

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

6/7/23 Meeting held at Barron County Government Center

Present at the meeting: Chase Cummings – Dunn Co LCD; Liz Usborne, Alex Smith – DNR; Megen Hines – City of Menomonie; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Al Brown, Tom Bilse – Tainter Lake District; Tina Lee, plus four summer LAKES REU students – UW-Stout; Jamey Lideen – Chetek Lakes; Joe Ailts – Farmers of Barron Co Watersheds; 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: Dan has received input from most all the partners for the 2022 Annual Report, but is still waiting on a few updates from folks, and some more data from DNR regarding the monitoring data below the Lake Menomin dam. Once finished, he will send out to everyone for review and approval, after which a summary of the document will be written up as a press release and distributed to the Partners and to various media outlets.

Discussion of Meeting Length: The last several Partnership meetings have gone long, and Dan asked the group if everyone was okay with extending the meeting length for future meetings to 2.5 hours, since that's about how long things had been going. Everyone agreed.

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

Dan: Gerry Johnson from the Red Cedar Lakes Association is stepping down the group's leadership, and also will no longer be attending Partnership meetings. Tom Goodwin will be the new leader, and will also step in as the Association's representative to the Partnership, although he could not make it to today's meeting. Dan also informed the group that the biannual budget now being discussed by the State Legislature does not have funding in it for Extension's Natural Resource Educators, and if that remains the status, his position will likely end at the end of 2023.

Joe: His first meeting with the Partnership. He and Logan Dwyer have moved into leadership positions within the Farmers of Barron County Watersheds producer-led group, and will be representing that group on the Partnership. He discussed some of his background and goals in his position as an agronomist and in working with the Barron County group. His wife, Ilisa, will also be assisting the Barron County group with administrative and organizational needs. There will be some upcoming demonstration days and research taking place at farms sponsored by this group. Currently the group has about \$19,000 from the most recent awards from DATCP's Producer Led grant program. They will be setting up a Facebook page soon. Mentioned that there seems to be a good number of farmers in the Barron and Dunn County areas doing cover crops compared to some other counties in the area.

Liz: Is working on a troublesome NOD site in the watershed, with possible increased enforcement activity ahead. Work on another NOD site in Dunn County is going much better, and there will soon be an inspection for yet another NOD site. TRM grant applications were due April 15. There were fewer applications statewide this year, with no applications in the Red Cedar watershed. Is working with several other Partnership members on the Dunn County HEAT (Healthy Environment Action Team) team which is part of Health Dunn Right. Recently presented to Farmers Union water quality staff on DNR activities. Reminded everyone of the Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference coming up on June 23rd.

Chase: Is working on about a dozen compliance cases around Dunn County, and hoping to get more funding for compliance work through the currently being negotiated national farm bill. Staff is about halfway through collection of about 1,000 groundwater samples for this year. Is also working with Chris Willger from DNR to augment DNR's water quality sampling in the County. The Red Cedar River Farmer Led group is participating in the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP), receiving grant funds to determine optimal uses of nitrogen to protect natural resources, yet still provide desirable results for crop production. Governor Evers visited one of the farms/farmers in this group last month. There will be a pop-up field day for the NOPP participants on June 15th. The Dunn County Dairy Breakfast will be happening on June 24th this year. Field days at the Red Cedar Demo Farm east of Menomonie will be coming up soon. There are also many youth education events regarding natural resources coming up. The County's no-till drill has been getting a lot of use so far this year. Beaver Creek Reserve has hired someone new to assist counties in the area with aquatic invasive species work, and that person is working in Dunn, as well as other area counties. The annual "Sharing Our Resources" fishing event is happening on Friday, June 9.

Jamey: Held a meet and greet a few weeks ago with good turnout. Recently started some update research of the aquatic plant plan for the lakes. Generally it looks like areas where there were troublesome invasive species like curly-leaf pondweed have gotten a bit worse, while areas where there was a healthy, natural community got a little bit better. Is working with Tyler to analyze sediment samples from the lakes, and that sampling started recently. The samples will be analyzed as liquid dairy manure, which will include looking at the dollar value of the nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in the sediments.

