



**GROUNDWATER NITRATE WORK GROUP
Wednesday December 1, 2021 @ 8:00 AM
Land Conservation Conference Room**

Minutes

1. **Call Meeting to Order.** Chair Sweeney called the meeting to order at 8:01 am.
Members present: All members were present; Rick Richards, Wes Davis, Pat Mullooly, Rich Bostwick, Dave Rebout, Lou Peer, and Al Sweeney.
Members Excused: All members were present
Others present: Rick Wietersen, Scott Fleming, Andrew Baker, and Chris Newberry
2. **Approval of Agenda.** Dave Rebout moved the agenda, seconded by Lou Peer. **Motion Carried.**
3. **Approval of Minutes from June 7, 2021 meeting** Wes Davis moved the minutes for the June 7, 2021 meeting as presented, seconded by Lou Peer. **Motion Carried.**
4. **Communications, Announcements.** Baker mentioned he sent an e-mail to the group about the proposed NR151 rule update. Officially, the rule making process was stopped because the deadline to do so had come. Unofficially, there was a lot of opposition and the proposed changes probably would not have passed in the legislature.
5. **Review of Staff Response related to Resolution Directing Rock County Staff to Explore the Feasibility of Creating Program to Address Nitrate Mitigation in Rock County's Ground Water** Baker referred to the feasibility study created by county staff, which was sent to the group via email. The study outlines estimated costs, based on past well test data, averages and assumptions, of funding test, mitigation via reverse osmosis systems and/or well replacement. Baker discussed that the cost of implementing the study concluding that it appears to not be a directly eligible use of ARPA funds, but could be funded under the "lost revenue" category of eligibly, which essentially can be used for anything. Davis brought up the fact that the study does not address the problem, it provides a treatment option which may cause other problems with water quality, i.e. there is no guaranteed solution. Richards questioned the effectiveness of reverse osmosis systems and asked about other options. Mullooly reiterated the study does not solve the problem and stressed that wells testing high in N should have the surrounding area assessed. The group also discussed that not only is a new well very expensive, it does not guarantee lower nitrate levels and may uncover other groundwater problems. Richards indicated he would like to see \$100,000-\$200,000 set aside to fund the program to be able to help the people that would like help. The group decided that the goal should not be to spend a lot of money on testing to simply gather more data, but rather to justify the cost of providing assistance for mitigation. The group concluded that Land Conservation and Public Health should continue to work on a program that prioritizes testing and funding based on high-risk groups in areas with historically high nitrate levels. The program should be designed based on an recommended initial budget of \$100,000.

6. **Discussion regarding funding/cooperation for groundwater nitrate research at the County Farm and other privately owned lands.** Newberry indicated he is still in contact with Discovery Farms about conducting research in Rock County. Newberry told the group that he has landowners willing to work with Discovery Farms with installing lysimeters. The problem is the funding for the research. Cost of a pair of pan lysimeters is ~\$18,000. 4 pair are needed for a 40-acre field. That cost does not include installation, sampling, and testing. Fleming and Mullooly discussed the accuracy of the new models for N rate applications. Fleming indicated he is working with a SARE grant comparing cover crops N with yields. The group tasked Newberry with costs of pan lysimeters and analysis. Fleming will also look into alternatives for testing.

7. **Well Sampling-Update.** Wietersen updated the group on the well sampling on and near the County Farm. He handed out graphs of the water table and N trends. Wietersen indicated that the monitoring well elevations are dropping and had dropped 3'. Flow is steady and remains NE to SW. The N in the farm monitoring wells is steady, while the trends in the public wells are decreasing. The Lions and the Compeer wells started similar and had diverged and are now converging to a similar path. Wietersen is questioning what caused the divergence. Staff plans to look at crop records for the fields to the north to try to identify a pattern. Rick also told the group the sampling team is having problems with the pump and it may need to be replaced.

8. **Status of 9KE and NWQI Plan Development.** Newberry noted he has been working with the DNR on STEPL models but, had to set aside the 9KE plan for a while to work on NWQI. Newberry indicated he has submitted the NWQI plan to the NRCS this summer and had received confirmation late fall that the county has received the funding. The funding is a special pot of EQIP money from the NRCS. The county should be receiving \$425,000 this year and \$140,000 the next 2 years. All the money must be spent within 5 years and must be spent within the La Prairie Township and City of Beloit East watersheds. Newberry indicated he has been meeting with landowners to get them to sign up for the NWQI funding.

9. **Producer Led Watershed Group Development - Update.** Newberry indicated he applied for funding from DATCP in September. He has been told that DATCP is working on legal questions which, is slowing down the approval process. As soon as they have worked through the issues, they will send out approvals. Newberry noted that FOTR hosted their first field day on September 8th at Jason Henschler's and Mike Hennings. FOTR will be having a meeting December 8th between 6:00-8:00 at Hughes' office.

12. **Next Meeting Date, Time, and Location (Avoid Second and Fourth Tuesday Mornings).** Date and time was tentatively set for Wednesday January 5, 2022 at 8:00am in person at the LCD conference room.

13. **Adjourn.** Bostwick moved to adjourn the December 1, 2021 meeting of the Groundwater Nitrate Workgroup at 9:40 am, seconded by Mullooly. **Motion Carried.**

Respectively Submitted,

Chris Newberry
Conservation Specialist IV

Minutes are not official until adopted by the Groundwater Nitrate Workgroup.

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