grass waterway projects, and also manure pit closures. Also has a couple of barnyard runoff projects lined up. The Chetek Lakes Association got some funding for testing the lake sediment and will begin that soon. The County will be hosting the West Central Conservation Forum in June at Four Mile Creek Dairy on 6/22.

Kelsey: Her first meeting with the group. Is new in the Ag and Water Quality section of Extension, based in NW Wisconsin. Has been busy getting to know people, and has begun some projects with Michael Geissinger, and also meeting with faculty in Madison to connect those folks to work being done in the region.

Liz: Runoff grants are due on 4/17. It doesn't look like any new runoff grant applications will be submitted for any projects in the Red Cedar watershed in this year's submissions. Submitted a report to

Dan for 2022 activities, which includes some good photos of some projects. Is working with Chase on the NOD project mentioned above. There have also been two citations issued recently for field erosion in the watershed which was draining directly to Tainter Lake. The party involved plead guilty no contest and paid a fine. Will be doing a presentation to Farmers Union soon. On 4/13 the new Chippewa County Farmer Led group will be having a “cover crop walk”. Will be meeting with the HEAT group mentioned above to help them with general questions and some direction. Is working with DNR CAFO staff on spills training.

Becky: US Fish and Wildlife recently worked to plant 80 acres of prairie on a property east of Menomonie. They have prairie seed available for use on public sites. The agency is beginning to work with development rights easements, but there is not much interest from private lands at this time in the Red Cedar watershed.

Tara: In addition to the NOPP project mentioned above, there are a handful of others happening in neighboring counties, and these all involve 20-40 plots per farm, so is a major commitment by farmers. Recently attended a small HUC 12 watershed (Rice Creek) presentation in MN, where some focused work has been done on installing practices such as cover crops and reduced tillage, combined with intensive monitoring to see how those practices affect nitrate levels in surface water. Some success has been noted, and it’s hoped that with continued work the creek could be delisted for nitrates. There is a group of agronomists in the Ridgeland area that are informally teaming up to be sort of a coalition of agronomists promoting soil health. The Hay River Farmer Led group may do some field days this year focused on livestock issues. The St. Croix County Farmer Led group has been collecting groundwater nitrate data, and has been seeing some preliminary correlation between corn production and increased nitrate levels.

Brad: Nothing further to report.

Tina Lee (via email): Have identified our LAKES students for summer—9 of them will be coming (2 Stout students and others from around the country) to work on projects related to economics and sustainable agriculture with Arthur Kneeland, pro-social behavior with Sarah Wood (psychologist), on media and scientific literacy with Kim Zagorski (political science), and on water quality and nutrient dynamics with Nicole Hayes (limnologist). Stout is also involved, along with Tom Quinn, Buzz Sorge, Jamey Lideen and several producers in getting a Red Cedar Learning Hub up and running with support from a USDA grant and the folks at Grassland 2.0. There will be opportunities going forward for others to get involved.

Evaluation: Most everyone rated the meeting as a 5, with a few giving it slightly lower ratings, mostly because we went about 45 minutes longer than the agenda. This happens often, and considering that, pre-pandemic, our meetings usually did go until 11:30 or noon, it may be appropriate to extend the agenda to that length again.

Next Meeting: The Partnership’s next regular meeting is **Wednesday, June 7, 2023**. The meeting will tentatively take place in Barron.