**Coon Creek Community Watershed Council (CCCWC)**

**October Meeting**

**Lovas Hill Rd & Co Hwy P, Westby**

**October 2, 2024**

**Eat & Greet! Food Served: 6:00 p.m.**

**Meeting: 6:30 p.m**.

1. Meeting was Called to Order @6:31PM by Nancy Wedwick. She asked the Council Members to take a moment to think about Lake Lure Dam (circa 1925) and what’s happening in the Southeast. What those folk must be going through. The thing that gave me hope is finding out that there are things we can do – how do we get a message to folks that people care and there is hope. How much I gave thought to – what a way to build community a habitat if you will of the future for little people so this is here for them. We need to not do so many introductions so if you are okay with that we will move on with Marc.
2. Marc’s Fascinating Flashbacks – Ivin Ouil farm 1922. Dam the creek and built a sawmill. Made it all out of wood, except the sawblade. That is how he got started with the sawmill and it grew through the years. There was a store, post office, maybe a school here at one time a long ago. He made a diversion dam and when the flood came it took out the dam, not the mill and just rebuilt each time. He was ahead of his time. The sawmill was donated.
3. Secretary's Report –Kevin Traastad made a motion to approve the two last meeting minutes and Orlan Bakkum made the 2nd motion. Motion passed.
4. Treasurer’s Report –$91,020.10 remains in the bank. We are paying the usual bills: social media, google suite, advertising, remaining expenses for the 91st. Who all received the postcard was asked and discussed? 3-7:30PM for the event at Branches. Flyers and online have the correct time and more details.
5. Updates
   1. Grants
      1. The Nature Conservancy (assistance for tree and shrub planting) – Sydney spoke about planting trees reimburse hedge rows – let Kevin know. Vernon County LWCD has the tree sale open now.

Sign ups have exceeded 160 acres, divide up dollars with folk that have cover crops planted already. Maybe 6-8 people interested now. Recommends winter rye – any question about mixes or planting contact Kevin, Ben, Brad, etc. for more information.

* + 1. Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (assistance for cover cropping)
  1. Federal flood control dam decommissioning

Shoot an email for more information. Tim has well documented many of the meetings. Essentially probably progressing with decommissioning pl566 dams int eh CC and west fork. $30 million for VC, except for Jersey Valley slightly smaller. Needs to be nature based solutions, build cheep check dams, wetlands, and everything that ties into the 9 key element plan. County Board has decided to move forward with decommissioning and construction. Paid for by the Federal Government. VC can’t foot the bill on these

Flood Mitigation Alliance – just department heads now it is expanding, specially until October 9th submit an application to apply to be on this committee. 3 community at large members, with preference for folks involved in a watershed group. A place for education, ideas, and roll up our sleeve and having the different county departments. Get your applications in. Be present and ask questions. Hopefully a lot more open of a discussion. Will someone actually on the County Board be on it? Yes, the good department heads.

* 1. EPA 9 Key Element Plan – in 6 steps. Address certain elements. Big take away – want community involvement. Let them make the decisions to protect this beautiful place and water we have.
  2. Adrew Craig State Watershed Coordinator shared that he helped about 50-75 watersheds HUC 12 develop these plans and co implement with funding and support. But the milestones need to come from groups like this – what is exciting is the CCCWC has a restoration project. This is the head waters and doesn’t have issues that many other plans must remediate. The CCCWC is doing more than just focusing on the quality of the water but addressing climate change. We should continue thinking about that, and these extreme weather events will continue to happen. Those ideas can all be incorporated in the plan. $50,000 being provided June of 2025.
  3. Nancy shares that the application/grant process is a bit confusing. We applied in 2022, then again in 2023, again at the HUC 10 focus and are the grant recipient of the 2023-2024 funding.
     1. In the meantime, $50,000 tops to work with HUC12 selected Timber Coulee to start there. It makes sense. Just submitted for a 3rd round of funding to complete the whole process.
     2. The postcard mailers offer different times and places to speak up and learn what is going on. Address what do we do next? How to learn to live without the dams and what is Plan B?
        1. We may be the first that includes what little people think and we may be the first in the nation to have such a watershed plan.
        2. Mitigation is part of the plan? Discussion ensures about pre-planning mitigation. Someone notes “I’ve been on the plan for many years… there are issues with bridges.” But the plan is just a starting – not finished yet. There will be plenty of time to add such comments. It usually takes 1 year to make a plan, but 10 years to implement the plan. You can set milestones to build objectives, and these are meant to change overtime.
        3. We are still working on a game plan and looking for a hit list = at least the standard that is beneficial. We need a lot of farmland walkovers. This watershed is really a priority, and farmers can help with recommendations. Some of the work will be simultaneous. Timber Coulee areas may be receiving priority, and we will be looking for folks for farm walkovers.
        4. There’s two or three other counties receiving funding (Buffalo and Pepin?) Bear Creek County – big steep headlands and sand. Look at surface and ground water challenges. Pierce County has 3 partially completed plans. Southwestern Coulee region suggestion – may want to contact each other to share and discuss opportunities.

1. New Business
   1. Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program applications open

What does this mean? Lindsey mentions there is a grant program of $40,000 for on-farm research. She has flyers and is happy to distribute those around. The intention is to help work on Wisconsin nitrate issues. There's work being done in Lafayette County and Trempealeau County, but nothing in between. Trials are also taking place across the state. Check out the QR code on the flyer. Sydney has contact information for more details.

* 1. Soil testing opportunities

Sherry White from Ag water quality works out of La Crosse on soil testing opportunities for no-till farms. Split the top 2 inches from the rest. Or now overwintering pastures and stratification. Folks can fill out a survey. Sherry has full sheet flyers available. Shows your results and those across the state and potentially across the region. Southwest wasn’t represented well but Sherri is now here to help change that.

* 1. CCCWC is “on the map”

We are now getting requests from researchers, PhDs organizations, etc. on a regular if not increasing basis. We would like to know how to share those requests with the Council? Add a FAQs to the website? Email requests out? General thoughts? We have been getting a lot of academic requests to connect with farmers. It should be mentioned that since very early on we have been using a rubric to determine what partnerships we should proceed with, but are people interested in that kind of information?

Ben Wojahn stated he has been through this for so many years and encourages some time to be taken to vet the individual projects. Another council member states that is the very issue at hand - there are endless opportunities which need to be vetted but there is not capacity to do so. Again, the question is raised: how do we want to proceed with this predicament? Another council member states I have thoughts we need to determine what the community needs for some of that contact - perhaps they need to come in and get a sense of us to better determine what we need from them. Part of the criteria to partner has been how does this effort benefit the CCCWC – here’s what you could do. We don’t want to burn out the CCCWC members. Bree suggests she could assist in putting together something for the website, like a survey, if that would be helpful. The Council thought this was a great idea to proceed.

1. Presentation followed by Matthew Canter who spoke about cover cropping on rented ground for some of their crop production - a grassy mix of meadow fescue, rye, and various clovers varieties.
2. The next meeting date and location was set for November 6, at the Coon Valley Conservation Club to discuss the 9 Key Element Plan (2 years in the making, and what is to come looking ahead at forthcoming phases).