

PORTAGE COUNTY GROUNDWATER CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 10, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.
Conference Room 5, Portage County Annex Building
1462 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

AGENDA

REMOTE ATTENDANCE & COMMENT

To attend this meeting by telephone: dial 1-608-338-1399, after dialing the number you will then be asked to enter in a meeting number. Use the following meeting number: 623 608 61, then press #

To attend this meeting by video: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

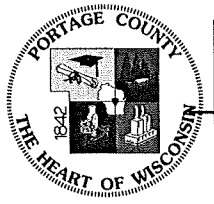
Due to COVID-19 and the potential risk to members of the public who attend meetings in-person, any person who plans to attend the meeting remotely, but wishes to comment on an agenda item can send their comments via email to mcnellyj@co.portage.wi.us. The deadline for sending comments by email is 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting. Emailed comments will be delivered to committee members at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Remote comment by the public during the meeting will be at the discretion of the Chair.

1. Call to Order
2. Review/Approval of Minutes from October 21, 2021
3. Correspondence
4. PUBLIC NOTICE: Members of the public who wish to address the Committee on specific agenda items must register their requests at this time, with such comments subject to the reasonable control of the Committee Chair as set forth in Robert's Rules of Order
5. Discussion/Possible Action:
 - a. Potential resolution brought forward by Committee member Ron Hensler
 - b. Potential actions to address nitrate contamination in Portage County
 - c. Potential meeting months and topics
6. Member Updates
7. Next Meeting Date/Topics
8. Adjournment

Notice: A quorum of the Portage County Board of Supervisors or any committee thereof may be present at this meeting.

Any person who has special needs, and plans on attending this meeting, should contact the Planning and Zoning Department as soon as possible to ensure that reasonable accommodations can be made.

Telephone 715-346-1334



PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

1462 STRONGS AVENUE, STEVENS POINT, WI 54481 • PHONE: 715-346-1334 • FAX: 715-346-1677

To: Groundwater Citizen Advisory Committee (GCAC)
From: Jen McNelly, Water Resource Specialist 
Date: February 3, 2022
R.e.: February 10, 2022 GCAC Meeting

The Portage County Groundwater Citizens Advisory Committee will be meeting on Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 7:00 pm. **Please note** the change in location of the meeting to Conference Room 5 on the 3rd floor of the County Annex Building. There will also be an option to attend the meeting virtually if you would like. The link for virtual attendance is included on the meeting agenda included in the packet and on the Portage County online calendar. Those that attend virtually we will still count towards a quorum.

The first item on the agenda for the February GCAC meeting will be the consideration of a potential resolution brought forward by committee member Ron Hensler. This resolution was shared at the December meeting as a piece of correspondence, and it was asked that it be placed on the next meeting agenda. The resolution has also been included with this packet of information.

In January at the Land and Water Conservation Committee, County Supervisor Neville had made a request that the Groundwater Citizen Advisory Committee forward a list of potential actions that the Committee could consider to address nitrate concerns within the County. We will be spending the February meeting discussing options and recommendations to forward onto the Land and Water Committee. I've included two previous documents that contain various options for addressing elevated nitrate concentrations within the County. The first was compiled in 2018 by representatives from the County Health and Human Services, Land and Water Conservation, and Planning and Zoning Departments. While this document is a bit older, I feel that the actions within it are still valid. Some of the recommended actions have been completed since the time that they were recommended. Those have been struck through within the document. The second, is a list of options under specific sources, that I put together for the Land and Water Conservation Committee. This list is not limited but was rather an attempt at putting any and all options on the table. I also tried to list options that were not included in the first document. I would ask that you review these lists and come prepared to discuss the options that are presented as well as any of your own recommendations.

I also wanted to provide a brief update on the proposed projects utilizing State and Local Recovery Funds (SLRF or also known as ARPA funds). This was the topic that was shared at the December meeting. We are continuing to develop the proposals, however the recent upswing in Covid cases has kept the County Health Department and County Executive hopping over the last couple of months. We are tentatively planning on reapproaching the Committee's in March with a more finalized proposal. We would also like to share the information on this with GCAC at that time. Which leads me to the last piece of information.

