

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

### 10/4/23 Meeting held at Barron County Government Center

**Present at the meeting:** Heather Wood – Dunn Co LCD; Liz Usborne, Alex Smith – DNR; Megan Hines – City of Menomonie; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Al Brown, Tom Bilse – Tainter Lake District; Jamey Lideen – Chetek Lakes; Joe Ailts, Ilisa Ailts – Farmers of Barron Co Watersheds; Tom Goodwin – Red Cedar Lakes; Sarah Brown, Kelsey Hyland, Becky Brathal, 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 Press Release:** Dan sent a press release out to everyone last week. He sent it to some major news outlets in Eau Claire, and others sent it to other local media. Several people said they had some other ideas on who to share it with and would follow through with that. As far as anyone knew, none of the media outlets contacted thus far have done any news story about the report.

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

**Heather:** Groundwater sampling is finished along with summer stream sampling. Grants for farmer led groups have been submitted.

**Becky:** There will be a manure spills demonstration next week, Thursday, October 12.

**Ilisa:** The Farmers of Barron County Watersheds group will have their annual meeting on December 12. A DATCP grant for the group has been submitted. Is working on a surface water grant through DNR to help fund her work for farmer led groups. Has also been in discussions to help the Rusk Co Flambeau River farmer led group with their administrative needs.

**Joe:** There is a Facebook page up for the Farmers of Barron County Watersheds group now. Has been doing Haney tests this summer, with about 60 tests done. These have shown a significant number of fields where nitrogen is remaining in the top 6 inches of soil (likely due to very little rainfall in most areas). Is advocating to producers to get cover crops in to help take up some of that available nitrogen.

**Tom G:** AIS work, water quality monitoring, and Clean Boats Clean Waters programs are all coming to an end for the season. Water quality was fairly good in the lakes this year. A new lake management plan for the lakes is being finalized.

**Tyler:** Several communities are looking for water quality trading opportunities, including Turtle Lake and Rice Lake. Recently one organization, the Wisconsin Water Quality Trading Clearinghouse has been given the position within the state to be the brokering agent for WQ trading programs. Chris Murphy is the

person in charge of this program. There is still a proposal in the county budget to hire a lakes person, with the possibility of a DNR surface water grant to augment the needed funds. Has been working on a few farms to alleviate runoff issues by using some diversions. Has also been working on closing idle manure pits. There are likely around 25 of those still to be addressed in the county. Kevin Erb with Extension will be hosting a soil health workshop in the county on October 16.

Jamey: Algae issues were not as bad this year in the Chetek chain, with lack of runoff likely a contributing factor. The new aquatic plant management plan for the lakes should be done by the end of October. The sediment study throughout the six lakes should also be wrapped up by late November.

Alex: Surface water grants are due next month. There looks to be 27 applications from NW Wisconsin which includes several in the Red Cedar watershed. The surface water grant program will not be able to award everyone, as there are far more requests than there are funds available.

Kelsey: Is not at a new office in Spooner. The new Wisconsin Water and Soil Health (WWASH) Conference is happening Dec 7-8 in Wisconsin Dells. This conference replaces the Cover Crop and Discovery Farms Conferences, combining them into one event. The study protocols for the soil phosphorus stratification study are in place. There was good interest in this study in the Red Cedar watershed. Is working on updating some phosphorus guidance/educational materials.

Sarah: Was mostly there to listen and talked a little about her duties in Washburn County.

Al: The new Tainter Lake District had their first annual meeting in August. About 200 people attended, and most were in favor of the District's existence and what they plan to do. The District now has a 7-person board. They are taking baby steps as they figure out how to move forward as a District to address issues in the lakes and river.

Tom B: The annual meeting of the Lake Tainter District went well. Tainter Township may need to partner with the District to manage the buoys that mark the slow, no-wake zone in the River, as the person who has been in charge of taking care of them will no longer be able to perform those duties soon.

Megen: Menomonie's phosphorus modeling project is done and has been submitted to DNR. According to the model results, the City is about 8% above their phosphorus goals. No large projects are proposed for the City in 2024. The City owns some land on Galloway Creek, and has planted some trees and shrubs there to help stabilize banks and decrease runoff. There are now some new doggy bag stations along the Red Cedar trail. The Red Cedar River Conference planning is going well, with all the keynote speakers selected and confirmed, and most of the breakout sessions ready as well. The Conference will be Thursday, March 14 at Stout.

Liz: Recently presented to the Dunn County PR&D committee on the topic of NR151 and runoff regulations. Is working on reports to EPA on how the state has used Clean Water Act Section 319 funding. The Partnership's 2022 annual report was included in those reports. Is working with Dunn County on some enforcement issues/cases. Some escalation may occur with some of the more difficult

cases. Is working with Wisconsin Land and Water to help plan their annual conference in March. Regarding Alex's comment above about the number of applications for surface water grants, there were 240 applications statewide.

Dan: Funding for the Regional Natural Resources program through a proposal to NRCS was approved for 2 years. This will keep the program and Dan's job intact, though it may lead to altered work plans, though he sees no reason why his work with the Partnership won't still be part of his duties.

**Evaluation:** Everyone rated the meeting as a 5.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership's **next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, December 6. This meeting will be in Menomonie**, unless weather conditions prohibit, in which case it will be held via Zoom.