

CITIZENS (WOOD COUNTY) GROUNDWATER GROUP MEETING

DATE: Monday, August 15, 2022
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Conference Room 114-Wood County Courthouse & Teleconference via WebEx

Present (In person or via WebEx): Rhonda Carrell, Sandy Cain, Bill Clendenning, Gordon Gottbeheit, Bill Leichtnam, Tamas Houlihan, Karoline Whitman, Maddie Loeffler, Forrest Humphrey, Ray Bossert, Dave Joosten

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Bill Leichtnam called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.
2. **Public Comment:** None.
3. **Speaker – Maddie Loeffler, Wester Organizer-Wisconsin Conservation Voters**
Maddie gave a presentation on Protecting Drinking Water in the Central Sands Region.
 - Issues of rural ground water contamination come up the most as this is a statewide issue.
 - At Wisconsin Conservation Voters (WCV) their mission is to engage voters to protect Wisconsin's environment and specifically to ensure everyone living in Wisconsin can turn on their tap and know their water is safe to drink.

WCV's Water Campaigns:

Supporting standards and regulations

 - Leading on Lead
 - Helped strengthen NR 151 karst regions
 - Passing PFAs standards
 - Supporting the CLEAR act

Elevating clean drinking water as a statewide issue

 - 2019 – the Year of Clean Drinking Water
 - Sharing stories of those most impacted by contamination

Community Organizing

 - Deep canvassing in affected communities
 - Supporting residents in testing wells, talking with their legislators
 - Working with water utilities for transparency around contaminant levels

WCV's Water Goals – nitrates:

Supporting local governments

 - Encourage communities to adopt strong nitrate standards
 - Work with local governments and DNR to support federal funding getting to local communities
 - Increase access to water testing for private wells

Lobbying the state government

 - CAFOs should pay their own operating costs
 - Fully fund county conservation staff – statute states it should come from the governor's budget
 - Rally communities to take back power from big agriculture & manufacturing lobby
 - Strengthen NR 151 statewide
 - Pass the CLEAR Act

Local Context

 - What are the sources of nitrates or other contaminants in Wood County wells?
 - Who are the top offenders polluting the groundwater?
 - What has been done so far to combat groundwater contamination in Wood County?
 - Who is responsible for mitigating groundwater contamination issues?
 - What do you want to see change?

What's the problem?

 - Policies have not kept up with growth of agriculture industry
 - Flawed nitrogen standards
 - More animals on less land
 - Agricultural pollution is difficult to regulate/track
 - Lack of accountability for farms-nitrogen application is self-reported

- Rural and low-income communities disproportionately affected
 - What else?

Case Study: Kewaunee County

- 16 dairy CAFOs operating in Kewaunee County
 - Lincoln Township “a town of 900 people and 17,000 cows”
- USDA study said that 31% of Kewaunee wells were contaminated with manure
- Community organizing paved the way for policy change
- July 2021-DNR has authority locally to set terms in permits for CAFOs, monitoring groundwater and limiting animal concentrations
- Groundwater workgroup report
 - Outlined items that different agencies could do to combat issues

Moving forward

- What measures can we take to hold industrial agriculture accountable?
- How can we make sure farmers are supported in practicing sustainable agriculture?
- Who should be at the table in groundwater protection efforts?
- How can we empower the community to take action?

Who has the power?

- DNR has new authority to regulate and monitor CAFOs
- County Officials can take action
- State Legislature and Governor can create policy in support of clean water
- Attorney General and Courts can enforce policy and rule in favor of Wisconsin residents
- Farmers can make their practices more sustainable-reduce their nitrogen use and rotate crops
- We can demand CAFOs and industrial farms pay for their pollution

Speaker – Forrest Humphrey, Rural Organizer, Wisconsin Farmers Union

Encourage non-partisan outreach opportunities in communities

- Producer-led watershed groups
- Testimony from farmers at county and town meetings
- Food alliances

Forrest Humphrey: 715-450-9179, fhumphrey@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

4. **Correspondence/Updates/Handouts/Reports on Meetings Attended:**

- 7/25/22 meeting with Katrina Shankland: Discussed Wisconsin Act 223
- 8/17/22 Senator Tammy Baldwin will be presenting Healthy H2O Act/Healthy Water Affordability Act

5. **“Action Items” proposed to CEED Committee by Wood County CGG:** None

6. **Roundtable:** None

7. **Announcements by members / visitors (upcoming related events / meetings):** Juneau County Citizens Group has disbanded.

8. **Future Speakers:** Please contact Bill Leichtnam or Bruce Dimick with suggestions for future speakers. September - None.

9. **Agenda Items for next meeting:**
Agenda items should be submitted to Bill Leichtnam by the second Monday of the month.

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, September 19th at 2:00 p.m. This will be an in-person and virtual WebEx meeting. This meeting may be

rescheduled due to a scheduling conflict. Possible alternative dates include 9/14/22, 9/16/22, 9/22/22, 9/23/22.

11. **Adjourn Groundwater Group Meeting:**

Bill Leichtnam declared the meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.
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Notes by Karoline Whitman, Planning & Zoning Office