

SUMMARY NOTES
Yahara CLEAN Compact Steering Team
Thursday, July 29th, 2021
8:30-11:00 a.m. @ DNR Service Center (3911 S. Fish Hatchery Rd.)

Attendance

Present: Mark Riedel, Paul Dearlove, Alison Lebwohl (facilitator), James Tye, Kyle Minks, Emily Reynolds, Eric Booth, Katie Hepler, Eric Vieth, Carolyn Clow, Kathy Lake, Renee Lauber, Mike Rupiper, Coreen Fallat, Sarah Pasquesi (SmithGroup), J. Blue (SmithGroup), Dick Lathrop, Greg Fries, Chad Lawler, Marcus Pearson (Urban Assets), Tricia Gorby, Matt Diebel, Janet Schmidt, Anne Baranski

Clean Lakes Alliance meeting support: Luke Wynn, Alexandra Bogner, Allison Elli, David Odegard, Adam Sodersten, Karin Swanson, Brian Shorey

Anticipated Outcomes

- Shared understanding of plan strategies
- Shared understanding of recommended actions for two stakeholder groups:
Residential/Commercial Property Owners and Parks & Open Space Managers
- Feedback to SmithGroup on the draft Action Tables for these two stakeholder groups

Welcome and Check In (Chaired by Mark Riedel, Wisconsin DNR)

Riedel convened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. The group was welcomed back to its first in-person gathering since February of 2020.

Meeting reminders: Steering Team will next meet on September 17th, and no meeting is scheduled for August. The September and October meetings are planned to be 2.5 hours and in person.

Operating agreements: After brief introductions, Lebwohl went over the Steering Team and facilitator ground rules. Following a request for any edits or clarifications, Dearlove asked that members make every effort to contribute comments, questions and recommendations during these meetings, which helps ensure that those thoughts are effectively communicated, discussed and documented. No other edits were requested. ***The amended ground rules and operating agreements were unanimously approved.***

Overview: Riedel reviewed Compact goals and objectives, the project timeline, and what members can expect from the remaining months of the watershed planning process. Also reviewed were the agenda and anticipated outcomes, with the focus being on the broader strategies and recommended action tables specific to two of the five key stakeholder groups.

Summary notes from the June 11th, 2021 meeting were approved as presented. (NOTE: All Compact documentation continues 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,

includes the latest updates to the Compact Decision Tracker, monthly financials, project schedule, interim results of the Greater Madison Lakes Survey, and other relevant materials and handouts.)

Project background & status: Recent work has focused on learning about the science and the success of Yahara CLEAN 2.0 strategies. This has led to a commitment to double down on what is already working while exploring new opportunities, such as dedicated funding models and improved community awareness and ownership. We are also learning more about our five stakeholder groups and engaging with the larger community. The latter is being done through focus groups, intercept interviews, event tabling, and the online Greater Madison Lakes Survey.

Over the last two months, the Steering Team has provided guidance on the format for organizing the recommendations and supporting information within the plan. It has also begun to weigh in on individual strategies and tactics. This and subsequent meetings will now focus on recommended actions related to each of our major stakeholder groups, beginning with Residential/Commercial Property Owners and Parks Managers.

Between now and the 9/17 meeting, SmithGroup will work with Clean Lakes Alliance to set up one-on-one meetings with individual members (as needed) to "ground truth" the viability of certain tactics and progress-tracking methods. By September, the focus will then shift to the other three stakeholder groups: Builders & Developers, Government, and Agriculture. That should set the stage for SmithGroup to assemble a draft plan by October, which is being informed by ongoing Steering Team feedback and input generated from the public-engagement process. Meanwhile, interim public survey results will continue to be shared on a regular basis, and the P-Loading Subgroup (led by Diebel) will be drafting the State of the Science chapter following the outline previously shared.

Strategies & Actions (SmithGroup)

Blue walked the group through the project timeline and the three discussion handouts: 1) an outline of goals, objectives, approaches, and broader strategies; 2) an actions table for Residential/Commercial Property Owners; and 3) an actions table for Parks Managers. The current goal is to present a draft of the Yahara CLEAN 3.0 report in October. The tables are intended to identify and get agreement on priority actions. Explanation was provided on how SmithGroup is using the Steering Team's work and feedback to shape final planning recommendations. Recent examples of how feedback is being used include: simplifying content to make it easier to read and understand; grouping actions by stakeholder group; and either adding or giving more emphasis to certain strategies/actions, including some that are considered more audacious.

