

SUMMARY NOTES
Yahara CLEAN Compact Steering Team
Friday, February 12, 2021
8:30-10:00 A.M.
Zoom

Attendance

Present: Anne Baranski, Bob Wipperfurth, Eric Booth, Eric Vieth, J Blue, Martye Griffin, Missy Nergard, Kyle Minks, Carolyn Clow, Coreen Fallat, Greg Fries, Mark Riedel, Matt Diebel, Mike Rupiper, Richard Lathrop, Renee Lauber, Sarah Dance, Tom Wilson, Tricia Gorby, Kathy Lake, Emily Lakeman (UW intern), Hannah Neuenschwander (UW intern), Alison Lebwohl (facilitator), Paul Dearlove, Luke Wynn, Becky Mitchell, Karin Swanson, and Adam Sodersten

Anticipated Outcomes

1. Shared understanding of updated work plan, including public engagement
2. Shared understanding of findings to date from P-Loading Subgroup
 - Input from members: observations and questions
3. Shared understanding of Compact members' perspectives, assets and big ideas
 - Input from members: observations and ideas for the Compact

Welcome & Check In (Chaired by Greg Fries)

- Meeting convened at 8:30 a.m. Reminders: Next virtual meetings of the Steering Team and Executive Committee are scheduled for 3/12/21. There will be no Steering Team and Executive Committee meetings in August (draft plan release), and the September meeting is moved from 9/11 to 9/17.
- Documents shared in advance: summary notes from the January Compact meetings; P-Loading Subgroup notes (two meeting dates); updated decision tracker; updated income-expense report; updated project schedule; SmithGroup memo reviewing Compact work to-date; and Urban Assets literature review on the results of six public-engagement efforts.
- ***Summary notes of the January 8, 2021 Steering Team meeting were unanimously accepted as presented, and with no requested changes or edits.***
 - Meeting notes, once accepted, continue to get posted to the Yahara CLEAN webpage (<https://www.cleanlakesalliance.org/yahara-clean>). Compact-related documents can also be accessed by members in the shared Google Drive folder: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-BD-1Aup9SViTIXhyGadHoDVMmDB1N?usp=sharing>
- Introductions: Eric Vieth (new lead designee for Yahara Lakes Association); and Emily Lakeman and Hannah Neuenschwander (Compact-support interns working with Clean Lakes Alliance).
- Reviewed working agreements, facilitator rules, and an agenda overview.

Compact Workplan Update (J. Blue, SmithGroup)

- SmithGroup and Urban Assets are currently implementing the first phase of a three-phased, public-engagement process. The three phases include: 1) focus group interviews with Compact members; 2) interviews with outside stakeholders; and 3) a general public survey. Interview dates for Compact members are being scheduled the week of 2/22.
- Introduced a draft “case statement” and list of focus group participants. These materials will be shared with members after the meeting for review and input.
 - **Action Items: 1) Review the case statement and email feedback to J Blue. 2) Start thinking about prospective participants to be included as part of the outside stakeholder engagement. 3) Sign up for a focus group date and begin considering responses to the questions asked in the case statement.**

P-Loading Subgroup Update (Matt Diebel, Subgroup Chair)

- Diebel presented a summary of the subgroup’s work and indicated that a written report will be distributed in March. The presentation focused primarily on changes and new understanding since CLEAN 2.0, and what is still being discussed by the technical team.
- Provided a refresher on watershed geography, pointing out that the best monitoring data comes from the northern, upper reaches of the watershed. USGS gaging stations are located in this area along the primary tributaries entering Lake Mendota. Some of these gaging stations have been operating for over 30 years.
- Are we making progress? (The big question!)
 - We know lake conditions are still failing to meet water quality criteria.
 - We know from Clean Lakes Alliance’s State of the Lakes reporting that our community is about 42% of the way to its annual goal of implemented practices and related phosphorus reductions recommended in CLEAN 2.0. However, practice-implementation progress does not appear to be leading to the needed phosphorus-loading reductions in the monitored streams.
 - We know that increased rainfall is causing increased phosphorus loading to the lakes. Flow-normalized trend analyses demonstrate that increased precipitation is driving most of the increases in stormflows and phosphorus loading. In fact, modeling shows that phosphorus inputs to the lakes have increased about 13% over the last 30 years. However, removing climate variability from the model shows we would have seen about a 41% load reduction if stormflows had remained constant over that period. This suggests practice implementation is having a positive but insufficient impact due to a wetter environment.
 - There may be factors other than climate at play. For example, it is possible we are overestimating the performance of certain practices, not accounting for new sources of phosphorus, and/or failing to account for legacy phosphorus effects in the soil or stream sediment that may be slowing in-stream response times. Either way, it is clear that we will need to do more.
 - The critical season in which most of the phosphorus loading occurs is the late winter and early spring when snowmelt and spring rainfall cause runoff across frozen ground.
 - More than half of the annual phosphorus load is delivered to the lakes during the Jan-Mar time period, and most of it is in the dissolved state where it is not bound to soil particles.

