

SUMMARY NOTES
Yahara CLEAN Compact Steering Team
Friday, October 9, 2020
8:30-10:00 A.M.
Zoom

Attendance

Present: Katie Hepler, Carolyn Clow, Mark Riedel, Amber Radatz (UW-Extension Discovery Farms), Chad Lawler, Kyle Minks, Tom Wilson, Kathy Lake, Melissa Huggins (Urban Assets), Mike Rupiper, Martye Griffin, J Blue (SmithGroup), Coreen Fallat, Cassie Goodwin (SmithGroup), Tricia Gorby, Missy Nergard, Ruth Hackney, Matt Diebel, Jake Vander Zanden, Greg Fries, Kelly Hilyard, Janet Schmidt, Paul Dearlove, Luke Wynn, Alison Lebwohl (facilitator), Sarah Dance

Anticipated Outcomes

Shared understanding of:

1. Rural perspectives, particularly those of dairy farmers
2. Ongoing work of Public Engagement Subgroup, P Loading Subgroup, and Executive Committee, including contract negotiations with SmithGroup

Welcome, Updates & Check In (Paul Dearlove, Chair)

- Dearlove convened the meeting at 8:31 a.m. as chair. Reminder: next meetings of the Steering Team and Executive Committee are scheduled for 11/13/20.
- ***The summary notes of the September 11, 2020 Steering Team meeting were unanimously accepted as presented. There were no requested changes or edits.***
- Lebwohl reviewed the working agreements and facilitator rules. Updated copies of the decision tracker and income-expense report were previously shared and referenced.
- Introductions: Cassie Goodwin and J Blue from SmithGroup, Melissa Huggins from Urban Assets (subconsultant), and Amber Radatz from UW-Extension Discovery Farms.
- Agenda overview:
 - Input from the Steering Team member interviews is laying the groundwork for future Compact meetings and what SmithGroup will be doing. That input is being compiled by Tracy Harvey (UW PhD student) on behalf of Exec.
 - Last month, we heard a more urban perspective from Chad Lawler of Madison Area Builders Association. Today's meeting will focus on the rural perspective as we hear from Katie Hepler of Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and Amber Radatz from UW-Extension's Discovery Farms. They will each share thoughts on the types of strategies the Compact might deliver and the unique assets their organizations bring to the success of that effort. Also on the agenda are updates on the work of the Executive Committee and our two subgroups. Each has been working behind the scenes to continue moving the work of the Compact forward.

A Rural Perspective: Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and Discovery Farms (An Interview with Katie Hepler and Amber Radatz)

Chad Lawler introduces the speakers and moderates the presentation.

Question 1: What would be useful for us as fellow participants in the Yahara CLEAN Compact to know about your organization and its constituents?

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (Katie Hepler)

- Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin is a marketing organization speaking on behalf of dairy farmers throughout the state. Primary roles include market research and promotion. The organization does not lobby or set milk prices, nor does it try to guide or push legislation. It receives funding from the Center for Dairy Research at UW-Madison.
- 90% of Wisconsin's milk production goes into making cheese, and 90% of that cheese is sold outside of the state.
- Priority areas: Growing the public's affinity for Wisconsin-made cheese; product distribution and sales; building trust; and creating positive messaging related to farming culture and operations.

Discovery Farms (Amber Radatz)

- Discovery Farms is a water quality research and educational program that supports on-farm decision-making. It primarily focuses on research related to weather impacts, soil health, runoff, nutrient dynamics, and erosion prevention.
- Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin has been a funder of water quality research through Discovery Farms since the program began.
- There is a strong legacy of conservation ethics in Wisconsin that is championed by farmers. Goal is to provide evidence and data to farmers so they can make informed operational decisions.
- Farming is a diverse, complex, and data-driven business. Farmers are not looking for outside interests to tell them how to farm or implement a practice.

Question 2: What unique assets or perspectives can you and your organization offer to the Compact effort?

