

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

### 6/6/24 Meeting held at Barron Co Government Center

**Present at the meeting:** Tina Lee - UW-Stout; Nick Stadnick – Rusk County LCD; Megen Hines – City of Menomonie; Al Brown, Tom Bilse – Tainter Lake District; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Tom Goodwin – Red Cedar Lakes Association; Alex Smith, Liz Usborne, Anna Mares – WDNR; Chase Cummings, Caden Erickson – Dunn County LCD; Kelsey Hyland, Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

**Discussion of Plan Update:** This entire meeting was dedicated to discussing the update of our ten-year watershed plan for the Red Cedar which will expire in 2026. Dan had some conversations with Andrew Craig at WDNR in the last several months about what is needed. The plan can be completed as an addendum to the current plan, and does not have to cover much of the background information covered in the original plan. Primarily, the new plan should discuss what's worked in the last ten years, what hasn't worked and how those would be addressed, and any other new activities that may be appropriate to further the goal of improving water quality in the Red Cedar River system.

The first topic discussed was the level and variety of public input that should be sought for the plan update. It was generally agreed that this would be a worthy endeavor. Some of the obvious places to start are with the farmer-led watershed groups and also with the lake associations and districts. Those present who are directly connected to these groups (the Land Conservation Departments, and the Lake Associations and Districts) agreed to do an initial outreach to these groups to introduce the idea of them providing feedback and conversations about the plan and the watershed. Other specific groups that were mentioned included agronomists, grazers, and non-profit organizations such as Trout Unlimited. There are likely others and they will be explored in further discussions.

Another item discussed was a need for more and better outreach about what has been and is being done already. Many folks still think that nothing is being done (mostly because the lakes and river still get green and have poor water quality at times). It's important to let people know what's happening, and also to educate them on the process itself, and how there will be no "magic bullet" to clean up the system overnight...that this is a long-term process that will take time, and still not completely eliminate the water quality issues.

Another point stressed was that farmers need to be approached by us with a message of what we can do for them in this process. How can we help them to make the decisions on their farm that can lead to erosion control, better infiltration, and a positive impact on their bottom line and sustainability; and then do what we can to build that into the plan.

A second major topic of discussion was the idea of focusing some more effort on some specific HUC 12 (or smaller-scale) watersheds. The general consensus of the group was that we could certainly do that with regard to some aspects of the plan (such as more intense and regular monitoring), but that it shouldn't overshadow all other work. In other words, continue to work watershed wide, but look for or

create opportunities for some more focused relationship-building and assistance in smaller pockets of the watershed. In some instances this may proceed from what we already know, and in other instances, it may require further information such as monitoring or even modeling some of those smaller watersheds.

Another aspect of this smaller watershed discussion was developing some sort of ranking system for the HUC 12 watersheds in the Basin. This wouldn't necessarily be purely scientific, but would include factors such as the modeling data we have (SWRRB and, for a couple HUC 12s, ACPF), any monitoring data we may have, the presence of farmer-led groups or other organized constituencies, any available sociological data we have, county land and water plans, transect survey data, and any other factors that we may determine as relevant.

**Action items:** Between now and the next meeting, here are the action items people agreed to take on.

- 1) Farmer-led groups will be contacted by Land Conservation offices (or other members of the Partnership who work with these groups regularly) to discuss the possibility of having a lengthier discussion with them about their role in helping shape the plan.
- 2) Lake residents will be contacted, as above, by those members of the Partnership closest to them, namely the Districts and Associations, to present the same idea as above to their members.
- 3) If any other Partners have connections to organizations that would be valuable in the plan-update process, such as any non-profits, granting organizations, or relevant organized constituencies, they will reach out to those groups.
- 4) Those Partners who have questions about their role in the plan update will go through the current plan and highlight areas where they were singled out for activities in order to determine where they are with those goals, and what any new goals should be for the plan update.
- 5) Everyone will begin the process of assembling or tallying any sort of data that may help to develop the above-mentioned priority list for the HUC 12 watersheds.

If any relevant actions are taken that the group should know about before the next meeting, those actions should be communicated to Dan or the entire group, so we can be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

**Check-In and Discussion:** Because of the format of the meeting (focusing on just the issue of plan revision) we did not do our regular check-ins.

**Evaluation:** Rather than a strict 1-5 rating, a more open evaluation discussion took place, with everyone stating their feelings about how the discussion went and asking any clarifying questions about what to do between now and next meeting. Generally everyone was happy with how the meeting went.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership's next meeting is a week earlier than our regular schedule (to accommodate others' schedules), and **will be held Wednesday, July 31<sup>st</sup> at 9 AM in Menomonie.**