- There are many agricultural conservation practices that work well to control soil erosion and related phosphorus loss during the growing season. However, they are usually not designed to effectively control dissolved phosphorus during this frozen-ground period.
 - Identifying hotspots within the watershed will be important for targeting future efforts and resources.
 - We will want to focus on areas that are not internally-drained, topographic depressions where runoff is typically contained and prevented from reaching downstream waterways.
 - There are many more internally-drained areas throughout the watershed (approximately 40% of total) than originally identified. Snowmelt and precipitation within these areas will have a minimal impact on water quality since they are not as hydrologically connected to the lakes.
- What hasn't changed?
 - Reducing phosphorus is still the priority.
 - The target P load to the lakes, recommended in CLEAN 2.0, is still appropriate.
 - Most of the CLEAN 2.0 recommendations and action priorities are still valid.
- What are we still discussing?
 - How to deal with the late-winter and early-spring dissolved P loading. Solutions are likely to involve measures that reduce P sources/inputs (mass balance); retain runoff; and maintain year-round vegetation cover.
 - How we can take current action to the next level to overcome the effects of climate variability, and recognizing that much of the lower-hanging fruit has been picked. The reality is that while we are all doing what we can, but no one is solely accountable for the bottom line.
 - Beach closures from bacterial contamination has not yet received attention, but it will be an important issue for us to address.

Paired Discussion Outcomes

1. *What stood out?*
2. *What do you wonder about?*

- **Group 1 (Diebel, Gorby, Wipperfurth):** 1. Difference between State of the Lakes reporting and tributary trends. 2. How can we reconcile these methods?
- **Group 2 (Fallat, Booth):** 1. Management signals are positive, but we are pushing against things out of our control. The reality is that we just have to do more. Not to expand the focus beyond P, but what is the impact of nitrate in these areas that are internally drained? Conversation about nitrate is more prominent – will we need a Clean 4.0 at some future point? 2. The increase in number of cows is also a reality and can increase management issues. More research is needed on the role of P in groundwater feeding the lakes. Communication messages need to be stronger. Are separate recommendations needed for the yellow vs. the red areas on the map? There is a need for more perennial cover in early spring.
- **Group 3 (Lathrop, Lake):** *No content on recording form.*
- **Group 4 (Nergard, Wilson):** 1. It is clear we need to do more on these recommended actions due to increased rain events. P in the soil is causing a lag time, so how do we address that? Surprised by the magnitude of the problem occurring in late winter and early spring. What can we do better (i.e., more cover crops, etc.), and where/how

should we focus our efforts? What can we do to reduce P sources/inputs? **2.** Rain events are cyclical, so what opportunities do we have to capitalize on that fact?

- **Group 5 (Clow, Rupiper):** **1.** The first map showing almost every area in the watershed draining to the lakes was striking. The refined map showing the full coverage of internally-drained areas makes the effort seem more doable. Also surprised to see the seasonal effects of phosphorus loading. **2.** How many of the mapped, internally drained areas are actually not due to the presence of drain tiling or culverts? How do we take this technical information and communicate it in a way that will be useful?
- **Group 6 (Fries, Griffin):** **1.** Because of climate change, practices will need to be geared toward holding water back. Practices that work best in response to climate change may not be the traditional ones we normally think of. **2.** How does climate change affect the shallower landscape depressions? During larger rainfall events, do some of these depressions change from non-contributing to contributing areas?
- **Group 7 (Vieth, Dance):** **1.** Graphs/maps identifying runoff areas. Hard to digest graphs in such a short-time. **2.** What drives the increased P loading in the winter and early spring? Is it manure spreading? Why is it dissolved? Why does future rainfall variability need to be considered so heavily?
- **Group 8 (Riedel, Lauber):** **1.** Are we making progress? The answer is unclear. Seasonality is important, but we have no control over the weather. The language we choose to message progress and needed action is important. **2.** What can be done in that winter/spring period? Are there any practices that can get at those harder-to-reach apples? We need to be optimistic and recognize where we made progress, then highlight new challenges.
- **Group 9 (Minks, Baranski):** **1.** Stormwater and urban practices on rural landscapes may play a role. **2.** What role does liquid manure play in phosphorus loading?
- **Input received via Chat:** Need to focus on manure management and to stop spreading raw manure on frozen ground (**Lathrop**); What role is development playing? (**Blue**)