I've included a brief list of potential upcoming topics and meeting months. This is informational more than anything and is subject to change. Specific dates for the meetings will be discussed at meeting prior each month. I just wanted to take a few minutes to kind of sketch out plans for the rest of the year. Typically, we meet every other month, however we are tentatively looking at having a March meeting and skipping April due to the potential timing of the ARPA funds discussion.

As always, we will have an opportunity for local municipalities to share updates on groundwater concerns and/or issues. If there is something you would like to discuss, please come prepared to do so.

It is critical we have a quorum of members present either online or in person for this meeting, otherwise the Committee will not be able to forward suggestions/recommendations onto the Land and Water Conservation Committee.

If you are not able to attend this meeting or have any other questions or concerns, please notify Jen McNelly as soon as you are able. My contact information is: 715-346-1334 or mcnellyj@co.portage.wi.us.

PORTAGE COUNTY GROUNDWATER CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CONFERENCE ROOMS 1 & 2, COUNTY ANNEX
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2021 - 7:00 P.M.

MEETING MINUTES

GROUNDWATER CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GCAC) MEMBERS LISTING:

MUNICIPALITY	MEMBERS NAME	Attendance	MUNICIPALITY	MEMBERS NAME	Attendance
TOWNS:			TOWNS:		
Alban	Vacant		Pine Grove	Ben Sawyer	Absent
Almond	Edward Burns	Present	Pine Grove Alt	Jeanette Wilson	Absent
Amherst	Tommy Enright	Present Online	Plover	Joe Firkus	Absent
Amherst Alt	Peggy Farrell	-----	Sharon	Ron Hensler	Present Online
Belmont	Mike Warzynski	Absent	Stockton	Curt Soik	Absent
Belmont Alternate	Rita Walkowicz	Absent	VILLAGES:		
Buena Vista	Zack Mykisen	Absent	Almond	Richard Burns	Absent
Buena Vista Alt	Roger Turzinski	Absent	Amherst	Mike Juris	Present
Carson	Fred Copes	Absent	Amherst Junction	Vacant	
Dewey	Dennis Meis	Present	Junction City	Peter Mallek	Excused
Dewey Alt	Kathy Girolamo	-----	Nelsonville	Tarion O'Carroll	Present
Eau Pleine	David Hansen	Absent	Park Ridge	Dan McFarlane	Excused
Grant	Cecile Stelzer-Johnson	Present	Park Ridge Alt	Christine Neidlein	Absent
Grant Alt	Andrea Musch	-----	Plover	Matt Saloun	Present Online
Hull	Tim Zimmerman	Absent	Rosholt	Jessie Anderson	Absent
Lanark	John Droske	Present Online	Whiting	Nicholas Schmeiser	Present Online
Linwood	Garth Frost	Present	CITY:		
New Hope	Jenny Larsen	Present Online	Stevens Point	Eric Southworth	Present Online
New Hope Alt	Anne Abbott	-----			

STAFF PRESENT: Jen McNelly and Patty Benedict, Planning and Zoning Department.

OTHERS PRESENT: In-person: Barry Jacowski, County Board Supervisor, District 23. Online: Dr. Carla Romano

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by E. Burns, Chair.

2. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM AUGUST 19, 2021

Stelzer-Johnson moved to approve the minutes. Juris seconded the motion, which passed by voice vote.

3. CORRESPONDENCE

None

4. PUBLIC NOTICE: *Members of the public who wish to address the Committee on specific agenda items must register their requests at this time with such comments subject to the reasonable control of the Committee Chair as set forth in Robert's Rules of Order.* No one registered to speak.

5. Discussion/Possible Action:

- Introduction to the Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative, Grant Project, and Dr. Carla Romano – McNelly reported the CSGCC is comprised of Land and Water, Planning and Zoning, UW-Extension, and Health Departments as well as County Board Supervisors from Adams, Juneau, Marquette, Portage and Waushara, and Wood Counties. A \$60,000 grant was received from DATCP to run through November 2022 to inventory and compile research into one database for all six counties. Dr. Carla Romano, project researcher, was introduced and summarized the project.
- PFA's Presentation – McNelly gave a presentation regarding PFA's and shared a video featuring Dr. Sarah Yang (Groundwater Toxicologist, Wisconsin Department of Health Services).