Al: The newly created Tainter Lake District has been meeting periodically this year with four meetings so far. Their annual meeting will be held on August 5th, where a board will be elected, tax rates will be voted on, and other business conducted to help the District move forward. Right now they have about \$3,000 available, and that should increase once the tax levy begins. A draft of a first budget estimated approximately \$15,000 annually. They are applying for a surface water grant from DNR to help with planning. If Al is elected as the Board Chair in August, he will continue to represent the District at Partnership meetings.

Tom: His first meeting with the Partnership. If Al is not elected in August, Tom may be the representative to the Partnership. Has noticed that many of the critics of the formation of the District have quieted down as things become more clear about tax amounts and the goals of the group.

Tina: Brought 4 of the 9 summer LAKES REU students to the meeting. They are enthused and ready for their summer of work and fun in the watershed. They will be working with instructors from multiple disciplines at UW-Stout. Their final presentation will be held at the Raw Deal in Menomonie on August 3rd. The Freshwater Collaborative in Wisconsin, which awards grants to University System schools, has awarded money to Stout for various activities, including helping with water quality monitoring for the next few years, and also money to educate high school students on water issues and water quality. The environmental science program at Stout has added a “human dimensions” educational element to their program. The Red Cedar River Learning Hub (through Grasslands 2.0) is in its early stages with one meeting held so far. John Strausser at UW-Madison is helping with this. The National Science Foundation is fostering a program to develop “Regional Innovation Engines”, which creates seed money for various ecosystem activities. Stout is involved in one of these, focused on sustainable agriculture. This is very new and just getting started.

Megen: The newly completed UV treatment system at the City’s wastewater treatment plant is up and running. Recently finished some repairs on a damaged storm water outfall. The phosphorus modeling project completed a final run showing the City meeting the phosphorus goals for the TMDL, but this has to be reviewed. Is doing several pond inspections. Had a number of Earth Day education activities happening earlier this spring.

Alex: The Red Cedar Lakes management plan has been completed and has yet to be approved. Work for the plan shows that phosphorus appears to be peaking in summer during base flow conditions, which is a little off-season for ag runoff. This may be due to the groundwater phosphorus levels in the area, but more research is needed. The City of Cumberland wants to dredge Library Lake, and there appears to be high amounts of lead in the sediment. There is a lot of chemical treatment of aquatic invasive species happening in the region, but recently tribal communities have requested that no chemicals be used in any waters where walleye spawning happens, so this may cause some conflict.

Tyler: Is working on a groundwater study and has been recruiting private citizens to volunteer well testing at their locations. So far about 450 samples have been taken this year, with many new people signing up this year. There will likely be around 800 total. About \$20,000 if multi-discharge variance funds are coming to the County and will likely be used for cost share for grass planting in headland areas. Most of this will be taken up by a fairly small number of landowners. Will be hosting the West Central Regional Conservation Tour on June 22nd. Is working with NRCS on manure facility closures, with many old structures throughout the County in need of proper closure. Is going to be working with officials in the County to try to increase his department’s capacity for soil conservation. More people are needed to get the work done that needs to be done.

Gerry (via email): A request was submitted and approved by the DNR to extend the current AIS Control Grant out to 2024. Also the DNR approved our request to include Murphy Flowage in the grant, which will allow for an aquatic plant survey to be completed in mid-July. The DNR approved a request by RCLA to implement the Diver-Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH) program to remove CLP from our lakes. Initial implementation was completed on Balsam Lake on June 1, following a bed map survey in late May. This will likely result in less use of herbicide on other medium to heavy beds of CLP in our lakes

going forward. Root stock has been provided to the Birchwood Charter School to propagate beetles for managing AIS Purple Loosestrife. Also, volunteers will be conducting surveys and treating/removing smaller beds of PL on islands and lakeshores. RCLA has sub-contracted approximately 450 hours of boat landing monitoring at our four busiest landings this summer – Waldo Carlson, V Landing, Beach Club, Hemlock. In addition, decontamination stations are back in operation at the previously mentioned landings, plus the Balsam Lake landing, in mid-May.

Evaluation: Everyone rated the meeting as a 5, with many good comments about progress and today's meeting.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next regularly scheduled meeting would be Wednesday, August 2nd, but instead **will take place on Thursday, August 3rd at 2 PM in Menomonie to coincide with the LAKES REU presentations which start at 5 PM at the Raw Deal in Menomonie.**