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (Katie Hepler)

- There is a disconnect between farmers and our urban residents. Often, urban residents are informed about agriculture through a news headline that does not convey the whole picture.
- Let's look at everyone's needs in the watershed and figure out how different stakeholders can we work together to move common interests forward.
- COVID-related Initiatives: Stop the imposition of dairy limits; move milk to communities of need; work with school districts and other partners to implement relief efforts by providing milk

Discovery Farms (Amber Radatz)

- Farmers are often balancing success and survival. Conservation is part of the business model, but it can be difficult from a short-term cash flow perspective.

- Silver-bullet solutions are not always feasible. Farmers cannot immediately jump to building skyscrapers (commercial development analogy).

Question 3: Given the needs and views of your organization and constituency, what one or two “big ideas” (solutions, strategy focus, etc.) would you like to see in the updated plan?

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (Katie Hepler)

- Tell farmers’ stories. Our farmers share the same values that our urban and residential neighbors hold.

Discovery Farms (Amber Radatz)

- There is a whole team involved in operating a farm. That team might include land conservationists, soil/crop/nutrition consultants, lenders, and others. Finding solutions that can work for everyone on the team is critical.
- Use data as evidence to drive better decision-making.

Dairy Farmers and the Compact: small group work & large group report-outs

Following the presentation, Steering Team members went into small breakout rooms to offer input on the following questions. Small group responses are numbered to reflect the specific question being answered.

1. *What stood out for you?*
2. *What might this mean for the work of the Compact?*
3. *What other “big ideas” does this suggest?*

Group 1 (Clow, Diebel, Griffin)

1. Other groups don’t understand where farmers are coming from, their concerns, how their business decisions are made, and who else is involved in their operations. Decision-makers need to be aware of how strategies will affect the bottom line for various agricultural business sectors.
2. It will be important to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the farming community while respecting “the ask” in terms of expected time commitments. We are taking time to build relationships so we can maintain them.
3. We need to listen.

Group 2 (Wilson, Dance, Schmidt)

1. Economic impact of farming is important for more people to know. Farmers own two-thirds of the land in Dane County. We need to work with farmers and avoid regulating them without allowing for input. Trust, transparency and accountability are critical. Not being a farmer, it can be a challenge to fully grasp the production process, the intricacies of what farmers do, and how people (regulators) may not appreciate the impacts of decisions and if they’re being effectively communicated. Protection of the local industry means supporting it. That includes both financially and having farmers at the table.
2. We have to engage the farming community if we’re going to be successful. They are incredible communicators and information sharers, and can be invaluable assets in promoting good conservation practices. Need to work more with farmers instead of

blindly regulating them. We want farmers at the table, but have to be respectful about time commitments and approach.

3. We will want to educate the general public about the size, influence, and impact of farms within the watershed. Urban-rural partnerships are important, and we will want to tell stories in a positive way to build collective understanding and community. Farmers have diverse interests and ways they influence water quality. Questions to ask: Are we working hard enough to earn the trust of farmers? How do we translate communication into action?

Group 3 (Gorby, Wynn, Hepler)

1. There is complexity to understanding how farms can operate more effectively to protect water quality (economics, culture, etc.). What's exciting about the Compact initiative is that more people are on board and on the same page. Important to focus on adoptable solutions.
2. Expansion of the Compact to include more stakeholders promotes a better learning and community-building process. Need a phased plan for how to get all the work done, and then be able to communicate and implement the recommendations. What are we telling the public, how are we doing it, and how are we going to bring everyone along? Need a communications plan to roll this out correctly, and to identify an objective for each of our key audiences. Normalize the work and the lakes are the winners. Farmers are not monolithic but impacted differently, and there is a cultural significance. How do we package this complexity and help everyone get on the same page in a headline culture?
3. (Nothing reported)

Group 4 (Lawler, Minks, Fallat)

1. Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin is focused on marketing and education, not lobbying. Most dairy products are sent out of state. There are significant issues related to product pricing and downstream processing.
2. Will we be able to address the economic impacts associated with agriculture, especially with all the price limitations within industry? Other stakeholders, like lenders, play a role and have to be taken into account. Farmers may be interested in change, but will that impact their financing, conservation efforts, etc.? Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin has outreach and marketing proficiencies that can assist us in communicating with the public and refining our messaging. A challenge will be how to offset the cost of needed changes by finding innovative but less costly initiatives to meet Compact goals. Providing data to financial institutions.
3. We need to bring in banks, lending institutions, and funding sources to develop the necessary financing (and understand requirements of different funding sources) to cover the costs of any regulation or initiative.

