

# Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

## 12/6/23 Meeting held via Zoom

**Present at the meeting:** Heather Wood, Chase Cummings – Dunn Co LCD; Alex Smith, Andrew Schneyer – DNR; Megen Hines – City of Menomonie; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Al Brown – Tainter Lake District; Jamey Lideen, Gary Luepke – Chetek Lakes; Ilisa Ailts – Farmers of Barron Co Watersheds; Tara Daun – WI Farmers Union; Lynda Schweikert – Chippewa County LCD; Nick Stadnick – Rusk County LCD; 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 Press Release and Upcoming 2023 Report:** Dan inquired if anyone had received feedback and/or questions on the 2022 Annual Report from the Partnership or feedback about the press release. Tyler had not sent it out to anyone, but said he would get that done. Dan received a few comments from folks who saw it, but nothing from the press. Megen put it in the “Menomonie Minute” but didn’t hear much feedback. Jamey put it in the Chetek Lakes annual newsletter that went out to about 1,500 people. Liz Osborne (via email) said the press release and report were well received by DNR folks in Madison, and also by EPA. Dan reminded folks that we will start putting together the 2023 report in the next few months, so folks should think about preparing their contributions.

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

**Lynda:** Working hard to finalize reports for the end of the year. The producer led group in Chippewa County will be presenting at the annual Producer Led Watershed Conference in February.

**Heather:** Lots of reporting and compiling. The producer led groups in Dunn County are issuing checks for installed practices. The County is again applying for Multi-Discharge Variance (MDV) funds for next year, and doing other planning for next year. Water sampling has wrapped up for the year.

**Alex:** Is very busy with the surface water grants submitted in November. Several have been submitted by various members of the Partnership. Awards will be announced in February.

**Ilisa:** Submitted a surface water grant through Tara and Farmers Union to fund her as an assistant to producer led groups in Barron, Rusk, Chippewa and Washburn Counties. The Farmers of Barron County Watershed group is hosting an event next week, Tuesday, December 12, in Barron and RSVPs are still being accepted (Ilisa is the contact). So far about 40 people have signed up.

Tara: In addition to the grant for Ilisa, Farmers Union has also submitted a grant to help fund Tara's position. All the producer led groups in Dunn, St. Croix, Pierce and Polk Counties received money from the latest DATCP grant cycle, but all were cuts from what they had asked (common throughout the state with more requests coming than money available). It was a good year for cover crops in her watershed groups, and corn did surprisingly well considering the dry conditions. Soybeans were more average to below average. Is working with John Strauser and the Grasslands 2.0 Learning Hub on the "Beef to Lakes" project. There will be a regional row crop event on January 31 but no venue has been secured yet. There will be an early February event involving church groups focused on ag in a "Community Conversations" vein. Farmers Union is exploring some ways to compile and analyze a lot of data they have access to on water quality and soil conditions.

Al: The Tainter Lake District has four committees up and running on the following topics; 1) Buoy placement in the channel; 2) Strategic planning, focusing on how to plan perhaps by hiring a consultant, and how to get public input for any planning efforts; 3) Sediment issues at the upper end of the lake, where many folks can no longer get a boat in due to sedimentation and shallow-water plant communities; 4) Aquatic vegetation.

Jamey: A healthy lakes grant for several projects has been submitted for the Chetek Lakes Association. Costs for these projects are rising, making it harder to get folks to sign up. The aquatic plant management plan is out for public review now. The data from the sediment study has all been collected and is being analyzed, hopefully with a report coming in the next few months. The Association's annual newsletter went out recently to 1,500 residents around the lakes.

Gary: Nothing more to add to Jamey's comments.

Chase: Lots of end-of-year activities and reports underway. Nice weather has been helping finish up construction projects, and as Jamey mentioned, costs are going up for these for farmers as well.

Megen: Wrapping up stormwater outfall inspections. Utility budgets were just finalized including the storm water utility. The City of Menomonie is looking to fill a vacant communications position that will be expanded from just police and fire to all county departments. Red Cedar Conference registration is now open for the March 14 conference in Menomonie, with a focus this coming year on groundwater. Sadly, zebra mussels were just found in Lake Menomin when some docks were pulled out for the season, with the mussels covering the submerged portion of those docks. Chances are they've been in the lake for a while, but this was the first confirmed sighting.

Kelsey: The Wisconsin Watershed and Soil Health (WWASH) Conference is this week, Thursday and Friday in Wisconsin Dells. Several members of the Partnership are attending. There is still a survey available online for farmers and agronomists to take that includes a \$30 rebate for the conference fee. Finished the phosphorus stratification sample collection which will now be analyzed.

Tyler: Barron County submitted a surface water grant to help fund a lakeshore specialist position within the County. All groundwater data has been collected from those folks who signed up to have their wells tested. A report will be forthcoming soon. A few locations in the county are being considered for

possible water quality trading projects. Is wrapping up construction projects for the season and there were a dozen more manure pit closures this year. A few waterways also went in this year. There is an NOD issue in the Vance Creek area that still hasn't been resolved.

Andrew: Finished sampling (bugs were the last thing collected) in the Lower Pine Creek watershed, and those have all been sent in for analysis. For those taking docks out (and perhaps finding invasive species), there is some educational information available from DNR.

Liz Osborne (via email): The annual report to EPA on how 319 funds are spent in WI has been completed and submitted with mention of the Partnership's efforts as well as other efforts within the Red Cedar watershed. Highlights include Surface Water and Runoff grants, flow monitoring, DATCP engineered practices, enforcement actions, Water Action Volunteers support, and UW-Ex Soil Health workshops. The press release Dan put together and the URL link to the full annual report we all contributed to is also included. DNR has received good feedback on the report from EPA (they liked all the pictures!).

Three enforcement cases in the watershed have escalated to Notice of Violations and Enforcement Conferences led by DNR Environmental Enforcement Specialist staff.

I am attending the WI Water and Soil Health Conference at the end of this week – hope to see many of you there as well!

I am acting DNR advisor on the WI Land and Water Technical Committee and we are meeting next week where we will talk about the topic of drainage tile concerns.

Started engaging in the USDA's Rural Partners Network. Last week I had a one-on-one meeting with Sarah Sippl, the Community Liaison for the Northwestern partnership, and she filled me in with the history of the program (which is VERY new, like less than a year). The northwestern network is focused on outdoor recreation in terms of economic development and the northern network's focus is infrastructure. I have recommended partnering with Natural Resources Foundation to schedule more field trips in the area. Agrotourism is outdoor recreation and several field trips in the past have included showcasing farms that have implemented conservation practices. So many birds with one stone: boost/diversify farm revenue, get people outside, promote ag BMPs, yay! Plus some of those counties have been pretty light in field trip options, so a great opportunity to fill the void and make some opportunities more accessible to people closer to the area as well as bring others in.

<https://www.rural.gov/community-networks/wi>

I'm working with Health Dunn Right's Healthy Environment Action Team to get lead free tackle kits and partner with WI Salt Wise.

Western WI Ag Lenders Conference is in January in Altoona. This was an excellent event I attended last year, but unfortunately can't make it this year. We always talk about ways to connect with this important stakeholder group for the work we do and this event is a great opportunity to make inroads!

Brad Luedtke (via email): Nothing new to report from 3M.

Nick: Had to leave early, but nothing new to report beyond busy end-of-year wrap ups, etc.

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

**Next Meeting**: The Partnership's **next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, February 7**. This could be virtual, or perhaps in person in Barron, depending on weather and people's availability.