

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Minutes

5/13/15, Dunn Co Ag Service Center, Menomonie, WI

Present at the meeting: Paul LaLiberte, Buzz Sorge – WDNR; Dan Prestebak, Amanda Hanson – Dunn County Land Conservation; Katie Wantoch – Dunn Co Extension; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Nels Paulson, Bill James – UW Stout; Andrew Norman – WWLT; Ron Verdon – TMLIA; John Sipple – NRCS; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension

Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda: Meeting minutes from the April meeting were reviewed, with a minor change specifying that Matt Kuchta is collecting stream data, not lake data. 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 P: Amanda has been offered and accepted the position within Dunn Co of Conservation Planner/Water Quality Specialist. Dan is working on putting together a ground water monitoring program funded by the county. Some sites will be in the Red Cedar watershed, and hopefully one may be located in the farmer-led council subwatershed. Some LCD funding was restored in the latest work by the Joint Finance Committee of the legislature.
- Andrew: It sounds like the DNR stream bank program for conservation easements along trout streams will be renewed by DNR. WWLT is participating in this program.
- Tyler: The proposed Chetek Lake District looks like it won't happen, as it was voted down by the Chetek City Council. Asked the group if there is potential to talk about in-lake work to reduce phosphorus in Chetek and other shallow lakes. Recently drove through SW WI and it looks like our part of the state is doing better on reduced tillage and no-till.
- Nels: Is preparing for work with the REU students who are coming June 14. Also collecting names and addresses from Dan P and Tyler for social surveying of farmers/producers.
- Bill: Is helping with the REU project. Will be doing water quality monitoring in the watershed beyond the REU work.
- Ron: The Joint Finance Committee voted to restore funding for the Natural Resources Education program within UW-Extension, meaning Dan Z and Julia will likely keep their jobs. Attended the TMDL Community of Practice workshop at the Lakes Partnership Conference in Stevens Point in April (Buzz also attended, Dan Z was there as well and led the workshop, and Amanda was there as part of a panel discussion).
- Paul: Recognized Buzz with a presentation of goodies honoring his 30 years of work with DNR. Shared the poster for the Lower Chippewa River events coming up in August and talked about some of the events. Also mentioned that the variance for phosphorus rules is now in a public comment phase. Cost versus benefits will be the main discussion for this...will it cost more to implement the new rules than can be recovered by any benefits the

- phosphorus restrictions could provide? There are two conflicting studies on this topic. Passed out a sheet showing point-source loads in the last 15 years. There has been an increase in the last couple years due to Rice Lake and Turtle Lake waste water treatment plants contributing large amounts of phosphorus to the Red Cedar River system.
- John: NRCS intern will be starting on 5/26, and will be assisting NRCS, LCD and others with various projects for 400 hours over the summer.
 - Amanda: Briefly talked about her new job. Participated in Environmental Education Day with 5th graders from the area. The event featured several different stations offering education and information on many topics. Met with DNR staff for site evaluations to determine how effective past practices installed under past Clean Water Act Section 319 (NPS) funding programs were in improving water quality. The South Fork Hay River is part of this area.
 - Katie: On the 160 acres of County/City farmland on the Red Cedar Demonstration Farm was soil sampled over two days, and included samples of every acre. Converting the land to no-till is a goal, but may take some work. A fall field day is being planned. Also received a grant from Extension to install a weather monitoring station.

Discussion of Drafts of All Chapters: Dan Z distributed new drafts of all the chapters to the Partnership the week before the meeting. Discussion took place and comments were taken by Dan for various revisions. Revisions will also be accepted via e-mail, and Dan will incorporate into the document. The goal is to have the plan in nearly final form by the next meeting in June, and submit to DNR/EPA shortly after that.

Report from Paul on Water Quality Monitoring: Paul gave a summary of WQ monitoring in the Basin, explaining where and how often sampling is taking place, and who is doing the work. The Partnership decided to add some language to Chapter 5 recommended by Bill, giving more details about further monitoring in the future.

Transitioning from Planning Team to Implementation Team: A discussion took place regarding the move toward becoming more of an implementation team once the plan is done. The group seemed to be mostly in favor of meeting quarterly. There was also consensus that we should try to get more farmers to participate in the implementation phase. The group also talked about getting the plan out to the public in various venues and to various groups. This includes presentations to county boards, city councils, towns associations, sportsman's groups, and others. Further events were discussed to bring awareness to the public, such as pontoon rides and field days.

Discussion of Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Grants through NRCS: Dan Z asked the group if they thought applying for such a grant would be a good idea for the Partnership. Some discussion took place regarding pros and cons. Considering that the RCPP is mostly just a finely tuned cost-share program, it may not fit with the farmer-led councils very well. Buzz suggested that a lake grant from DNR could be used as match to the federal grant, and that the lake grant money could be used for staffing, for which the RCPP cannot be used. But further discussion is needed. Pre-

proposals are due on July 8. Dan Z agreed to investigate further and try to organize a group that will include LCDs from St. Croix and Chippewa Counties as well, to discuss the idea.

Evaluation: The meeting went long, and Dan Z decided to skip the evaluation portion of the meeting to avoid keeping people any longer than they already had been.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next meeting will be Wednesday, June 10th in Barron.