Pecha Kucha Presentations: Compact member organizations' perspectives, assets & ideas

We continue to consider the assets and ideas that our member organizations bring to the table. Pecha kucha presentations are a way for us to learn about our unique strengths, roles, synergies, perspectives, and ideas as partners and collaborators. Member groups presenting:

- [Dane County](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7eBikeQfjLrmEWZIQE7m8gm4N0FnLEw)
(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7eBikeQfjLrmEWZIQE7m8gm4N0FnLEw>)
- [Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District / Yahara WINS](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7eBikeQfjLrmEWZIQE7m8gm4N0FnLEw)
(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7eBikeQfjLrmEWZIQE7m8gm4N0FnLEw>)
- [Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7eBikeQfjLrmEWZIQE7m8gm4N0FnLEw)
(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N7eBikeQfjLrmEWZIQE7m8gm4N0FnLEw>)

NOTE: Time constraints prevented the group from being able to discuss the pecha kuchas and record feedback in small breakout rooms. **Action Item: Email feedback to Paul Dearlove or go to the shared Google Doc (link provided) to provide feedback there.** Below represents the input received in response to the action item.

1. What stood out for you?

No one-size-fits-all solution; multiple benefits are derived from farmland conservation practices; importance of flexibility, adaptability and innovation when trying to effect change; takes 40 days for water flushed down a toilet to make it to the Gulf of Mexico; inherent challenges and opportunities in how agricultural and human waste are handled, processed and used; large breadth of work being done (i.e., parks, farms, lakes/streams, etc.), and the interconnections among all those different projects can serve us well; did not know that DATCP's Land & Water Bureau did so much work on ag runoff; issues faced in the Yahara Watershed are not unique to our area

2. What ideas does this suggest for the Compact?

Science & community action

We should be broadening our horizons on where to look for solutions (i.e., Chesapeake Bay Program); consider how human wastewater treatment methods and technologies can be applied to manure to produce energy and other beneficial end products; livestock facility siting and standards could be something big for us to utilize

Funding

All of this will cost a lot of money, so a stable source of funding is needed. Our current nonpoint account that provides funding for many government funded programs pays more in debt service than it provides in funding. We need something like:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/legacy/index.html>

Public engagement

Dane County, Yahara WINS and DATCP all bring a wide range of partnerships to the table that can help us advance our efforts; should look into engaging more with groups who are not already part of the Compact; there are other ways to raise awareness (i.e., tourism and public health messages) to get to the end result we all want

Messaging

People probably don't know enough about what is going on; avenues for messaging are more decentralized now that we rely heavily on social media channels for information; love the "one water" concept

Meeting ended at 10:00 a.m.

SUMMARY NOTES
Yahara CLEAN Compact Executive Committee
Friday, February 12, 2020
10:10-11:10 A.M.
Zoom

Attendance

Present: Paul Dearlove, Luke Wynn, Alison Lebwohl (facilitator), Coreen Fallat, Greg Fries, Matt Diebel, Kyle Minks, Mark Riedel, J Blue (SmithGroup), Missy Nergard, Sarah Dance

Anticipated Outcomes

1. Shared understanding of SmithGroup workplan and lead for all steps
 - Decision on accepting the updated workplan
2. Shared understanding of P-Loading Subgroup work & next steps

Welcome and Check In (Chaired by Greg Fries)

- Meeting convened at 10:10 a.m. Members were asked for any comments or questions relating to the prior meeting notes, updated financials, or other shared documentation. There were no questions or comments. ***Summary notes from the 1/8/21 Executive Committee meeting unanimously accepted as presented.***
- Dearlove presented the latest income-expense report, and reviewed how in-kind expenses were being tracked.

Compact Workplan Update (J. Blue, SmithGroup)

- The updated project schedule was reviewed. Blue explained the nature and timing of the major work items that were either completed or underway, as well as how the work is being coordinated. Most of the focus was on the public-engagement pieces that are designed to learn what has and has not worked since CLEAN 2.0.
- Public engagement is occurring in three, sequential phases: 1) Focus group interviews with Compact members; 2) focus group interviews with outside stakeholder groups; and 3) an online survey geared toward the general public.
- A series of questions to be asked of the Compact members were briefly presented as part of the “case statement” document shown at the Steering Team meeting. Questions were drafted by SmithGroup and Urban Assets in consultation with the Leadership Team. The case statement is designed to introduce the Compact (purpose, goals, importance) and present a series of questions to steer focus group discussion.
- Phase 2 will involve third party testing of Compact vision/values assumptions. The questions will evaluate awareness of CLEAN 2.0 and the willingness to adopt and pay for potential recommended actions, as well as where people see their role. Results will be used to assess past and current barriers and motivations that influence participation in recommended actions.
- SmithGroup and Urban Assets will use focus group input from phases 1-2 to develop recommendations for the general public survey (i.e., online survey tool, questions to ask, who should get it, how different groups should be approached, and general

implementation strategy). They will also analyze the feedback so it can help guide public outreach and messaging recommendations to be included in the final plan.