Pearson reported >1,000 completed surveys. Urban Assets is now visiting beaches and attending community events to promote the survey and conduct intercept interviews. Canvassing efforts began in late May and will continue through early September. Blue added that while the CLEAN 2.0 plan was largely data and science driven, CLEAN 3.0 builds on that work while being more community and stakeholder driven.

Steering Team Feedback (World Café-style Small Group Work)

General

- The stakeholder action tables are excellent. They are easily understood, providing a great tool for communicating recommendations to elected officials and non-technical audiences. They represent a step forward in terms of content, organization and clarity that help affect change.

- Content is understandable to the layperson, but **more specificity on the “how”** and the “why” is needed either within or outside of the tables.
- The growing list of stakeholder actions is extensive and can be overwhelming. **A clear ranking or prioritization of both the strategies and actions** would be very helpful but is currently missing. For example, the Top 3 Actions for each stakeholder group could be highlighted as the easiest and most inclusive to implement. This would provide a starting point for people that would then evolve into a positive feedback loop. Many people assume the solutions are either out of their control or they simply don’t know where to start.
- Runoff reduction (infiltration, volume control, peak runoff moderation), being one of our primary objectives, warrants more emphasis in all the stakeholder action tables. Maintaining internally drained areas in the watershed and the massive increase in runoff volume needs to be a clear focus of our approach. In addition, identifying **co-benefits**, such as from actions that both reduce runoff volumes and phosphorus, could help sell their utility and general appeal.
- An **overarching narrative** will be paired with the tables. The narrative can be more inspirational. It can also be used to define the different stakeholder groups and how the suite of actions will help the lakes.
- Community and stakeholder-driven movements generate change. Scientists and engineers will not be the ones to drive this movement.

Main Strategies

- Nomenclature definitions are clear and helpful when it comes to deciphering between goals, objectives, approaches, strategies, and actions. Also helpful are the use of graphical icons representing the three main approaches to phosphorus and *E. coli* control (source, land, water).
- There is natural overlap among the strategies, and they should not be viewed as being mutually exclusive. Because multiple strategies can apply to a number of individual actions, this could cause confusion. Which strategies get implemented and where will largely determine impact.
- The **distinctions between the larger goals/objectives and the strategies** are getting blurred and conflated. Some strategies appear to restate those larger goals or objectives (i.e., “reduce phosphorus in...” or “improve water quality at...”).
- “Increased Public Awareness & Ownership” could potentially serve as one, overarching strategy that includes all the others as subsets.
- Change “Manage Runoff” to “**Reduce Runoff.**” This strategy is all about reducing runoff volume and peak flow, and mostly by finding large-scale opportunities to enhance infiltration and evapotranspiration across the landscape.
- Reorganize the strategies by priority to signify level of importance and potential impact. For example, call out improved manure processing and handling, especially during the critical Jan-Mar period. Also consider slimming down the list by grouping similar strategies.
- “Reduce phosphorus from agricultural sources,” and especially anything that addresses the manure issue, should be at the top of the list given that it represents most of the annual phosphorus loading. Agriculture involves a lot of critical sub-actions that get further minimized when not called out, which gives the impression of lesser significance. Find a way to call out manure in the #4 bullet.
- Manure digesters are more of a tactic than a strategy. Also, it should read: “**Three, new manure digesters are still needed in the watershed.**” Additional language recommended: “**Expand existing digesters in terms of processing capacity and operational efficiency to capture more phosphorus.**” Messaging around manure should highlight its value as a locally generated resource (i.e., renewable energy), rather than simply a problem to address.

- Improve value proposition when it comes to effective manure management. Increase incentives for farmers who fully comply. Pilot manure-reduction actions so we have a story to tell and can show results to the public.
- Need a strategy and definition that more effectively calls out *E. coli* reduction.
- Breakdown bullet #9 into its main parts: 1) evaluate and track the watershed's nutrient budget (phosphorus imports vs. exports); 2) study the impact of manure-management actions in a pilot watershed; and 3) fund the continued monitoring and data analysis of the lakes and gaged stream tributaries. An economic study should probably be added to give the public a better idea of what it stands to gain or lose.