Group 5 (Hackney, Lake, Hilyard)

1. Farming is a complex business and everything is connected. Connections between organic farming and the state's identity around dairy. Wisconsinites take pride in the products produced here and have a cultural affinity and connection to

agriculture. Cheese to Wisconsin is like beef to Montana. Dairy is both a business and a lifestyle. Data are important to making decisions.

2. It is really important to find other benefits for farmers that go beyond water quality. Farmers are busy and trying to manage outside expectations. The public funding piece needs to come into the conversation. Those of us who benefit should pay for that funding. There are opportunities to find entry points and funding for things that have benefits to the farm. Incentivize farmers to figure out how to do it rather than prescribing the path. It is hard to change without motivation. Making farmers feel like they're being backed into a corner will cause push back, especially when they are operating at the margins. Even small changes can make or break an operation. Find co-benefits, listen, fund what is needed, and avoid being overly prescriptive.
3. Identity. Telling stories is the best way to connect people from different backgrounds. Community funding can help spur the development of more digesters. Biogas economics work. Look at the byproducts created from manure digesters. How do we make manure profitable? Make sure the right people are at the table to get the economics right. Look at problems through different lenses of expertise and perspective. Use innovation funding and trust the professionals within the industry.

Group 6 (Vander Zanden, Rupiper, J Blue)

1. 90% of Wisconsin dairy industry is cheese, and 90% of that cheese is sold outside the state (while the manure stays). Volatility in milk prices makes it hard to plan.
2. Focus on peer-to-peer exchanges like Yahara Pride Farms. It is important for Compact members to understand the perspectives of other groups and stakeholders.
3. We should have more peer-to-peer initiatives like Yahara Pride Farms. There are no silver bullets, so we need to explore a variety of options for manure management (i.e., digesters, composting, etc.). "Clean Lakes" certified cheese?

Group 7 (Radatz, Fries, Dearlove)

1. Only 4% of Wisconsin's population is involved in Ag. It's important to understand the complicated nature of farming as a business. Change to a farmer means risk and operational adjustments. Conservation goals, however, can lead to suggesting major changes to farming systems. Regulations come with a cost that product sales can't always offset. A whole team is involved in operating a farm, including lenders and consultants. Environmental regulation is viewed as a threat to many farmers. Fluctuating milk prices make it much more difficult for us to work with farmers to implement new regulations or operational changes. Farmers have very little ability to drive their economic situation and often go to work with the goal of not losing money.
2. The economics of milk manufacturing are very complex and generally out of our control, but it affects our ability to recommend adoptable practices or policies. Managing overall costs for the farmer will be essential. We do need to address winter manure spreading (Lathrop/Stuntebeck paper). This will likely mean moving away from manure storage as being the one solution. Need to look at other methods focused on processing and distribution. We have to be careful of unintended consequences, like putting in more manure storages that then leads to more cows (to pay for the new storage). Should address the disconnect between

what farmers need to stay fiscally solvent and what non-farmers might think is needed and would be accepted into practice. Regulations can come with a business cost without an offsetting price adjustment to the commodity being sold. Currently, the only way to differentiate your product is to go organic.

3. Digesters do not seem to be the full answer. They are expensive, heavily subsidized, and only serve a limited number of larger farms. There has to be a suite of options made available to address the manure problem. That could include on-farm digestion, in-field management (manure application timing, tillage, cover crops), and community partnerships where we don't just push our side of the equation and expect the farmers to resolve the cost end on their side. Messaging, incentives and assistance can and should be directed at lenders, crop consultants and other farm-team members. Who the messenger is makes a difference.

