



Renew the Blue Council: Year One Charter

*Acting together for healthy lakes, lands and shorelines
in the Yahara Watershed*

The Renew the Blue Council is composed of governments, nonprofits, and neighborhoods who have come together to advance our community's shared vision of swimmable lakes, open beaches, healthy waters, and resilient landscapes for all.

The Council works within the Yahara Watershed to increase watershed stewardship and reduce phosphorus, *E. coli* pollution, and runoff by implementing the 12 high-impact actions identified in [*Renew the Blue: A community plan for cleaner lakes & beaches in the Yahara Watershed*](#). We use a Collective Impact framework to amplify our work through collaboration, coordination, and focus. Clean Lakes Alliance provides backbone infrastructure to this initiative, which builds upon the foundational work completed during the 2008, 2012, and 2022 Yahara CLEAN partnerships.

Recognizing that the first year of any initiative is a pivotal time of learning, connection, and demonstration, this charter covers year one (2026) of the Council and is designed to be modified and renewed for year two and beyond (2027+) to incorporate lessons learned.

Deliverables

- Expansion of *State of the Lakes* to include land health reporting
- Launch of implementation teams working on the 12 High-Impact Actions (Appendix A)
- Collection of success stories, opportunities and challenges in the Yahara Watershed
- Denser, more fruitful networks across sectors and organizations
- Lessons learned and recommended deliverables for Year Two (2027) of the Council

2026 Calendar

Wed, Feb 4 2-3:45 pm The Edgewater <i>part of Frozen Assets Festival</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Orient delegates to Council structure & goals● Build connections among Council delegates
Wed, Mar 11 2-3:45 pm East Side Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore Council organizations & their priority work● Generate ideas for implementation teams
Wed, May 13 9:45-11 am The Edgewater <i>following Community Coffee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explore land health report, 12 high-impact actions, and Council organizations' priorities & initiatives● Identify implementation teams
Wed, Aug 12 2-3:45 pm East Side Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Implementation team updates shared● Gather Council feedback
Wed, Dec 9 2-3:45 pm East Side Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Implementation team deliverables presented● Capture lessons learned from Council Year One

Roles & responsibilities

Member Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate two delegates – at least one of whom will be an elected official or serve in an official capacity on a common council, committee, or organization board – and support their active participation in Council meetings Become an annual Clean Lakes Alliance Member and make an annual financial contribution to support council activities Provide data, resources, and participation to support the work and goals of the Renew the Blue Council
Delegates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both delegates attend and actively participate in Council meetings Represent their organization at the Council; represent the Council within their organizations Serve in leadership roles and on implementation teams as appropriate
Steering Team Co-chairs + Backbone + Strategic Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select Council annual outcomes, products, and processes in consultation with all Council members Lead Council evaluation; reinforce Council purpose and values. Approve and support Council-sponsored Implementation teams.
Co-chairs Shelly Allness Jason Valerius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair Council meetings Serve on Steering Team
Endorsers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly support the values and direction of the Council
Backbone Organization Clean Lakes Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide communication, administration, and facilitation for Council. Administer funding mechanism to support Council. In consultation with Council, recruit potential Council members. Serve on Steering Team
Strategic Partners Dane County CARPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion the Council Lead and staff key Council initiatives, including data analysis, metrics creation, and data gathering.
Facilitation Alison Lebwohl Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and facilitate all aspects of strategic engagement Provide project management for events and outcomes

Ground Rules

- Arrive on time. Leave on time.
- Be present. Give this work and fellow participants your full attention. Limit use of electronic devices.
- Encourage understanding. Speak plainly, ask questions, listen for understanding, allow some silence. Avoid jargon.
- Take good care of the group. We make stronger decisions by incorporating all values, experiences and perspectives. Lean into curiosity.
- Take good care of yourself. Come prepared. Let us know what's working and what else you need. Get comfortable with discomfort.
- Delegates and alternates will communicate with each other and their organizations between meetings.

