

**SUMMARY NOTES**  
**Yahara CLEAN Compact Steering Team**  
**Friday, April 9, 2021**  
**8:30-10:00 A.M.**  
**Zoom Meeting**

## **Attendance**

Present: Tricia Gorby, Missy Nergard, Janet Schmidt, Anne Baranski, Bob Wipperfurth, Eric Booth, Eric Vieth, Martye Griffin, Missy Nergard, Kelly Hilyard, Richard Lathrop, Kyle Minks, Carolyn Clow, Coreen Fallat, Greg Fries, Mark Riedel, Matt Diebel, Mike Rupiper, Sarah Dance, Alison Lebwohl (facilitator), Paul Dearlove, Luke Wynn, Karin Swanson, James Tye, Kathy Lake, J Blue, Marcus Pearson, Michael Tiboris

## **Anticipated Outcomes**

- Recommendation on State of the Science report findings & recommendations
- Initial feedback on draft literature review & findings summary
- Shared understanding of Compact & Ag Stakeholder interview findings, and Public Engagement next steps

## **Welcome & Check In (Chaired by Paul Dearlove)**

Meeting convened at 8:30 a.m. Reminder that the next virtual meetings of the Steering Team and Executive Committee are scheduled for 5/14/21. There will be no meetings in August, and the September meetings were moved from 9/11 to 9/17. These changes are reflected in prior updates to the Google Calendar invites.

***Summary notes of the March 12, 2021 Steering Team meeting were unanimously accepted as presented, and with no requested changes or edits.*** Meeting notes and other Compact documentation continue to get posted to the Yahara CLEAN webpage and the shared Google Drive folder: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-BD-1Aup9SViTIXlxhyGadHoDVMmDB1N?usp=sharing>. The folder, accessible to all official designees, also includes the latest updates to the Compact Decision Tracker, monthly financials, project schedule, and other relevant materials and handouts.

Working agreements and facilitator rules were reviewed. SmithGroup and Urban Assets will present preliminary findings from their interviews with Compact members and agricultural stakeholders. In addition, work is underway on how to fund, design, and outsource the administration of an online public survey. It is hoped that a survey can be made available by late May, with results and recommendations by early September.

### Agenda overview:

- Voting to recommend that the Executive Committee accept the findings and guidance outlined in the State of the Science draft report presented by the P-Loading Subgroup in February and March.

- NOTE: Last month's presentation by Diebel, Lathrop and Stuntebeck will be repeated for the public at Clean Lakes Alliance's April 14th Clean Lakes 101 Science Cafe. Compact members received a calendar invite and webinar link and were encouraged to attend.
- Learning what past public engagement studies discovered, and thinking about how we tell the story of the lakes and the watershed, and of the work we are doing together
- Learning about the outcomes of the Compact member and agricultural stakeholder interviews, and public engagement next steps from SmithGroup & Urban Assets
- *Pecha kucha* presentation from the City of Madison about its assets and ideas for the CLEAN 3.0 plan (postponed until May).

## **State of the Science (Matt Diebel)**

While we are voting to advance the recommendations previously presented for input by the P-Loading Subgroup, it is important to remember that these recommendations will continue to evolve and need further discussion. We are asking for approval of the recommendations as a slate of focal points, not necessarily a stamp of approval for every detail. The information will continue to be refined and improved.

***Advisory Vote: Recommend that the Executive Committee accept the findings and recommendations from the P-Loading Subgroup as shared in the draft report and presented at the February and March Compact meetings (All in favor)***

## **Literature Review (Sarah Dance)**

### Introduction

Dance, through her Clean Lakes Alliance fellowship role, was asked to summarize current findings of a comprehensive literature review designed to support our work. While the literature review was originally going to be a part of the SmithGroup contract, it had to be removed from the scope of work to stay within the budget forecast. Nonetheless, the work was considered critical to better understand what was learned and recommended through prior efforts that we could build upon. An additional benefit of the literature review was to gain insight into how to fill community engagement gaps and develop needed messaging content.

### Presentation

The primary objective of the literature review is to compile, categorize, and pull supporting information from the large body of relevant research and prior planning efforts. It was also intended to help shape some of the main messages we want to communicate as a Compact. Overall, the literature review seeks to identify and gather core documents, refine messaging, summarize major understandings, and identify gaps in past public-engagement efforts. An expanded case statement was subsequently developed and distributed for the Steering Team's feedback and future use for its outreach content.