6. MEMBER UPDATES

None

7. NEXT MEETING DATE/TOPICS:

The next meeting date is tentatively set for Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in Conference Rooms 1 & 2, County Annex.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

Meis moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by O'Carroll. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

To: Portage County GCAC

From: Ron Hensler

RE: Potential resolution relative to recent PC Committee, County Board and DNR/State Legislature actions

Date: December 14, 2021

Background:

This committee brought together information regarding the quality of Portage Counties groundwater and created a groundwater management plan. Nitrate nitrogen levels are above 10 ppm in too many wells and appears to be increasing. Nelsonville has over 50% of its private wells above the threshold and other municipalities have nitrate removal systems as do many Portage County homeowners for their private wells. And, if highly soluble nitrate is there, what else is present that may make the water unsafe to consume?

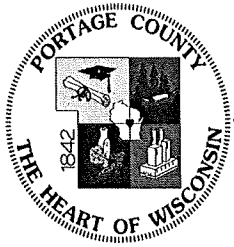
The biggest source of nitrate to Portage County groundwater is agriculture. There are cultural practices that can minimize the problem. However, the porous, sandy nature of most agricultural fields makes it difficult to have success all of the time. Irrigation management tools work when it doesn't rain; events over an inch or two likely move nitrate below the root zone of shallow rooted crops. Nutrient management plans are geared to runoff control to surface waters. And, because the recommendations are based on economic returns, the recommended rates are probably too high for sandy soils. Nutrient management plans do not adequately take into account that only about 50% of applied Nitrogen is recovered by the crop.

Resolution:

Our elected government people are "of the people, elected by the people, to serve the people". When a problem like groundwater contamination of nitrate is established, we expect the elected bodies to pursue remedies for the problem as opposed to create obstructions to solving the problem or to cater to special interests to further the status quo.

I will be present via Zoom; however, I will probably not be an active participant because I can hear or understand about half or so of committee conversations; ie, some people are easier to hear than others. I encourage someone to introduce this if appropriate and reworking this is expected.

I think that the County committees associated with the Planning and Zoning group and staff, County Board Chair (or all members) and at least our State Representatives (Testin, Shanklin) receive the resolution. It is disconcerting to see the can kicked down the road again.



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To: County Executive Patty Dreier

From: Planning and Zoning Director Jeff Schuler
County Conservationist Steve Bradley
Water Resource Specialist Jennifer McNelly

Health and Human Services Director Ray Przybelski
Public Health Officer Gary Garske

Date: January 10, 2018

R.e.: Response to November 28, 2017 Call To Action by County Executive

On November 28, 2017 you issued a “call to action” for Planning and Zoning and Health and Human Services Department staff to put together a list of action strategies that Portage County can take, within its current authority, to improve water quality.

We agree with your assessment in that call to action that groundwater quality is an urgent issue that needs attention, and that we have a substantial amount of planning in place (Department Mission Statements, County Groundwater Management Plan, County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, etc.) to allow us to move forward now more directly. To that end, we have identified immediate to longer term actions in what will be a long-term and on-going effort at water quality improvement.

MORE IMMEDIATE STEPS

- County leadership could work with WPVGA and vegetable processors to encourage varieties of snap beans that utilize inoculated seed to promote colonization of rhizobia, which would eliminate the need for nitrogen fertilization and ask for the use of UW nitrogen recommendations (150 lbs./ac.) on sweet corn instead of the routine 190 lbs./ac. mandated by processors.
- County leadership could advocate for subsidies (by Portage County or others) promoting slow release commercial nitrogen to eliminate excessive nitrate leaching from increasingly frequent intense storm events.
- County leadership could increase funding to the Land Preservation Fund and expand the mission to purchase conservation easements for the protection of groundwater.
- County leadership to help create a market for “groundwater friendly” crops such as alfalfa, clover and/or soybeans by working with the private sector to locate a processing facility in the County.
- Encourage and provide assistance for the formation of additional farmer-led groups promoting the understanding and use of best management practices. Farmers for Tomorrow, a farmer led council

recently formed to adopt and promote conservation practices in the Tomorrow River Watershed to reduce nitrate leaching.