Report Outs

P Loading Subgroup (Diebel)

Looking into what it can answer or provide for the plan update, and what will have to wait as part of a future initiative. Current focus is on setting targets, assessing progress, and potentially creating a dashboard to track and communicate progress metrics. The subgroup is also exploring needs as they relate to the selection of effective strategies (i.e. type, scale, location, etc.). The plan is to work with SmithGroup by providing any needed data, analysis and technical support.

Public Engagement Subgroup (Clow)

The key word has been "focus." The subgroup continues to work with UW Division of Extension to determine which audiences/stakeholders we need to focus on and why. The third and final UWEX-facilitated meeting is planned for October 30th. Any resulting recommendations will then go to Exec and SmithGroup for consideration.

Executive Committee (Dearlove)

Exec is currently gathering information from all members of the Compact through one-on-one interviews. The interviews are helping to identify those big ideas, perspectives and available resources that our member organizations bring to the table. Member groups are also being asked to prepare ~7-min Pecha Kucha presentations that will be shared with the full Steering Team starting in December. The purpose of the short presentations is to address the same questions posed to Madison Area Builders Association, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, and UW-Extension's Discovery Farms at our recent Steering Team meetings.

Close

The Steering Team will next meet from 8:30-10:00 a.m. on November 13th, and the Executive Committee meeting will immediately follow (separate Zoom link). As members exited the meeting, they were invited to put one word in the Chat to communicate how they are feeling about the effort: "Thankful, excited, optimistic, hopeful, engaged, awesome, informed."

SUMMARY NOTES
Yahara CLEAN Compact Executive Committee
Friday, October 9, 2020
10:10-11:10 A.M.
Zoom

Attendance

Present: James Tye, Paul Dearlove, Luke Wynn, Alison Lebwohl (facilitator), Cassie Goodwin (SmithGroup), Melissa Huggins (Urban Assets), Carolyn Clow, Coreen Fallat, Janet Schmidt, J Blue (SmithGroup), Matt Diebel, Sarah Dance, Tracy Harvey (Compact member interviewer), Kyle Minks, Mark Riedel, Missy Nergard

Anticipated Outcomes

1. Decision on scope of work and budget estimates for contract negotiations with SmithGroup
2. Shared understanding of next steps for Executive Committee, including timeline for decision-making on authorizing a contract and discussing the results of the interviews with Compact Collaborators and Partners
3. Shared understanding of next steps for Steering Team and subgroups

Welcome, Updates & Check In (Paul Dearlove)

- Dearlove, as this month's chair, convened the meeting at 10:10 a.m. Next meeting is scheduled for November 13th.
- ***Summary notes from the 9/11/20 Executive Committee meeting were approved unanimously. No changes or corrections were requested.***
- The agenda and expected outcomes were reviewed. SmithGroup was invited to present a proposed scope of work and budget. They will stay to answer any questions before leaving to allow the Executive Committee to go into closed session for internal discussion and a vote. Tracy Harvey will then share her initial findings from the Compact member interviews. A more detailed report will be shared prior to the next meeting when the results will be the subject of discussion.

Decision: Scope of work & budget for SmithGroup contract negotiations

Open session

Goodwin and Blue introduced the team and presented a draft scope of work and budget. This was followed by a question-and-answer session. The stated goal was to create an updated plan that can serve as a stakeholder-specific user manual. Its eventual format will be conducive to sharing the different components through a variety of outreach platforms.

Q: What is the timing on the focus groups?

A: Get as many done as possible before Clean Lakes Alliance's May 14th Community Breakfast. However, there is plenty of room for flexibility. The schedule of anticipated meetings and hours are intended to serve as a baseline for what is needed to produce the expected deliverables.

Q: Is the final plan deadline attainable?

A: It is still a little unclear on how the work of the P Loading Subgroup will work in tandem with SmithGroup. However, there is high confidence that SmithGroup can achieve the outlined milestones. While not knowing what 2021 will look like is a challenge, getting the necessary public input is doable from Urban Assets' perspective.

- Diebel: The P Loading Subgroup is ready to talk through its process, timing and expected deliverables to ensure efforts are well coordinated.