The expanded case statement was arranged around the following header themes in which the most salient points were summarized: Our Lakes Benefit Us All; Our Lakes Are Suffering; We Are Building on Prior Work; Desired Outcomes and Strategies; and Broadening Community Involvement. In addition to the expanded case statement and

bibliography that were shared prior to the meeting, a more detailed companion document will be made available that includes supporting evidence linked to specific references.

### Small Group Discussions

Steering Team feedback was requested around the following questions:

- What information is missing?
- Are there other key messages critical to the story?
- Is the information accessible and inclusive?
- Is the expanded case statement helpful to your organization to better tell the story of the Compact?

NOTE: See attachment for documented Menti Poll feedback

## **Public Engagement (SmithGroup/Urban Assets/River Alliance)**

Updates and new insights were presented related to the outcomes of the Compact member interviews and agricultural stakeholder focus groups. Also presented was the plan for broader community engagement.

### Compact Member Interview Findings (J Blue, SmithGroup)

Stakeholder workshops and one-on-one discussions with all members of the Compact yielded the following key findings:

- The Compact can be characterized by two groups: 1) those who understand the significance of phosphorus loading on a technical level; and 2) those who get the importance of controlling phosphorus, but don't understand why or how phosphorus loading is affecting the quality of the lakes. These members want and value clean lakes but don't quite understand all the technical and scientific aspects.
- The technical jargon is a major barrier to understanding the issues. Those who don't understand the technical aspects need a way to better understand how phosphorus loading impacts the lakes.
- A number of Compact members can't easily articulate why unhealthy lakes are bad, and what would happen if the lakes were to "fail." The implication of poor water quality needs to be better communicated and understood so members can be successful ambassadors.
- Some members are unsure of the role they may or may not play in controlling phosphorus.

### Recommendations:

- Messaging around complex topics should be evaluated for clarity and made simpler, perhaps by using infographics.
- The core messaging of the Compact needs to be repeated regularly.
- Messaging content must be accessible to Compact members so it can be more easily shared with the broader community.
- Messaging must have meaning (What happens if the lakes can't be used?)
- Develop and make inter-Compact partnering easier for outreach purposes.

### Agricultural Stakeholder Engagement Findings (Michael Tiboris, River Alliance of WI)

Goal was to talk to as many local farmers and agricultural groups as possible to get a better sense of their attitudes toward the current state of conservation practice adoption.

“Conservation practice” is defined as what people believe are the best methods to manage soil and nutrient loss. Findings were as follows:

- Farmers are not all the same. There is a significant division between farmers who are already involved in conservation and those who are not. There are also big differences between smaller farms and larger ones, like Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). For some farmers, conservation is a part of their business model.
- A large portion of farmland in the watershed is rented and owned by absentee landowners. This is a difficult group to reach.
- Farmers often feel blamed by critics who don’t understand what they do. These groups are sensitive to being singled out.
- Those who were interviewed do not have strong partners beyond their peers. They want to hear guidance from other farmers, but they don’t often have a firm understanding of what other farmers are doing.
- There is distrust of non-agricultural partners, such as lake or river groups. They are not opposed to collaboration, but do not easily identify with these groups, pointing to news stories about farming being the cause of water quality problems.
- Those who have adopted conservation practices support them and believe that awareness is growing.
- There is some belief that phosphorus loading in urban systems is not being fully accounted for.
- Many interviewees do not see strong economic incentives to change the way they do things. Interest is there, but they don’t see the economic feasibility.
- They largely believe that the main obstacles to conservation are cultural.
- Some individuals expressed the notion that practice adoption has plateaued, with the low-hanging fruit already picked.

### Recommendations

- Different strategies are warranted for engaging with different parts of the agricultural community. The focus should be on:
  - building relationships;
  - elevating agricultural voices;
  - creating processes; and
  - refraining from trying to “educate” farmers
- Peer influence is easily the best way to reach farmers
- Do more to help non-farmers understand farmer incentives and decision-making
- Highlight the consequences of inaction *for agriculture* (i.e., economics, soil health, etc.)
- Include agricultural representation on the Compact leadership team
- Find ways to capitalize on the significant progress that has already been made

### Three Phases of Engagement (Marcus Pearson, Urban Assets)

Three phases of community engagement that are underway, planned or proposed: 1) Data gathering and analysis of perceptions and awareness (Apr – Aug ’21); 2) Willingness-to-

implement testing and communications branding (Dec '21 – May '22); and 3) Implementation (starting May '22)

NOTE: See attachment for documented Menti Poll feedback

### **Pecha kucha presentations: Compact member organizations' perspectives, assets & ideas**

City of Madison was on deck, but decision was made to postpone until next month to allow more time for discussion.