Discussion

Q: How do the quick “cocktail party” messages we have been discussing fit into this process?

A: We are reviewing and going to build off a lot of the great work that has already been done. It is important for engagement to start with the Compact members. Input from phases 1 and 2 will then guide how messaging gets crafted for outreaching to the general public.

Q: Surveys can be notoriously difficult to fully execute and get good response rates, especially from disenfranchised stakeholders. For example, there are people who do not have the luxury to care about the lakes, but we have to be careful that we aren’t dismissive of those groups. What strategies/tactics are planned to elucidate a greater response rate?

A: We reviewed a variety of past public-engagement initiatives and will provide recommendations on how to mitigate or deal with those types of challenges. Realistically, there are populations that we will not be able to connect with to the level desired. The priority for this project will be to focus on engaging with groups that have the agency to impact water quality and care enough to want to provide feedback.

Q: How do you plan to engage with agricultural stakeholders? We will want to make sure it complements and is coordinated with communications by Dane County Land & Water Resources staff.

A: The vision and values testing in phase 1 will inform how we want to engage outside stakeholders. In regard to the agricultural community, a strategy and prospective participant list have been developed. These will be shared with Minks and Fallat for their review and comment. Farmers will be contacted before they become too busy with spring planting. Michael Tiboris, the ag outreach specialist for the Wisconsin River Alliance, is the subcontractor leading this effort. Focus groups are being created around four farming categories (conservation groups; individual farmers; producers and input providers; and professional farming associations), and each will be approached and engaged in a uniquely targeted fashion. Through informal, personal meetings on their farms, we can identify individuals who are having a lot of success. These farmers can then serve as champions and examples of how some conservation practices can be implemented successfully.

Action Request: Minks asked that SmithGroup keep him and Dane County LWRD staff apprised of any planned farmer communications since his office will end up getting calls from people wondering what’s going on.

Q: Should Dane County staff reach out to the farmers first to give them a heads up? They’ve been hit hard with requests. If they don’t know Michael Tiboris already, it might be difficult.

A: Tiboris already has contacts and good relationships. Having him as the lead is intentional since he offers somewhat of an outside perspective and does not represent an agency or one of the Compact groups.

Q: Is Tiboris going to share a message that although more needs to be done, it is not necessarily by those farmers who are already being proactive? We need their help in finding ways to encourage others to take those steps to help the situation.

A: Yes! The plan is to learn what farmers think is working and not working, both for the focus group participants themselves and for others in the ag community.

P-Loading Subgroup Update (Matt Diebel, Subgroup Chair)

- Following up on summary updates presented to the Steering Team, Diebel explained that his intention was to help the group understand what is happening. The trickier issue for the subgroup is being able to reach consensus on progress tracking metrics and criteria for recommended action. There is potential for these topics to become controversial from a messaging standpoint. For example, revising how we assess progress could have consequences related to public perceptions and being able to sustain hope. He asked for the group's advice on how it would like to the subgroup to approach this concern.
 - Reidel: This is where messaging is important and valuable. Suggests using measures and analogies that people will understand. For example, health professionals use the Body Mass Index as a human health metric.
 - Dearlove: Suggests being as transparent and candid as possible regarding the scientific findings characterizing the situation, including the scale of the problem and what it could take to fix. Spending too much time worrying about messaging or how the public will respond to the information will bog the subgroup down.
 - Fallat: If our water quality problems are all climate related, how is what we're doing or planning going to help? Is this just a lost cause? We have to be prepared to answer this question and have compelling messages. (Diebel responded that achieving water quality improvement is not an all or nothing proposition. There is a continuum of action and results that can be expected from those degrees of effort.)
 - Blue: We are working to come up with the most salient set of management actions pertinent to each stakeholder group. The action criteria identified by the subgroup will hopefully serve as defining the necessary parameters/timing for any practices to be successful. A longer subgroup meeting is needed on this topic.

Action Items: Minks and Fallat are to be included as part of the agricultural outreach discussions. (Blue had indicated that this was his intention.) In addition, Diebel, Minks and J should connect on the approach to use for practice selection.

Meeting ended at 11:15 a.m. Next meeting scheduled for March 12th with Missy Nergard (UW-Madison) chairing.