

CITIZENS (WOOD COUNTY) GROUNDWATER GROUP MEETING

DATE: Monday, August 16, 2021
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: In-Person (Wood County Courthouse, Room #114) & Teleconference via WebEx

Present: Caleb Armstrong, Ray Bossert, Rhonda Carrell, Scott Custer, Tamas Houlihan, Ben Jeffrey, Kim Keech, Olivia Kirchberg, Klayton Kree, Bill Leichtnam, Arne Nystrom, Amy Sue Vruwink, Gregg Wavrunek, Shane Wucherpennig and Tim Wuebben.

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chair Bill Leichtnam called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.
2. **Public Comment:** None.
3. **Speaker – Olivia Kirchberg, Representative from U.S. Ron Kind’s office speaking on “Federal Clean Water Initiatives”**

Olivia Kirchberg is a Legislative Assistant in Washington D.C. for U.S. Representative Ron Kind. Duties include: Transportation, Infrastructure Policy, Environmental Policy & Agriculture portfolio.

Highlights of “Federal; Clean Water Initiatives” presentation:

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill recently passed from the Senate. The appropriations process is for fiscal year 2022. The infrastructure bill is moving through Congress. House will debate the bill the week of August 23rd. The Infrastructure bill has a fair amount of funding. \$9.5 billion for U.S. Army Corps for construction, operation and maintenance for authorized projects. \$300 million for Mississippi River and Tributaries project. \$3.5 billion for flood litigation assistance through FEMA. Additional funding for Port Infrastructure and Hydropower Infrastructure. Funding for FEMA, NOA, Army Corps to support dam safety and maintenance. The provisions of the bill and timeframe to implement is unknown. The House will debate over the next couple of weeks. Tied to budget reconciliation process which will likely include infrastructure pieces and Clean Water initiatives.
- The Bipartisan WRDA, Water Resources Development Act, passed in December 2020 is critical to all states, territories and Tribal communities that invests in our ports, harbors and inland waterway, build more resilient communities; and ensure that the the US Army Corp of Engineers carries out projects in an economically and environmentally responsible manner.
- Drinking Water Quality – PFA’s contamination. Assist communities and accountability for pollution.
- USDA Rural Water Programs – Supports and serves the rural community which is designed to support enough funding to get projects off of the ground.
- NOA Research
- Land & Water Conservation Funds
- Amendment to increase USDA Rural Water & Waste Disposal Grant program
- Other Investments: Ecosystem Programs (construction, navigation, navigable), Great Lakes Restoration Initiatives, Upper Michigan Basin & Resource Plan.

Discussion comments:

- Southwest Wisconsin Water Study found human waste in contaminating private wells.
- Funding to provide municipalities to keep nitrates and PFA’s at measureable levels.
- PFASs mostly in private wells.
- American Rescue Act provides funding availability for smaller communities.
- Water Keeper Alliance – Fights pollution and protect watersheds.
- The “Dirty Water Rule” narrows the scope of the Clean Water Act by cutting federal protections for the nation’s wetlands and stream miles.
- Thank you to Congressman Ron Kind for his years of service after nearly 25 years in the U.S. House of Representatives.

4. **Correspondence/Updates/Handouts/Reports:**

Bill Leichtnam shared the following:

- Golden Sands RC & D meeting on Thursday, July 22nd – Portage County Board of Supervisors approved \$20,000 towards the Nelsonville Water Quality Monitoring Project. The Village of Nelsonville is an area that is facing potential water quality concerns similar to those seen across Portage County. The intent of this project is to establish a current baseline of water quality data that will help the Village to make decisions regarding water quality in the future and management practices that may influence drinking water quality.
- Wisconsin Public Radio by Danielle Kaeding, “Regulators Vow to Meet Water Quality Challenges despite Pushback from Industry Lawmakers” – Wisconsin health and environmental regulators will meet the state’s water quality challenges despite pushback from lawmakers and industry over efforts to address nitrates, lead and PFAS. Lawmakers removed proposals from the governor’s budget for the replacement of lead service lines, grant program to address PFA’s and testing, 11 new positions and grants for county conservation staff to support land and water conservation.
- WSAW News Article by Emily Davies, “Research turns focus toward finding solutions to nitrate contaminated groundwater” – Kevin Masarik of UWSP experimented to find ways to minimize nitrates in a commercial potato farm. The reason potatoes was chosen because it is the largest crop grown in the region, potatoes require a nitrogen nutrient application and potatoes leach the most nitrogen into the groundwater. Kevin Masarik’s UWSP students planted grass between the potato crops to create a root mass that soaks the extra water and nutrients the potatoes did not absorb. In 2020, ryegrass and millet was used but they found that the ryegrass preferred cooler conditions and could not grow fast enough to compete. In 2021, the UWSP students used a mix of barley oats and millet.

5. **Action Items proposed by Citizens (Wood County) Groundwater Group** None.

Actions proposed by citizens that would go to the Conservation, Education and Economic Development Committee of the Wood County Board. Citizens have access to their board.

6. **Roundtable**

Tamas Houlihan shared that – DNR Little Plover River Wisconsin Wildlife Association, thinned buckthorn growers and students bundles and put it along the river to narrow the river Larry Romansky USDA. Producer Led Grant – Irrigation tech highlighted farmer to farmer field day tour of Little Plover tour

7. **Announcements of members / visitors (upcoming parallel events / meetings)**

Portage County Groundwater Citizen Advisory Committee – The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 19th, 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Portage County Courthouse Annex in Conference Rooms 1 and 2. The committee is comprised of one primary representative and/or one alternate from each of the municipalities in Portage County. Agenda Items: Farmer Led Watershed Council Information, Wellhead Protection Ordinance, Village of Nelsonville, Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative Project, State Budget and Water Related Legislation, County Wide Water Quality Sampling and next steps.

Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative hired a researcher who will be employed for 13 months to research the impacts of nitrogen and neonicotinoids. The county collaborative group is made up of representatives from Adams County, Juneau County, Marquette County, Waushara County, Portage County and Wood County. The six counties are in the Central Sands aquifer.

8. **Wood County CLEAN SWEEP on Saturday, August 28th, 8 a.m.-Noon, Town of Saratoga garage**

Acceptable Items: fungicides, herbicides, insecticide, rodenticides, household drain cleaner, dry cleaning fluid, floor polish, metal cleaners, mildew cleaner, moth balls, nail polish remover, NiCad batteries, oven cleaner, photography chemicals, pool chemicals, silver polish, spot remover, creosote, gun cleaning fluid, hobby materials, lacquer, lead-based paints, stripper, thinner/solvents, turpentine, varnish, wood preservatives, automotive brake fluid, degreasers, ether, old fuel, transmission fluid.

Unacceptable Items: latex paint, tires, motor oil, automotive batteries, fluorescent tubes, electronics, appliances antifreeze, explosives and high pressure cylinders.

9. **Future Speakers:** Please contact Bill Leichtnam or Bruce Dimick with any suggestions for speakers.

Speaker suggestions:

Randy Romanski, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and consumer Protection Secretary

10. **Agenda Items for next meeting**

Agenda items should be submitted to Bill Leichtnam or Kim Keech by the second Monday of the month.

11. **Next Meeting** Meetings will be the third Monday of each month @ 2:00 p.m.

The next regular Citizens (Wood County) Groundwater Group meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 20th at 2:00 p.m. at Wood County Courthouse in Conference Room #114. A virtual WebEx option will also be available for this meeting.

12. **Adjourn Groundwater Group Meeting** Chair Bill Leichtnam adjourned @ 2:45 p.m.

Notes by Kim Keech, Planning & Zoning Office