

CITIZENS (WOOD COUNTY) GROUNDWATER GROUP MEETING

DATE: Monday, July 19, 2021
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: In-Person (Wood County Courthouse, Room #114) & Teleconference via WebEx

Present: Ray Bossert, Bill Clendenning, Scott Custer, Bruce Dimick, Gordon Gottbeheut, Tamas Houlihan, Keith Iverson, Ben Jeffrey, Kim Keech, Gail Kretschmer, Bill Leichtnam, Emily Salvinski, Robert Sorenson, Colleene Thomas, Mike Tiboris, Gregg Wavrunek, Rachael Whitehair, Ken Winters and Tim Wuebben.

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chair Bill Leichtnam called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.
2. **Public Comment:** Bruce Dimick commented that the current state legislature reaction to PFA's is a disappointment.
3. **Speaker – Colleene Thomas, Lead Legislative Aide, Washington D.C. office, for U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, “Federal Clean Water Initiatives”**
Colleene Thomas is the Lead Legislative Aide in Washington D.C. for U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin.

Highlights of “Federal; Clean Water Initiatives” presentation:

- Federal agencies providing resources to address contaminated groundwater. There is a Grant Specialist in Senator Baldwin's Milwaukee Office who can assist in grant resources. The Grant Specialist position can provide a letter in support of grant funding.
- How does the federal government assist with groundwater?
 - a. Strategies to support our working land managers such as farmers, foresters and rural land owners to be equipped with knowledge and financial assistance to put in conservation practices to improve the long-term health of the their land, water and soil.
 - b. Regional Conservation Partnership Program
USDA and Natural Resources Conservation Service – Regional office located in Madison with staff located throughout the state. Provide support to county conservation offices in each county. The goal is to provide technical support for challenging local problems and increase conservation practices such as cover crops, erosion control, buffer strips.
 - c. Research funding – Mark Borchardt USDA website <https://www.usda.gov/>
 - d. Midwest Geological Society – Research bedrock and how bedrock interacts with water.
- Clean Water is a human right and should be available for all of our communities
- Clean Water is the core to our quality of life and health.
- Federal Focus:
 - a. Do people have access to clean water? How do people have access to clean water? Temporary solutions are a filtration system or bottled water?
 - b. What is contributing factors to the quality of water going into the aquafer?
- Next steps? What actions? What can the federal government do to improve groundwater?

Discussion comments:

- Greater Lakes – How can you get clean water from Lake Michigan? Would like to know where the watershed and divide line?
- Wells tested in the Town of Armenia and Town of Port Edwards in 2018 that were contaminated with pesticides and nitrates never made the newspaper. In 2021, homeowners received their own well results but not anyone else's.
- Other pollutants and insecticides? PFA's, neonicotinoids. Keep pressure on the state legislature.
- Depth of well is irrelevant to clean water.
- DNR dissatisfied of the repair of the reservoir on the Armenia Growers Coalition farms.
- Nitrates cannot be treated over 30 ppm.
- WPDES permits need to take soil type into consideration. Federal effort needs to include that nutrients are applied for crop type but soil type as well.
- The EPA and DNR need to regulate and enforce groundwater.

- Farmers need to make a living.
- Plants need nitrogen. There are controlled release nitrogen. We know how much to apply but the problem is the amount of the rainfall. Long-term better weather prediction and weather instrumentation.
- Refill USDA agriculture research position and UWEX educator joint position on potato breeding. Goal is to breed better potatoes that use less nitrogen.
- CAFO's can survive financially better than small farms.
- Animals can only tolerate so much nitrate in their drinking water.
- Is it sustainable? Two issues: Economic standpoint. Health concerns.
- Next Steps? Better farming practices for soil types. Federal Government needs standards for PFA's, nitrates and other pollutants. There needs to be better agriculture standards. Enforcement across all industries.
- Long-term solution is to support organic farming or those that follow organic practices. Federal Farm bills lobbyists are trying to change the definition of "organic." Industries shouldn't take advantage of the word "organic" by downplaying the standards.

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

Bill Leichtnam shared the following:

- Bill Leichtnam shared that he and Bill Clendening attended the Portage County Groundwater Citizens Advisory Committee meeting on June 3rd. Speakers: John Exo, UW-Extension and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Water Quality Programs Coordinator and Chris Clayton, Wisconsin DNR, NR Program Manager "NR151 Nitrate Targeted Performance Standard". New provisions in RN151 may not be enough to get through to the next decade.
- "Cow Manure Predicted To Cause Most Sickness From Contaminated Wells in Kewaunee County" – Study by Tucker Burch, USDA research agricultural engineer published a story in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives. The study predicts cow manure causes 230 cases of acute gastrointestinal illnesses in the county per year. Symptoms of gastrointestinal illness can include nausea and vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramps, sometimes accompanied by a fever. Children, the elderly and people with underlying health conditions are more vulnerable.

A companion study by USDA microbiologist Mark Borchardt found that nitrate in coliform in Kewaunee's drinking wells mostly comes from agriculture – not human waste. Mark Borchardt's research shows a new or deeper well does not necessarily provide protection. Farming practices need to change.

The new rules will target 43% of agricultural land in sensitive areas in Wisconsin (i.e. Central Sands, southern Wisconsin and Chippewa Valley).

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** None.
7. **Announcements of members / visitors (upcoming parallel events / meetings)** None.
8. **Future Speakers:** Please contact Bill Leichtnam with any suggestions for speakers.
August – To be decided

Speaker suggestions:

- a. Maurine Muldoon, UW Oshkosh Professor of Geology
- b. Wisconsin Green Fire, retired DATCP, DNR professionals
- c. James Matson, retired DATCP chief legal counsel
- d. Ed Odgers

9. **Agenda Items for next meeting**

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

Update on MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Armenia Growers Coalition.

10. **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, August 16th at 2:00 p.m. at Wood County Courthouse in Conference Room #114. A virtual WebEx option will also be available for this meeting.

11. **Adjourn Groundwater Group Meeting** Chair Bill Leichtnam adjourned @ 3:47 p.m.

Notes by Kim Keech, Planning & Zoning Office