Residential/Commercial Property Owners

- Many actions listed come across more as aspirational goals than behavior-change tactics. How are we reaching and incentivizing people who do not use or live near the lakes? How do we create social norms around the desired actions and better connect people to the lakes? What will a campaign for change look like, and who will serve as the influencers? Instruction on "how" the actions get accomplished is missing, but that can be provided outside of the table.
- The action table is a great resource that we can use to sell these recommendations to the larger public. However, more specificity is needed in some cases on what we are asking people to do (i.e., mow to a specific grass height) and what is needed to implement the particular action.
- Some actions seem more relevant to landscapers than homeowners, so we will want to make sure there is a plan for reaching that audience. In some cases, it may be best to work directly with builders and landscapers. Examples might include pre-installed rain barrels, properly directed runoff downspouts, and native landscaping as part of the development process. A "clean lakes building certification" could be used to reward certain environmental standards.
- Specific recommendations are needed for landlords and renters who do not directly create or maintain lawns.
- A ranking or prioritization of the actions would be helpful. Promote the completion of easier actions first as the low-hanging fruit that will get people participating. Focus more on key areas that will result in the largest cumulative impact. For example, how valuable is a rain garden or the act of picking up pet waste or keeping streets leaf-free? 5 stars? 3 stars? Do we have a way of estimating their relative impacts?
- There are co-benefits associated with many of the actions that can be more effectively communicated. For example, changing yard care practices can yield other benefits beyond runoff and nutrient control. Local policies should be reviewed to make sure they are not preventing desired behavior changes.
- Action I: downspouts can also be redirected to rain barrels
 - Explore the idea of grouping actions into best management practice (BMP) categories.
 - Educational and outreach recommendations should explain the "why."
 - Make sure we are not reinventing the wheel. For example, stormwater actions are already being implemented by the Madison Area Municipal Stormwater Partnership (MAMSWaP). How can we align efforts with MAMSWaP and NGOs to improve coordination of responsibilities and messaging while maximizing resources?
 - Maybe recommend a more frequent inspection, pumping, and servicing of septic systems.
 - Municipalities need to look at their mowing schedules. Do we need to come together on a county-wide vs. municipal basis to adopt uniform, lake-friendly policies?

Park Managers

- Table would benefit from an introduction to define the stakeholder group. Consider renaming this stakeholder category “Park Managers & Park Friends Groups.”
- Aren’t Park Managers just a subset of Government since they are usually government employees? Park managers could have their own set of actions as already listed, and then some of those actions could be merged with public land managers whether they be state, county, city, town, or non-profit.
- Remove “consider” or “analyze feasibility of” so the recommendations are more forceful
- Directly engage with park managers and Friend groups regarding proposed actions and how they should be prioritized. What can be done at each park given its unique constraints and opportunities? When considering actions, we should be asking ourselves: What would we do if funding was not a limitation?
- Actions G, H, M, and C are all very similar. Are there ways to group ‘redundant’ actions?
- Action H: Add “floating aquatic plant debris” which is increasingly becoming a big problem
- Presence of hydric soils is not the only indicator of wetland-restoration viability
- Action L is unrealistic and would be difficult to champion
- Action B includes language that is a little difficult to interpret
- It is difficult to realign funds for smaller municipalities. May need to use volunteers and other creative resources to better coordinate and leverage action.
- Action I: may not need to go so far as halt all use
- Action R: Unnecessarily calls out “construction erosion” even though the action is not limited to construction management. Maybe consider removing the “construction” aspect of the strategy to focus on all types of erosion control that may be related to the action.
- Recommend a regional volunteer coordinator to pair project needs with interested volunteers.
- Make sure recommendations get incorporated into existing parks and open space plans, especially language on water quality. When relevant, reference any local plans that give support to recommended strategies and actions.
- Develop specific metrics for all actions so people know when they’ve successfully met the action goal. Guidance on the “how” is needed for each action as well.
- Like in the larger strategy table, use of a 1-5 scale for action impact, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness would be useful to help weigh relative importance.
- As a recommended action, an annual or biannual staff-collaboration meeting would be useful for partners to compare notes on successful tactics.
- Infiltration measures that reduce runoff warrant greater emphasis in the table.
- It is not only about managing parklands to reduce runoff and sources of phosphorus and *E. coli*. It is also about managing public wildlife and conservation areas, open spaces, golf courses, etc. These would not be considered parks but are just as important.
- A recommended action might be to use the forebay of the estuary right below the confluence of the Yahara River and Token Creek as an in-stream sediment and phosphorus trap. Accumulated sediment could then be cleaned out periodically.

Close

Summary highlights were presented by a spokesperson from each table. Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m. The Steering Team will next meet on September 17th.