- ~~Utilize Tomorrow River Watershed water quality data and State of the Tomorrow River Report to compare 1994 and 2016 results by sub-watershed to identify areas where water quality improvement has been achieved, and direct efforts based on successful results.~~
- Utilize a two-prong approach to help Portage County Residents facing nitrate issues in their wells:
 - A homeowner would bring an elevated nitrate water quality test into Portage County;
 - Water resource specialist would work with homeowner to ensure that the test is truly positive (a retest to confirm);
 - A nitrate source analysis would be done on the water sample to try and determine if there is any evidence to indicate a possible source of nitrates in the drinking water (IE animal/cattle, fertilizers/pesticides, or human sources);
 - The water resource specialist would work to determine a zone of contribution for the affected well;
 - The County Conservationist would work with landowners within the identified zone of contribution to put better land use practices in place that may help to address the nitrates being contributed.
 - If the County was interested potential cost sharing could be made available to off-set the cost water quality testing, source water analysis testing, and cost-sharing treatment system and/or well replacement for affected well owner.
 - There have been suggestions that this type of program can remain voluntary up until landowners are no longer voluntarily making changes to help address nitrate concentrations in the area. At that point, regulatory actions would need to be taken by the County Board to require changes.
- ~~Portage County Born Learning Program to utilize water testing as part of their home safety checks.~~
- ~~Portage County Community Health Improvement Plan to incorporate relevant aspects of groundwater quality impacts.~~
- Hold a groundwater “summit” (in cooperation with Wood County, possibly other adjacent Counties), inviting industries, residents, water lab personnel to discuss options for reducing nitrates.
- More widely promote the use of existing cost-share funding through the Portage County Land and Water Conservation Division for conservation facilities and practices.

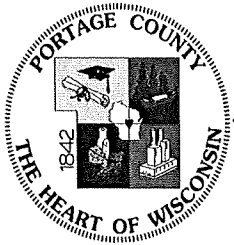
LONGER TERM ACTIVITIES

Set A Goal:

- Have policymakers set an N value to force action to achieve.

Regulatory Efforts

- Mandatory well testing (for data collection purposes).



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Wellhead Protection

- ~~Extend the Village of Amherst's Wellhead Protection Area into the unincorporated area.~~
- ~~Properly delineate the wellhead protection area for Junction City's new well.~~
- ~~Require nutrient management plans and best management practices for agricultural practices within wellhead protection zones~~
 - ~~BMP's would attempt to limit nutrient inputs from agricultural practices;~~
 - ~~Annually submit nutrient management plans to the County, so they could check that practices are being followed;~~
 - ~~Offer cost-sharing as part of this.~~

~~** There is already language in the ordinance that speaks to the use of nutrient management plans for agricultural activities. 7.2.5.3 (13) "Animal waste shall not be applied at rates which exceed the nutrient requirements of the crops grown on the applicant site" 7.2.5.3 (14) "Conduct and management of agricultural activities shall be subject to a farm plan (based on the potential for groundwater contamination) utilizing standards in the Portage County Technical Guide adopted by the Portage County Land Conservation Committee". **~~

- ~~Consider the duplication of performance standards regarding maximum areas of manicured lawn/grass and the encouragement of natural vegetative covers for residential lots (whether sewerred or un-sewerred) in Zones A and B.~~
- ~~Consider adding a residential fertilizer limit to wellhead protection zones A and B.~~
- ~~Review activities under all zones to make sure that they are still applicable and acceptable uses in the wellhead protection zones.~~

Zoning

- Establish a new zoning district based on soil types susceptible to water contamination. This district could limit nutrient applications, type of crops/farming allowed, and/or require the use of best management practices.
- Establish a new zoning district based on water quality test results. This would theoretically be the same as the Atrazine prohibition areas. A water test result over a certain threshold for a parameter would be used as a starting point. Additional water tests of surrounding properties would be required until an established area is determined. Potential activities within these areas could include limiting nutrient applications, types of crops/farming allowed, and/or require the use of best management practices.