Q: What feedback loops are built into the planning so it remains adaptable to input?

A: Plan development is intended to be an iterative process. As we learn about gaps, we will re-tool the process to fill those gaps to reach more or different stakeholders.

- Tye: Clean Lakes Alliance's Community Breakfast in May is an opportunity to announce the work of the Compact to the public. It can also be used to kickoff a more intensive outreach effort during a time when people are using and thinking about the lakes.
- Riedel: The end product needs to satisfy the original scope and goals as outlined by the Compact in the RFQ. We want to maximize the skills and resources of the SmithGroup team so it can do the work that the Compact members cannot easily do themselves.

Closed session

- Tye reviewed the most updated financial statement and a budget forecast, highlighting relevant numbers for contract negotiation purposes. Even after removing the \$25,000 "unallocated" line item, the budget forecast showed a \$45,000 deficit compared to what was originally planned to be available for the consultant. The deficit is the result of a shortfall in the amount, timing and/or nature of cash contributions from two partners.
- Minks: How are we going to reimburse SmithGroup? It is easy to exceed a budget with such an iterative and changing project.
 - Riedel: If we want a different financial model, it is up to us to refine and present any needed adjustments. SmithGroup first generated a cost estimate based on what we were expecting them to do that significantly exceeded the original budget number they were presented. It then reduced its scope of work to accommodate our budget constraints.
- Diebel: Is the \$5,000 for the UW Extension contract reflected in the forecasted budget?
 - Dearlove: It is not. The projected deficit rises to about \$50,000 once UW Extension invoices us for those contract expenses.
- Tye: Is there anything missing in the planned tasks and deliverables presented by SmithGroup? If we can agree on planned activities and deliverables, then the next decision from Exec should be how to find the money needed or to redefine the scope so it meets the new budget constraints.
- Minks: Favors a decision to move forward with the general scope of work presented as long as we recognize that there is anticipated fluidity.

Decision: Move forward with the development of a detailed contract based on the presented scope of work. (All in favor)

- Dearlove: As negotiations proceed, clarity is now needed on any kind of budget adjustment we need to establish. What amended budget parameters does Exec want to communicate to SmithGroup? This will largely define the time allocations that can be spent on each activity as outlined in the draft scope.
 - Riedel: If needed, we can break the project work into phases to allow us to get started. It is a little more complicated, but it is an option.
 - Tye: We have two options to deal with the funding challenge: 1) Look internally among the partners and collaborators to find a way to close the budget gap, or 2) make adjustments to the scope of work to meet these new budget constraints.
- **Decision:** *Dearlove, Riedel, and Tye will work with SmithGroup to draft an adjusted scope of work to meet a \$120,000 budget requirement. Meanwhile, Executive Committee members will check whether their respective organizations might be able to perform some of the needed work. (All in favor)*

Briefing: Initial Findings from Compact Member Interviews (Tracy Harvey)

- Harvey briefly summarized the structure of the document that will be shared with Exec once finalized. One of the main takeaways was that members wanted a big, transformative and different approach to achieving our water quality goals. Report sections are broken down as follows:
 - Overview of interview process
 - General takeaways
 - Common reasons why members joined the Compact
 - Members, general info, and their assets
 - Ideas for the CLEAN 3.0 plan
 - Other interesting findings
- **ACTION ITEM:** Executive Committee members will answer the following questions upon receipt of the summary document:
 1. What stood out for you?
 2. How do you see using this information in the work of the Compact?
 3. What do you want to get out of the Steering Team's discussion of this document?

Close

- Next step for Steering Team includes learning more about fellow members and about P Loading Subgroup work. Dane County (Minks) is chairing.
- Next steps for Executive Committee is to approve a final scope of work with SmithGroup, sign a contract, and approve the work of the Public Engagement and P Loading Subgroups. A discussion of the interview findings will probably have to wait until December.
- Next scheduled meeting is November 13th. If applicable, a special Executive session may need to be scheduled in advance of the 13th to approve the SmithGroup contract.

Meeting ended at 11:21 a.m.