Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

6/23/26 Meeting held at Dunn Co Government Center

Present at the meeting: Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron Co LCD; Chase Cummings – Dunn Co LCD; Nick Stadnik – Rusk Co LCD; Jamey Lideen – Chetek Lakes Association; Liz Usborne, Andrew Craig – WDNR; Al Brown, Tom Bilse – Tainter Lake District; Tom Goodwin – Red Cedar Lakes Association; Todd Prill, Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

2025 Annual Report Discussion: Dan has received contributions for the annual report from Todd, Chase, Megen and Liz. If others could send their reports soon it would be appreciated.

Plan Update Discussion: Progress continues on the plan update, though not as much has been done since last meeting due to Dan's schedule. Some items discussed that are needed for the plan are some details on monitoring goals for the watershed and also for the HUC 12s of interest. Andrew suggested that if we have subwatersheds where modeling shows a good percentage of possible load reduction, those would be places to target. Tyler suggested finding the old Priority Watershed data for Barker Creek and looking at that. Chase is going to provide Tyler with some estimates on the cost of monitoring. Tom G mentioned that all the streams entering into the Red Cedar Lakes chain are being monitored, and that could be valuable, though most of those watersheds showed P load contributions to the watershed that are small compared to others. Andrew suggested that we put in the plan that regular meetings will be held with Chris Willger and Madeline Roberts (DNR monitoring staff) in the future as we move forward with monitoring.

The topic of Dan's future retirement (likely sometime in 2028) came up, and the group mentioned this is cause for some sort of succession/contingency planning for how the group can stay together and functional after that date. There is no guarantee that Extension will fill Dan's position.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding lobbying of lawmakers for the resources needed to do the work we need to do. It's obvious with what's been happening with the loss of positions in conservation and natural resources, that it will be difficult to achieve goals with fewer resources. Lake Associations and Districts and other non-agency partners are in a unique position to educate their members about needs, and provide those members with language and talking points to lobby to try to fill those resource and personnel needs. Developing a common lobbying message for all lake groups in the watershed should be a priority. Tyler mentioned that there is some work being done in his office on how to organize a countywide Lakes Association for Barron County. Dan also has a list of all the lake groups in the watershed.

Dan hopes to have more of a completed draft for folks to look at by the next meeting in August.

Check-In: Everyone took a few minutes to talk about what was happening in their realm/jurisdiction regarding the Red Cedar watershed.

Todd: Is meeting with all the producer led watershed groups in the area to get to know them better and explore needs. The Ag and Water Quality Extension folks are working on information regarding what BMPs are best for managing phosphorus. Is also doing some nitrate sampling of irrigation wells.

Tom G: A survey of streamside properties of tributaries to the Red Cedar Lakes chain took place this spring with help from Nick and Tyler. Any issues found were generally small. In May a curly leaf pondweed study was done, with very little found and no treatments recommended. Also surveying the lakeshores for yellow iris (invasive plant), as it is starting to show up on some properties. An aquatic plant management study is currently underway for all lakes.

Liz: Working through some grants in the watershed. Recently presented to the LAKES REU students here for the summer. Is part of the NR 151 progress and assessment study, a project to look at NR 151 compliance on a random sample of farms across the state, with all ag counties having some sites to inspect. Ruth King is retiring this week from DNR. Her position will likely be modified when advertised.

Al and Tom B: Working on a study of lake usage for Tainter Lake. Next year a planned economic impact study will be done. All that data will be help guide the mission and work of the District. Grants are being written, one for the development of a lake management plan, and another for buying a harvester for aquatic vegetation. The 2nd annual carp bounty just wrapped up for the lake. Results were good but due to weather issues they miss the peak of spawning. It may likely be extended next year. They are also doing a study of carp in lakes to determine if carp truly are an issue in Tainter.

Jamey: Aquatic vegetation has been challenging this year. Normally harvesting of aquatic vegetation starts around the first of July, but this year they have been working on it since late May. Are currently updating educational materials as the season gets underway. There seems to be less interest in Healthy Lakes projects the last few years. People have signed on to projects, only to back out. This is likely due to the $1,000 cap per practice for the program. Costs have gone up considerably the last couple years, so it's harder to convince folks to participate. Is also having an educational event for kids, and asked for advice on water quality education materials that would work for kids. Several folks gave ideas and contacts.

Nick: Has a farm in the watershed transitioning to managed grazing that includes field border pollinator strips. Is doing a countywide study of which lakes are actually suitable for wake boats.

Tyler: There are three dams on the Yellow River in the City of Barron and there are issues with some of them. It may be possible that one could be taken out completely. Needs to attend to the random farms selected in Barron Co for the NR 151 study mentioned above. Hosted a conservation technician tour recently where they visited an intermittent stream that is a tributary to the Hay River. Since some work has been done the stream is looking better and fish are being seen in it, where as before the water quality was quite bad. Will be working with the county's LCC to set up a long-term groundwater plan. Repairs on the Chetek dam are needed, and may be done in a drawdown in September of next year.

Chase: Budget season is underway, and there may be some position issues. One position in his department is currently open, and it currently looks like they should be able to fill it. Lots of talk of data

centers happening, with some talk of small, modular data centers, about the size of a truck trailer. Dunn Co is currently 7th in the state for high capacity wells, so there is concern about what any large facilities may do to the water table if more high cap wells go into the ground. Dunn Co's draft Land and Water Plan is due this week to DATCP. Groundwater monitoring starts in July with about 300-350 participants, continuing a program that started in 2022. Funding is coming from an EPA award. One TRM grant and one NOD grant are being worked on, both in the Red Cedar watershed.

Dan: Reminded folks that the LAKES REU students will present their results at the Raw Deal in Menomonie on August 6. Also mentioned that he has been doing some work to help with the statewide Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy being written by an inter-agency task force, due to be out sometime next year.

Becky Brathal (via email): Hay River Farmer led is planning on having 2 field days later this summer, Grazing related to fencing and cover crop field this fall. There is a 7th Congressional District (Tom Tiffany's replacement) candidate forum happening this thursday 4:30-6:30pm in Star Prairie WI, with a focus on agriculture. 34 pairs of underwear planted across the region I cover, 5 in the Red Cedar Watershed.

Evaluation: On a scale of 1 to 5 (five being the best), everyone rated the meeting as a 5, with Andrew giving it a 4.5 because of some things he needs to discuss with Dan about the most recent draft of the watershed plan.

Next Meeting: The next Partnership meeting will be held **Wednesday, August 26th, at 9 AM in Barron**.