

CITIZENS (WOOD COUNTY) GROUNDWATER GROUP MEETING

DATE: Monday, June 21, 2021
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Teleconference via WebEx

Present: Caleb Armstrong, Ray Bossert, Bill Clendenning, Scott Custer, Gordon Gottbeheit, Russ Groves, Tamas Houlihan, Ben Jeffrey, Kim Keech, Klayton Kree, Bill Leichtnam, Emily Oetzman, Scott Provost, Nancy Turyk, Gregg Wavrunek, and Tim Wuebben.

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chair Bill Leichtnam called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.
2. **Public Comment:** None.
3. **Speaker – Scott Provost, Water Resource Specialist, Wisconsin DNR “Neonicotinoids”**
Scott Provost is a Water Resource Specialist with the Wisconsin DNR.

Highlights of “Neonicotinoids” (aka neonics) presentation:

- What are neonicotinoid insecticides? Similar to nicotine (now illegal). Developed during the early 1990's as a “safer” alternative for other insecticides. Widely used for corn and soybeans.
- How prevalent? According to the USDA 3.9 million acres of corn in Wisconsin. Nearly all of the seeds are treated. Best estimate for all crops is 200 tons. There are over 500 neonics products in Wisconsin but is not tracked.
- Fate of neonics? Various studies show nearly 90% reaches the environment. Highly water soluble (runoff, groundwater, etc.). Potential “build up” in the environment.
- Distribution?
USGS detected year-round on 74% of all water.
UW: 78% of 91 irrigation wells tested positive.
DATCP: 5.7% of wells in agriculture areas had detects. 15% of 34 streams sampled tested positive. Central Sands are more likely to have neonics.
- Non-Target Effects? Highly effective control on vegetable pests and non-target insects. Binds with nervous receptors of insects. Over stimulates nervous system to the point of death. Non-targets such as bees are very susceptible.
- Bees (pollinators) are very susceptible:
LD50 of 2 neonics are 5-4 nanogram.
1 ng = 1 billionth of a gram (example - 1 grain of sugar weighs 635,000 ng). Volume of a grain of sugar can kill 600 million bees.
- Central Sands Studies:
Previous sampling showed Carter & 10-mile highest known concentrations.
DATCP/UWSP currently sampling 14-Mile Creek Watershed.
Possibly DNR Denitrification Project.
- What can be done?
Development of safer products with the same efficiency.
Consumer demand.
Employ Conservation practices to use less.
Soil Health: Increases plant vigor. Relies on less irrigation (less leaching).

Discussion followed.

4. **Correspondence/Updates/Handouts/Reports:** Bill Leichtnam shared a summary of the presentations from the Portage County Groundwater Citizens Advisory Committee meeting on June 3rd.

John Exo, UW-Extension and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Water Quality Programs Coordinator presentation:

- Nitrate issues - 10% of all private Wisconsin wells are over 10 ppm safe limit. That is 20% in Portage County and 20-30% in agriculture areas in Portage County.

- Cooperating agencies on the nitrate issue are DATCP, NRCS Wisconsin DNR, UW-Madison and UWSP. A lot of people and agencies are working together.
- Problem is lack of funding. Some funding has come from the agriculture industry and the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association.
- COVID-19 has slowed the progress.
- What have they done so far (i.e. UW-Extension/UW-Madison)? Created a Nitrate Workgroup. Hired more Educators. Created a website on groundwater and nitrates. Developing tools to determine the amount of nitrates that are leaching into groundwater. On-farm research on cover crops, rotation of crops, precise application of nitrogen with fertilizer or liquid manure and nitrates coming in through the irrigation system. Examining a large study in Europe.
- What is the problem? The problem is the decision today is at the individual level of what a farmer or farm cooperative would choose to do. The state legislature has not acted. The problem has only been addressed on the research and Individual level.

Chris Clayton, Wisconsin DNR, NR Program Manager “NR151 Nitrate Targeted Performance Standard” presentation:

- WT-19-19 Draft Rule which is updating the Wisconsin Administrative Code with NR151. It is called “Nitrate Targeted Performance Standards”. Work was done back in 2018-2019 by 17 counties in northeastern Wisconsin which is now being extended to a Wisconsin Administrative Code rule.
- The rule will target 43% of agricultural land in sensitive areas in Wisconsin (i.e. Central Sands, southern Wisconsin and Chippewa Valley).
- The rule will prohibit fall application of nitrogen except on fall seeded crops after September 1st.
- Will try to ensure that nitrogen is only applied when needed and not beyond.
- The rule will account for nitrogen in irrigated water.
- Through NMP it will try to ensure that less than 2.2 pounds per acre of nitrogen is leached into the groundwater and hopefully keep the groundwater under the 10 ppm safe limit.
- Lower the nitrates safe limit to 5 ppm in well-head protection areas.
- What is the process to adopt the rule? Adoption of a rule takes 2-1/2 years. The rule process was started in late 2019 and may be adopted in mid-2022. Economic Income Assessment (EIA) is being prepared. Public Comment was accepted until April 10, 2021. Wisconsin Natural Resources Board will be requesting a Public Hearing on the rule. The rule goes to the Governor for approval and then to the Wisconsin State Legislature.

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.

Bill Clendenning suggested that a report of the RC&D meetings should be included in future meetings.

6. **Roundtable** None.

7. **Announcements of members / visitors (upcoming parallel events / meetings)**
Tamas Houlihan shared that there will be a Producer-Led Group of the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement project on June 28th. A tour is expected to be scheduled in the future at the meeting.

8. **Future Speakers:** Please contact Bill Leichtnam with any suggestions for speakers.
July – To be decided

Speaker suggestions:

- a. Staff Representative for US Senator Tammy Baldwin’s office
- b. Dr. Elizabeth Harrahy, UW-Whitewater Assistant Professor, impacts upon non-targets
- c. Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative researcher

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 the Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative. Researcher has not been hired but 22 applicants have applied for the position.

Waushara Argus article "Groundwater County Collaborative receives Groundwater DATCP Grant"
website link: <https://www.wausharaargus.com/news/groundwater-county-collaborative-receives-groundwater-datcp-grant>

10. **Next Meeting** Meetings will be the third Monday of each month @ 2:00 p.m. In-person meetings will start in July with a WebEx option available.

The next regular Citizens (Wood County) Groundwater Group meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 19th 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 @ 3:05 p.m.

Notes by Kim Keech, Planning & Zoning Office