

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

### 4/4/24 Meeting held at Dunn Co Government Center

**Present at the meeting:** Andrew Schneyer, Connor Dougherty – Center for Limnological Research and Rehabilitation at UW-Stout; Jamey Lideen – Chetek Lakes; Nick Stadnick – Rusk County LCD; Brad Luedtke – 3M; Megen Hines – City of Menomonie; Al Brown, Tom Bilse – Tainter Lake District; 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 Red Cedar Conference:** The Red Cedar River Watershed Conference was held at UW-Stout on March 14 with about 250 attendees. Many of those at today's meeting were there. Feedback was mixed, with several people saying a few of the keynote presentations were not as relevant to the watershed issues as they could have been. Several people had positive comments about John Strausser's breakout session where he had small groups form to talk about some questions focused on what people would like to see the watershed and their community look like in the future. Members of the planning committee who were present talked a little about future ideas for the Conference which may include more discussion-type events.

**Discussion of 2023 Annual Report:** Dan is beginning to receive info from various Partners to add to the 2023 annual report and reminded others of what is needed from them. He's hoping to get things together a little sooner than last year, when some DNR monitoring data was long in coming. There was some discussion of using the report to present a summary at the Red Cedar Conference of what things have been accomplished in the watershed.

**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 will expire in 2026. There have been some meetings and discussions on what the plan update should address. Dan has been getting some feedback from Andrew Craig at DNR in Madison about this, but needs to seek more information from him. There was some discussion of getting public input on the plan update; sort of modeling something like what John Strausser did at the Red Cedar Conference mentioned above. The June Partnership meeting will be devoted mostly to this topic.

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

**Dan:** Mentioned the WI Land and Water Conference and how there were some good sessions there. Is conducting a day-long watershed planning workshop with others at the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention on April 10 in Stevens Point. Also mentioned that he had met with Farmers 4 Health of Pepin

County as they discussed new items for which to pay incentive payments to farmers. The Haney soil test is one thing they would like to pay for.

Nick: They have a tree sale coming up soon. The County's shoreland program for lakeshore property owners, which pays for 50% of the cost of BMPs on lakefront property, is already getting sign-ups for this season. Is still looking for ways to finance a no-till drill for the county to rent out. The farmer-led watershed group in the county is thinking about establishing demo plots, and maybe doing some edge-of-field monitoring. Rusk County's junior division entry in the Conservation Speech contest at the WI Land and Water Conference won first place in the state.

Andrew and Conner: They are working on getting up to speed on all equipment, techniques and other knowledge being shared by Bill James for the next three weeks or so, until field season gets underway. They are looking for more projects, and did have a booth set up at the Red Cedar River Conference.

Jamey: The Chetek Lakes Association is putting on an educational event on Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> in Chetek, featuring some presentations by Dan, Tyler, Buzz Sorge and others. The Association had some articles published in the Chetek newspaper last summer about the lakes and things being done to improve water quality, and they recently found out that the Wisconsin Newspaper Association gave them a second-place award for those articles. Healthy Lakes projects are ramping up, and it looks like for the first time since the pandemic, Clean Boats Clean Waters work will be happening this year at the lakes.

Megen: Lots of construction happening with no lull over the winter. Rain to Rivers is sponsoring some erosion control training through NASECA coming up next week. Submitted the City's annual storm water report to DNR last month. They are working with DNR on phosphorus modeling, trying to work out if the City is indeed meeting their TMDL requirements for phosphorus reductions. Has several events and presentations coming up, including electronics collection, tree planting, and others. The City has recently met with a land owner to acquire land in north Menomonie needed for storm water pond #1.

Chase: Dunn Co will be getting about \$17,000 in MDV funds this year, which will be used for BMP funding. The County's two farmer-led groups have been active. The Red Cedar group is participating in the NOPP (nitrogen optimization pilot program) and also received a Nature Conservancy grant for \$10,000. There have been many compliance issues at some farms in the watershed with these farms violating NR151 or the county's sediment ordinance. There is one NOD grant that has been problematic, with some cost overruns threatening to derail to project and/or shut down the farm. The County is hiring an intern for the summer to help on various projects.

Al: The Tainter District was awarded a DNR planning grant for some strategic planning. A community survey of lake property owners was recently sent out, with 249 responses. Three community meetings will be held to discuss priorities for the District, with will then advise the plan writing process. They have developed four committees; 1) Strategic Planning; 2) Buoy and No-Wake issues; 3) Sedimentation of the lake; and 4) Strategic Planning. The District's annual meeting will be in August.

Tom: Is heading up the Sedimentation committee. There are many erosion sites upstream on the river, some that are contributing a huge quantity of sediment to the system year after year. It will take more money than the District will be able to collect to address these issues, so outside sources of funding are being explored.

Brad: 3M is looking to sell 157 acres of the land around the plant in Menomonie that was formerly rented out for farming, and is planted in a basic grass mix for now. The remainder (about another 100 acres or so) of the land that was farmed will be planted in some sort of permanent prairie vegetation. The managed prairie on the east side of the plant is doing well.

Tara Daun (via email):

1. The Hay River group will be pursuing an event on producers, processors, and retailers with the Red Cedar Learning Hub to improve and increase market access for well-stewarded beef.
2. The Farmers Union has received funding from the McKnight Foundation for development of a conservation agriculture-focused department which I will be directing. This will expand my role beyond the farmer-led councils and I'll be taking input from folks on where they see gaps in conservation agriculture adoption. I will still be working with my FLWC groups in the near term and setting up a transition to a replacement for me (if funding is secured) or working with other partners to cover the gap.
3. We will be submitting a Wisconsin Conservation Cooperation Agreement application before 4/15 to try to get funding for my current position as well as one more position like it for Barron, Chipp, and Washburn counties.

Liz Usborne (via email):

- Attended the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers research presentation event in Feb.
- Attended annual WI Land + Water Conference in Mar.
- Attended Red Cedar Watershed Conference in Mar.
- Evaluated possible site for water sampling in discharge enforcement case – too much snow at the time
- Granted deadline extension for ongoing enforcement case that has recently secured legal representation
- Working with Dunn County to wrap up an ~\$800,000 Notice of Discharge grant (site still has a couple violations to resolve before full compliance)
- Will be attending a couple Conservation Partner meetings (DATCP, NRCS, Counties, and DNR) – one next week in Eau Claire and another later this month in Merrill

- Runoff Grant application deadline is April 15th – not expecting any new ones this year in the Red Cedar, but one small scale barnyard Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) grant in Rusk County is expiring at the end of this year.
- Helping Healthy Environment Action Team with Health Dunn Right Resource Fair and family concert later this month
- The state’s nonpoint program is under review and they are hosting internal focus groups now. Will update when there is more to share

**Evaluation:** Everyone rated the meeting as a 5 but there were some negative comments about the low attendance at the meeting.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership’s next meeting is a day later than the regular “first Wednesday” of every other month due to some scheduling difficulties. So, **we will be meeting on Thursday, June 6 at the Baron County Government Center.** As mentioned above, this will be a meeting mostly focused on plan revision.