#### **Close**

Thank you to Dance, SmithGroup, Urban Assets, and River Alliance for today's presentations.

Meeting concluded at 10:00 a.m.

## Attachment – Menti Poll Feedback

### Expanded Case Statement (with Overview Presentation by Sarah Dance)

#### What stands out?

- Long history of research
- Climate change
- It's a complex system, but the messaging was clear
- Growth in work over time around understanding the lakes
- So many involved
- Beach closures and harmful algal blooms are not just about phosphorus. It may be oversimplifying the challenges and creating a misinterpretation among the public. "If we've done so much to reduce phosphorus, why are there still/more algal blooms?"
- Need clear message
- Additional content about why it matters
- People with different needs will find something within this presentation that they can use
- Needs to be shorter and more digestible
- Too much information
- Additional history of connection to the lakes
- Evolution of the project and work over time. Need to build on over time which adds a lot of complexity.
- A lot of key messages; distilling and focusing these further would be helpful
- There are so many documents and we often work in silos; groups of people are hyperfocused. Interesting to see the cross-section and this [expanded case statement] is a good way to capture information and distill it down. Interesting to see how the Compact has expanded.
- It demonstrates that we're making progress and being more inclusive
- Greater connection to areas outside of Madison
- Moving from a strong shared understanding to influencing the huge variety of groups that have different needs is a challenge
- Message needs to be clearer to understand what is important
- Involve the scientists in crafting the messaging on the science
- No mention of invasives
- Elevator speech or infographic version would be helpful
- Seemed Madison centric. More information on where/how water flows. How does water flow through our municipality?
- Expansion of group is interesting. Not many people are listening to this message. The reach needed to have more success. Climate change is the wild card and we need more people.
- Need only five bullet points; one page needed
- The issue is very complicated, but needs to be explained in simple terms
- Authors from the different sectors should be involved in the messaging
- Really liked the end slide that highlighted other initiatives that are ongoing and we could be engaged with in a different way. Interweaving this into other initiatives is critical. Explaining why/how the lakes matter for different reasons is important.

- Can we better intergrate in-lake processes, like impact of invasive species and the food web?
- It's also important to acknowledge the difference between "hobby farmers" and long-term professional farmers wo truly rely on generating their income and supporting business from long-term investment in farming.
- Slide on P loading and cycle has no urban component. It only shows agriculture as a source.

### **What questions or feedback do you have?**

- There's a way to read the narrative here that feels lik the cause is farmers and the problem is beach closures that may create an oppositional story between the urban and rural groups
- Can the message be tailored to try to help people who do not use the lakes for recreation understand why they should care?
- Are state planning efforts adequate?
- Most interested in understanding how this can be accomplished in terms of physical projects
- Presentation was good; document may need to be simplified
- It's so complicated; can't make linear assumptions
- Could it be tied to a message of "lake and land" rather than focusing just on the lakes?
- Climate change part is striking; water quantity; a lot of interacting factors, like invasive species. Could add a statement about the unknowns to prompt other researchers to address gaps.
- Communicate that the advances made have kept us afloat; things may not appear to be getting better, but they are not getting worse. To move forward, more focus is needed on the things that we know work.
- Lens is not who is responsible for what sources. Rather, focus on outcomes. What do we want to see, and then collectively move toward the goal. Too much focus on stopping winter spreading of manure vs. individual phopshorus footprint.
- The [baseline] is moving and we need to be clear about that
- A different way to view the issue is continue building on success vs. we are not at an intended target
- Types of projects need to meet the challenge and address runoff
- Positive agricultural management practices have certainly been implemented and have had good results (e.g. sediment), but there is still a lot of room for improvement

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## **Public Engagement (with Overview Presentation by SmithGroup Team)**

### **What stands out for you?**

- Need to capture community interests with the lakes and water quality to understand how to answer "what happens when the lakes fail?"
- Would be interested in the data about how much land is rented vs. owned in the watershed. Where does this come from?
- The skepticism from agricultural stakeholders that phosphorus loading in urban areas is not fully accounted is an important point