Council Theory of Change

- What happens on the land affects what happens in the water. By building watershed stewardship and strengthening collaboration across sectors and organizations, we will accelerate progress toward more resilient landscapes, cleaner and clearer water, and fewer cyanobacteria blooms – and toward healthier waterways and shorelines, more open beaches, and more swimmable-water days.
- Success will take all of us. The Council uses a [Collective Impact framework](#) to convene local organizations with a strong focus within the watershed – including public-sector and not-for-profit organizations managing land, creating policy, or otherwise working toward Renew the Blue values and actions – to implement *Renew the Blue: the community's plan for cleaner lakes & beaches in the Yahara Watershed*.
- Backbone infrastructure connects us and amplifies our work. Council members will use a shared mission, shared metrics, thoughtfully designed and facilitated gatherings, and mutually reinforcing activities to reduce phosphorus pollution, *E. coli* pollution, and runoff – and to increase watershed stewardship. Clean Lakes Alliance supports the Council with backbone infrastructure.

Appendices

- A. Top 12 High-Impact Actions (attached)
- B. [Renew the Blue: A community plan for cleaner lakes & beaches in the Yahara Watershed State of the Lakes Report](#) (linked)
- C. [Council organizations & delegates with contact information](#) (linked)
- D. Glossary of terms (link pending)
- E. [Implementation Team Charter Template](#) (linked)

Appendix A: Top 12 High-Impact Actions

From [Renew the Blue: A community plan for cleaner lakes & beaches in the Yahara Watershed](#)



<h3>Top Direct-Impact Actions</h3>	
1. Build additional manure-processing capacity. Support farmers in using existing manure-processing facilities or to build their own on-farm systems. Pilot a manure-collection and processing program targeting the critical January-March period with the highest overall phosphorus loading.	
2. Increase the ability to handle and transport manure. Use composting and other processing techniques to allow for improved timing and targeting of applications. Minimize chemical fertilizer use by substituting with composted manure or other sources of crop nutrients generated within the watershed.	
3. Increase farmland acres guided by a nutrient management plan. Use plans to improve operational decision-making, ensure the most efficient use of costly nutrient inputs, and reduce the risk of phosphorus loss.	
4. Increase farmland acres under no-till (or reduced tillage) and continuous living cover. Limit soil disturbance and maintain a living root in the soil with cover/forage crops, harvestable buffer strips, overwintering hay, etc. to build better soil health and reduce erosion.	
5. Increase municipal street-cleaning miles and frequency during fall. Regularly remove leaf litter from streets to prevent rainwater-leached phosphorus from entering storm sewer systems.	
6. Protect internally drained lands and wetlands. Use closed depressions (accounting for an estimated 41% of the watershed) to naturally retain and absorb runoff. Maintain and restore wetland function to achieve similar benefits.	
7. Increase green-infrastructure installations in parks, new developments, and on existing residential and commercial properties. Incorporate nature-based solutions such as rain gardens, bioswales, infiltration trenches, and permeable pavement to capture, absorb, and filter runoff. Use tools such as stormwater utility credits, rate adjustments, and recognitions to reward action.	
<h3>Top Indirect-Impact Actions</h3>	
1. Continue to work together as Yahara CLEAN Compact members. Maintain ongoing member meetings to collaborate on recommended actions, report progress, and coordinate around new initiatives. Ongoing collaboration should consider how actions might affect the watershed phosphorus mass balance, among other factors.	
2. Increase participation in producer-led watershed groups. Expand farmer involvement in conservation planning and practice adoption through continued learning, information sharing, and distribution of cost-share incentives.	
3. Complete an inventory of shoreline and beach conditions. Establish guidelines and criteria for the sustainable design, development, management, and restoration of shorelines and public beaches.	
4. Increase <i>E. coli</i> testing at public beaches. Focus efforts on beaches shown to be most susceptible to problems. Assess <i>E. coli</i> bacteria sources at beaches with high closure rates so corrective measures can be taken.	
5. Continue to track and report progress. Use and support the annual <i>State of the Lakes</i> Report as a means of outreach to the community. Support continued maintenance and operation of stream-gaging stations that track changes in phosphorus loading.	