

## Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Minutes

2/11/15 Barron County Government Center, Barron, WI

**Present at the meeting:** Paul LaLiberte, Buzz Sorge (phone), Ruth King – WDNR; Dan Prestebak, Amanda Hanson – Dunn County LCD; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County LCD; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Association; Nels Paulson – UW Stout; Ron Verdon – TMLIA; Andrew Norman – WWLT; Julia Olmstead, Dan Zerr-UW-Extension.

**Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda:** Meeting minutes from the January meeting were reviewed, with no changes. Agenda for the day was also reviewed with no significant changes.

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

- Dan Z: Budget issues in the Governor's proposed budget may affect personnel involved in the Partnership soon. Some discussion of these issues took place.
- Amanda: Hay River watershed Farmer Led Council has been meeting. Two of the farmers from the Council attended a team meeting in Menomonie on 2/10 that offered the chance to meet and discuss activities with Andrew Craig of DNR.
- Julia: Cover crop meeting will be held in Ridgeland, WI on Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Also talked more about the 2/10 team meeting. The Councils discussed three priorities; 1) secure funding; 2) engage more farmers; 3) decide on a plan for establishing a baseline of phosphorus loading and do some phosphorus index monitoring in all four watersheds. There was also a discussion at the 2/10 meeting about TRM grants, and the councils will apply for two large-scale TRM grants.
- Paul: Groundwater workshop at Stout on 1/15 went well. People realized that there are many big and small efforts going on to study and assess ground water issues in the area. Also, DNR will public-notice their framework explaining which watersheds they will focus their efforts on for water quality work. Stakeholder readiness will likely play a role in this, so our Partnership should be well-positioned. Also Paul and Buzz have proposed, during budget analysis activities at DNR, that they would like some resources to do a two-year monitoring program in the Red Cedar. This is a competitive allocation process, so it may or may not happen.
- Ron: Handed out a list compiled by TMLIA of their accomplishments in 2014. Mentioned that the Civic Governance grant that TMLIA wrote for the Interstate Civic Governance Organizing Agency (in which several Partnership members participate) was approved; so that group will begin meeting again in a few weeks, continuing through the year. Also mentioned that TMLIA will be advocating to legislators and others for some of the positions critical to the Partnership that may be eliminated in the latest budget proposal.

- Nels: Selection of students for this summer's REU activities will begin soon. Also sent a message to biology faculty at Stout to see if any students would be available to help with monitoring activities in the watershed.
- Rod: Had a buckthorn meeting at UW-Barron Co. Also spoke to an ecology class there, and got some students to agree to work on small-scale projects in the watershed such as rain gardens. Also met with Rice Lake officials to talk about things such as storage sites for plowed snow and other runoff issues. He will be helping build some rain gardens around Rice Lake. Also Desair Lake Association has funded some watershed projects in the Desair Lake watershed. Also briefed the Partnership on the upcoming Red Cedar River Conference.
- Andrew: Conversations with a farmer about a conservation easement within the watershed fell through, but there is hope that talks will start up again. The land is mostly forested in the northern portions of the Red Cedar Basin.
- Tyler: Talked to officials in Rice Lake about using no-till ag practices on land in the industrial park. Also mentioned that Bill James has a grad student who will be doing some work analyzing the Desair Lake watershed using the EVAAL (Erosion Vulnerability Assessment for Agricultural Lands) tool. Also there is a grant application from WLWCA to get funds to bring a BMP tracking tool from Flat Rock Geographics to Wisconsin, and use it in several counties, including Barron for the purpose of monitoring implementation activities.
- Ruth: As DNR looks at watersheds in which to focus efforts, some of the old Priority Watersheds Projects in the Red Cedar may be in a position to get more points on any grant applications. Some monitoring for some of these areas is being discussed to determine if BMPs that were installed years ago have changed water quality. Paul mentioned that the South Fork of the Hay River will be monitored. Ruth also mentioned that some of the projects Rod talked about in Rice Lake may start them on their way to meeting storm water permit requirements.
- Dan P: There is an effort to fund an intern in the NRCS office who would work on conservation issues under the Earth Team Volunteers program. The Soil Health Partnership that was formed between Dunn Co, the City of Menomonie and others is working to get people to farm sections of county and city land with water quality practices in mind. Dunn Co is experimenting with the EVAAL tool as well, but having some software problems. The speaking contest for students in the county was held recently, and most of the students in the Colfax area had high-capacity wells and sand mining as the topics for their speeches. Also the job description for the water conservation planner position within the county is being worked on. Groundwater has become a topic that some county officials want this position to work on, but members voiced concerns that this may take away from work on surface water quality issues.

**Discussion Chapter 3:** A draft of what's been done so far on Chapter 3 was handed out. It consists primarily of point source control strategies, which come mostly from DNR guidance documents. The nonpoint source section is still under construction. Buzz voiced some concerns about accountability in terms of tracking load reduction in subwatersheds over the next ten years, and whether or not we have goals for each of those watersheds that we can work toward and for which we can set benchmarks. The

Partnership looked over what we have so far, and agreed that what the Chapter 3 team has done so far is sufficient to meet these needs, but that some more clarification may be needed in the text.

Dan P will get some more data elements to Paul, who will use that data to perform some more calculations regarding how much load reduction will come from various practices. Once all the calculations and tables are done, Paul will get this information to Dan Z who will synthesize it into Chapter 3.

**Discussion of Chapter 4:** Nels created a Chapter 4 draft in the past few weeks that has been refined and edited a few times. The Partnership offered some more ideas and edits, and Dan Z agreed to take any further comments from people via e-mail and refine the chapter further.

**Discussion of Chapter 5:** The final chapter of the plan will be Chapter 5, dealing with EPA elements 6-9; primarily focused on setting benchmarks, monitoring progress, creating a framework for revisiting and revising the plan over time, and also setting up a water quality monitoring plan. Dan Z agreed to head up a team including Buzz, Paul and Nels, who will begin working on this plan in the next few weeks.

**Evaluation:** An evaluation of the meeting was conducted, with each Partnership member rating the meeting from 1 (worst) to 5 (best). If anything less than a 5 was given, the person was asked to elaborate on the gaps that caused a lower rating. Most everyone gave the meeting a 4, with the gaps being that the meeting ran long and parts of the discussion were rushed. Weather prevented some people from getting to the meeting on time, and sidetrack issues were numerous, so Dan Z agreed to work better at keeping the group on task at future meetings.

**Next Meeting:** The Partnership's next meeting will not be on the regular second Wednesday, as this would be the day before the Red Cedar Conference. So the group agreed to meet on Friday, March 6, at 9 AM in Menomonie.