- Identifying opportunities for all partners to work together on this issue using existing initiatives is really critical to make this standard operating procedure for all of us
- Which farmers were interviewed? How did you come to the assessment that they don't know what other farmers are doing?
- Very much agree that we should elevate agricultural voices that have made significant conservation progress, and that are also very successful from a business standpoint
- Agricultural stakeholder interests are very important and can show us a way to better connect those with other community interests
- How many farmers were interviewed?
- Do we have general numbers of many CSA, grass, dairy, and cash crop farmers per group?
- Improvement in on-farm conservation practices will generate cleaner runoff. Thermodynamics and river hydraulics dictated these cleaner waters will have unsatisfied sediment transport capacity – “sediment hungry water”
- It is obvious that the urban-rural divide is alive and well. We need strategies to build connections between urban and rural partners.
- I understand not wanting to feel blamed, but it just feels like too many farms are escaping consequences for their actions. That may be more of a reflection on farmers not being understood or valued in our society as much as they should.
- The observations and insights are spot on
- Does avoiding the use of jargon in messaging also apply to farmers?
- Having been working with our farmers in the region for a number of years, can see common threads of the conversations I've had with them, but also progress
- Mining of legacy sediments and nutrients is a natural response to cleaner runoff. Thus, we can't rely solely on end-point monitoring to track progress of on-farm implementation. Fluvial sources will mask landscape progress.
- Seems like farmers feel like they have been doing enough? The Compact won't be successful if farmers don't think they are part of the solution.
- Point about not educating farmers seems critical; Clean Lakes Alliance should be a partner, not an educator to farmers
- Implementing conservation practices has been conducted for many decades dating back to at least the late 1970s and emphasized in the Mendota Priority Watershed Project that ran from the mid-1990s to 2008
- One question for agriculture is: What initiatives or policies do farmers believe would constitute better urban responsibility for phosphorus loading? Can urban help fund rural because it affects us all?
- People need to know there are multitude of actions needed and spread over the region, but also understand the marching orders and actions in their micro-locality. Then, that message needs to be repeated and repeated, that helps cohesion
- We need a whole new paradigm shift in the type of practices being funded and implemented so they're geared towards the manure management problem (i.e., manure digesters and other manure-processing facilities)
- We use TIF incentives for districts in urban areas for economic recovery and sustainable development. What unique funding mechanisms could we use for agriculture that shares costs beyond individual farmers?
- Interesting data on agriculture from SmithGroup. Want to drill down into how to set up processes to help urban and rural work together.
- For messaging, there is a challenge in distilling something complex to not lose details, and yet we do need bite-sized, simple chunks for the populace. Could we instead target message more specifically to place without diluting message or action?



**What do you want to share with the Executive Committee as it considers next steps?**

- Has there been consideration about asking farmers who they to and trust? Do they trust UWEX? Dane County Land & Water Resources? Local co-op? Agronomist?
- Clarifying the comment on “creating processes” will be helpful
- Just thinking about the P-Loading Subgroup’s analysis of the 51% of the land where we should focus (not internally drained). Would it be possible to pair up that map with a map showing conservation status (i.e., an EVAAL assessment)?
- What opportunities exist to connect the agricultural and urban communities via the food supply chain? There are a lot of people in the Madison area who are willing to pay more for their milk and cheese if there is verifiable improvements in water quality.
- Would be interested in clarification on the comment about perception of conservation-minded farmers being poor farmers?

**SUMMARY NOTES**  
**Yahara CLEAN Compact Executive Committee**  
**Friday, April 9, 2021**  
**10:10-11:10 A.M.**  
**Zoom Meeting**

## **Attendance**

Present: Paul Dearlove, Luke Wynn, Alison Lebwohl (facilitator), Coreen Fallat, Greg Fries, Matt Diebel, Kyle Minks, Mark Riedel, Sarah Dance, James Tye, J Blue (SmithGroup), Marcus Pearson (Urban Assets)

## **Anticipated Outcomes**

- Decision on accepting the State of the Science report
- Decision on next steps for engaging Compact members, outside stakeholders, and the general public

## **Welcome and Check In (Chaired by Paul Dearlove)**

Meeting was convened at 10:10 a.m. *Summary notes from the 3/12/21 Executive Committee meeting were approved unanimously.* Members were asked for any comments or questions relating to the prior meeting notes, financials, and project timeline.

Q: Are sufficient funds on hand to pay for the outstanding public-engagement work currently under contract?

A: Yes, but Clean Lakes Alliance will need to use its own funds to cover some of the work up front before being reimbursed through a Wisconsin DNR grant. As for public-engagement work identified as necessary but not presently under contract, that discussion will be covered later in the agenda.

## **State of the Science Report**

***Decision:*** *Accept the findings and recommendations from the P-Loading Subgroup as shared in the draft report and presented at the February and March Compact meetings (All in favor)*

## **Public Engagement**

### Open Session Discussion

Members were invited to reflect on the presentations that had just been made to the Steering Team: What were you hearing and where might we go with that information?