Subdivision

- Require that every lot that undergoes a division to have a water test if a well is present.

- Bacteria and Nitrate for sure, possibly a pesticide scan?
- If sample exceeds standard a notation should be made on the CSM or possibly the deed.
- A subdivision of land could be denied if a returned samples contaminant levels are so high that the water is not able to be treated to the point that it would meet drinking water standards.
- If nitrate levels are high on the property, could there be an additional requirement to add additional treatment onto existing and any new septic systems on the property being divided?

POWTS Ordinance

- Require the use of recirculating sand filter or other similar technology to reduce/remove nitrates from effluent.

Educational Efforts

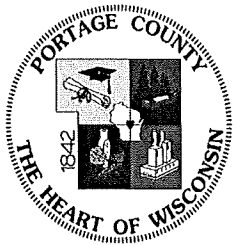
- Education: EPA-WiDNR-PoCo = same standard already.
- Youth education.

Financial Efforts

- Tax relief if well test results come back ≥ 20 ppm?
- Subsidized cost for individual water treatment systems?
- Promote and participate in public fund raising for water quality solutions?
- Pursue funding to incentivize agricultural activities that are of benefit to water resources?

Scientific Study/Research

- The AmaizeN model should be explored by UWEX to verify validity for reduced nitrogen applications on irrigated corn production.



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Actions That Could Be Considered to Address Elevated Nitrate-Nitrogen

These actions are suggested as potential actions that could be taken to address elevated nitrate-nitrogen concentrations in Portage County. These actions are not limited by what are actions that are likely to be adopted but rather span a range of “easy to adopt/implement” to “difficult/unlikely to implement” and a range of timelines on how they may take to implement and/or see actions.

These actions were compiled by the Portage County Water Resource Specialist and were previously shared with the Portage County Land and Water Conservation Committee.

Nitrogen from Lawns

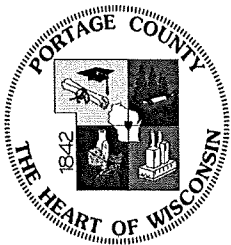
- Prohibit lawn fertilization
- Limit the amount of fertilizers applied to lawns
- Eliminate law fertilization on County properties
- Work with lawn fertilization companies to reduce nitrates applied to properties
- If there are certain governmental units that want to limit lawn fertilizers, provide assistance
- Work with willing landowners to replace lawns with native vegetation

Nitrogen from Septic Systems

- Require additional treatment on septic systems
- Explore municipal services to outlying areas
- Provide information to homeowners on how to ensure septic systems are functioning correctly and potential treatment systems that can be employed to remove additional nitrogen

Nitrogen from Agriculture

- Limit how much nitrogen is applied to crops
- Limit where nitrogen is applied
- Limit when nitrogen is applied (IE no fall applications of nitrogen)
- Change the crops that are grown to less nitrogen intense crops
- Change the recommended nitrogen application rates or create specialized application rates for Portage County
- Work with willing producers to identify nitrogen saving strategies (best management practices) that are specifically tailored to their farm and needs
- Encourage the use of best management practices across the entire County
- Reward farmers who utilize best management practices
- Purchase acreages to be taken out of agricultural production



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GCAC Potential Meeting Months and Topics

February – Potential Resolution and Nitrate Recommendations for LWCC

March – ARPA Funding Proposal

April – No meeting

May – County-Wide Water Quality Sampling Project

June – No Meeting

July – Potential Solar Project, ARPA Updates

August – No Meeting

September – Results of County Wide-Water Quality Sampling Project

October – No Meeting

November – CSGCC Final Project Presentation and Begin Discussions on GW Management Plan Update

December – No Meeting