

# Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

## 2/7/24 Meeting held at Barron Co Government Center

**Present at the meeting:** Alex Smith, Liz Osborne – DNR; Andrew Schneyer, Connor Dougherty – Center for Limnological Research and Rehabilitation at UW-Stout; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Jamey Lideen, Gary Luepke – Chetek Lakes; Nick Stadnick – Rusk County LCD; Becky Brathal, 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 2023 Annual Report:** Dan asked that people begin to assemble their individual reports for actions in 2023. He will assemble them into a report once he has everyone's info. He will contact Chris Willger from DNR to get P monitoring data from below the Lake Menomin dam. Also discussed were other ways to use the annual reports. Kelsey suggested some graphics for social media posts, as well as presenting at small events (either other peoples' events or specific events to discuss the report with different folks). Nick suggested a story map, and also maybe some booths at farmers markets, such as the ones in Barron, Rice Lake and Menomonie.

**Discussion of Plan Update:** The ten-year watershed plan for the Red Cedar will be ten years old in 2025 (approved by DNR and EPA in 2016), so it's time to start moving forward on an updated plan. Dan has learned from Andrew Craig with DNR in Madison that a complete rewrite may not be necessary, but could be done as more of an addendum to the current plan. Suggestions for changes included focusing more on how to reach and empower farmers, focusing more on other practices beyond cover crops (which can actually increase soluble P runoff), focusing on HUC12-scale work, and also bringing in other stakeholders such as public health officials. Dan will set up either a regular semi-monthly Partnership meeting or special meeting to discuss more about the plan update.

**Discussion of New Meeting Day:** The next few regularly scheduled meetings (first Wed of April and June) do not work for Dunn County staff, as their schedule has changed. Chase suggested perhaps the first Thursday of the month, or as an alternate, the first Tuesday. Tuesdays don't work for Tyler. So, the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, April 4 in Menomonie.

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

**Dan:** Asked everyone to register for the Red Cedar River Conference and ran down the agenda. The Conference is Thursday, March 14 at UW-Stout. It was suggested in some discussions that the Plan update should include more specifics on ways the Conference can be used to enhance the efforts of the Partnership and the goals of the Plan. Also informed everyone that Tara Daun (regional farmer-led watershed group coordinator for Farmers Union) did not get the DNR grant they applied for to fund her

position. And also the other grant that Farmers Union applied for to hire Ilisa Ailts as a coordinator for three other farmer-led groups in the region was not funded. Although Tara has funding for about another year, this would be a major loss in the region and in efforts to help regional farmer-led groups be productive and effective.

Liz: Is part of the Wisconsin Leadership Academy, and is focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion issues. Will be present at Farm Tech Days (to be held in Chippewa County August 13-15 this year). Is a member of the Environmental Sciences Advisory Committee at UW-Stout. Is working on six enforcement cases in the Red Cedar watershed, working closely with County Land Conservation staff to enforce NR-151 guidelines.

Becky: Has been holding CAFO update meetings for producers. Ducks Unlimited will be hiring a grazing specialist in NW WI to help write grazing plans. The Northwest Grazers Conference is coming up in Shell Lake on March 2.

Kelsey: Will be speaking at a workshop on the effects of grazing on water quality on February 27. There is also a webinar on Feb 13 on the topic of the impact of various practices on water quality. Is collecting monitoring data on phosphorus stratification in soils from some of the farmer led groups in the area. A nitrate leaching calculator workshop is being planned sometime soon in St. Croix County. Also is collecting data from some nitrogen use efficiency trials in Pepin County.

Alex: The full list of grant awards for 2024 from the DNR surface water grant program should be coming out next week.

Nick: Lots of grant reimbursement work keeping him busy recently. Fifty acres of land was recently donated to the County, along the Chippewa River near Bruce. County folks will be meeting soon to discuss how to use the land, but using it for education, outreach and research may be an idea discussed. Once again this year Rusk County has a finalist in the Conservation Speech contest sponsored by Wisconsin Land and Water.

Jamey: Chetek Lakes Association is doing lots of planning. The aquatic plant and sediment study is done, so that will help in planning efforts. Schedule and ideas for fundraising are also being discussed. They will be having an informational meeting for the public on April 13. Dan volunteered to speak at the event if needed.

Gary: Excited about the April 13 event.

Connor: Talked about his position with CLRR. He worked there before, went into private consulting, but is now back at the lab again. They will have a booth at the Red Cedar Conference.

Andrew: Bill James wants CLRR staff to continue to work with watershed partnerships and attend meetings. Bill is likely retiring completely in the next couple years, so is working to get Andrew and Connor in shape to take over the lab. They currently have five lakes they're working on through contracts.

Tyler: Talked to Chris Willger about continuing to sample the Yellow River south of Barron. DNR will continue this and fund it for now. There will be some sampling of some rivers in the Barron Co for neonicotinoid pollutants this year. The lakes position with the County is still up in the air, but is working to try to make that happen with County funding. His office is working hard to take advantage of increased NRCS funding, and getting projects for landowners paid for with that funding.

Chase Cummings (via email): Finished report on the 2023 groundwater monitoring program. Report will be presented to PR&D and County Board in February and then will be made available to larger audience. Also presented at Red Cedar Watershed Conference March 14th. We are nearing the completion of the first phase of runoff improvement project on a farm on the Dunn Barron county line. This is a NOD grant. Awaiting the final funding level for MDV from DNR. Have some projects lined up in the RC watershed. Continue to be a resource regarding the Tainter Lake Rehabilitation District, as best we can, as they pursue their interests and priorities. Revisiting some compliance issues through the Farmland Preservation Program. Also seeing some increased interest in the program following the increased tax credits, etc. (Changes recently approved by the legislature). Finalizing 2023 reports for both Producer Led Watershed Grants. Both, groups received less funding for 2024 than applied for. The Red Cedar Conservation Farmers group received an additional \$10,000 through a TNC (The Nature Conservancy) Grant to support their efforts. Surface water monitoring, in cooperation with DNR, will continue in 2024. NOPP (Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program) will continue in its second year with the RCCF producer led group. A meeting to discuss the results of the 2023 season will be held at Viking Bowl in Colfax on February 13th (10:00am). Contact Dunn Co. LWCD for info and registration.

Tara Daun (via email): We had our regional meeting which was considered a success (although the panel was rushed). And we'll also have had our Community Conversation in Glenwood City then as well (it's on Monday night 2/5). We're still trying to get a big livestock event put together for 2/24, but we're not making much progress on that front.

Megen Hines (via email): Taking advantage of this warm weather to do some private stormwater pond inspections and we've had our street sweeper out in January and February! Working on some GIS updates to make stormwater outfall and pond inspections more efficient.

**Evaluation**: Everyone rated the meeting as a 5 except for one rating of 4.75 due to the group's prolific use of unknown acronyms.

**Next Meeting**: The Partnership's next meeting would have been Wednesday, April 3. But as mentioned above the Dunn County Land Conservation office can no longer attend first Wednesday meetings. So, **the next meeting has been rescheduled for Thursday, April 4, and will be held in Menomonie at 9 AM.**