- We are hearing requests for clearer, simpler messaging. It is also encouraging that the agricultural stakeholders are on board, and that is a positive victory. This suggests we are headed in the right direction. (Pearson confirmed that those who were interviewed seemed universally supportive and on board, but were looking for direction on their specific role.)

- The overview presentation featuring the expanded case statement themes touched on the main concepts, but some important points were left out. It is difficult to balance simplicity with the fact that these concepts are complex.
- Many questions that were shared through the Menti Poll are answered in the more detailed, case statement “companion document” that Dance is finalizing. We will want to share that supporting information with the Steering Team when it is complete. For example, relevant factoids were collected on the importance and economic impacts of the lakes, and what consequences can be expected if they were to “fail.”
- We have great context and research supporting us, and the efforts to make it all clear, understandable, and accessible are appreciated. The expanded case statement is an attempt to deliver on that objective. The companion document is intended to provide all the supporting details for those who prefer to take that next step of diving deeper into any particular theme.
- Always knowing what we are asking from the public or the target audience is important. We will want to keep messages at a very high level, but tailor them to the specific audience or the specific ask. We may want to develop a suite of bullet points that can be easily repackaged to target different audiences.
- Let’s ask the Steering Team to do some homework using the expanded case statement. This can start with asking designees to give presentations to their respective Boards, leadership teams, or broader networks. It’s important for us to be communicating why all this matters. Compact members are told they have a role to play, but they will need to be reminded about what that role looks like.
- Questions directed to the SmithGroup team: How are outside stakeholders being approached and what information are they being presented? What are those messages you are leading with and how are they being introduced to the Compact?
  - Response: The case statement is the first item that is shared. Goal is to evaluate stakeholder awareness when it comes to the lakes, phosphorus loading, and how people are being impacted.
- Compact members need to explicitly hear what role we expect them to play, including what they should be communicating to their organizations. Looking to the SmithGroup team to weigh in on the content of the expanded case statement and direct next steps.
- The current plan is for the SmithGroup team to advise us on what additional public-engagement actions are recommended based on our stated goals and objectives. We will then reaffirm that this is what we want to do as part of our overall plan. The SmithGroup team, in turn, would play a lead role in moving that messaging piece across the finish line. This would include the general public online survey. The survey is intended to evaluate community awareness so that the right messaging and educational materials can be developed.

#### SmithGroup and Urban Assets’ Public Engagement Presentation

- A new and separate contract with Clean Lakes Alliance is under consideration to complete “Phase 1 public-engagement actions” that are currently outside of the consultant team’s scope of work. This includes promoting and administering the online public survey, performing intercept interviews at lake-access points this summer, and having a presence at community events to get more people to take the survey.

- The overall goal is to better assess opinions and perspectives on the lakes, knowledge and understanding of the issues, and feelings about ongoing improvement efforts.
- As part of a separate contract with Clean Lakes Alliance, SmithGroup and Urban Assets would be asked to develop and direct the distribution and promotion of the online public survey. Compact members would be expected to assist by allowing the use of their own communication networks and outreach tools. Results and analysis from this phase will then inform and shape how specific messaging content is crafted for different stakeholder audiences as part of “phase 2.”

#### Discussion on Phase 1 contract scope (Closed Session)

The SmithGroup team is currently contracted to: 1) engage with Compact members and outside stakeholders through a series of interviews; and 2) design and provide implementation guidance for a general public online survey. However, we know we want and need a more robust and inclusive community-engagement effort. To that end, the SmithGroup team has submitted for consideration a \$21,400 proposal to do this additional work. That work was cut from the original contract to meet the Compact’s reduced budget allocation.

Tye offered that Clean Lakes Alliance is prepared to fund this portion of the public engagement given its time sensitivity and importance to our overall success. If that idea is accepted by the Executive Committee, Clean Lakes Alliance would sign the contract, assume responsibility for covering those added costs, and gladly accept donations from other Compact entities that are willing and able to chip in.

***Decision: Accept on behalf of the Compact an additional Clean Lakes Alliance cash donation of \$21,400, plus in-kind contract management, to close the existing budget gap and provide for a more robust and inclusive public engagement process. Clean Lakes Alliance will contract and work directly with the SmithGroup team to restore “phase 1” public-engagement deliverables that were previously removed from the original contract scope due to insufficient Compact funds. (All in Favor)***

#### **Close**

Meeting ended at 11:10 a.m. Next meeting scheduled for May 14<sup>th</sup> with Kyle Minks (Dane County) chairing.