

Press release: For Immediate Release.

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## **We care about the Eau Claire River Watershed**

We can all do a little something to reduce the impacts of sediment and phosphorus and encourage quality habitat in the Eau Claire River Watershed. A room full of citizen volunteers, local officials, and agency personnel brought their best ideas to a meeting of the Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition held on Thursday, April 9 at the Unity Bank Community Room in Augusta.

The Coalition is just getting started on the creation of an action plan for the Eau Claire River Watershed. It is an open group that welcomes anyone who is willing to work on strategies to better care for and manage the health of our watershed resources. As a shoreland owner on Otter Creek, Ryan Chrouser felt the evening valuable because the natural resources throughout the larger Eau Claire River system “have tremendous habitat and recreational value for my community.” Fred Poss, President of the Lake Eau Claire Association, also commented that “we all have a lot of reasons why we are here and it will be important to frame those in an engaging way as we move forward to our future meetings”.

Public input and community-member dialogue is driving the development of this action plan for the Eau Claire River Watershed. As Kelly Jacobs, Eau Claire County Land Conservation Supervisor, shared at the beginning of Thursday’s meeting, “everyone has valuable insight that they can and should contribute.”

During the meeting, participants prioritized a variety of focus areas and topics, such as the need for water quality strategies for smaller streams and the importance of citizen collaboration to ensure that everyone can continue to enjoy our good, clean water. Participants from the agriculture sector emphasized that good soil health not only benefits the farmer, but is good for the entire watershed.

Coalition members also identified topics and potential presenters for the upcoming Community Discussion Meetings tentatively slated for May. Coalition participant and landowner Bruce Ommen wants to ensure that attendees at the May meetings are engaged from the start “so that we don’t stifle any of the unique thoughts and ideas that people have when they’re coming in the door. We want to make sure everyone has a chance to share those ideas as part of this process.” The Coalition hopes you can join us in May and share why the lakes, rivers, and streams of our watershed are important to you.

The Eau Claire River system flows through Taylor, Clark, Chippewa, Jackson, and Eau Claire Counties and ultimately joins the Chippewa River near Phoenix Park in downtown Eau Claire. The Eau Claire County Land Conservation Division was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in January 2015. Chris Straight, Planner with the West Central Regional Planning Commission, is facilitating the development of a plan that will address the “9 key elements” for watershed-based plans under the EPA Nonpoint Source (Section 319) Program.

If you would like to be notified of future Coalition events and be added to the project email list, please contact Chris Straight, Senior Planner with the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, at 715-836-2918 or [chris@wcvrpc.org](mailto:chris@wcvrpc.org).



Figure 1: Citizen volunteers, local officials, and agency staff come together to discuss priorities for the Eau Claire River Watershed on April 9, 2015 in Augusta.



Figure 2: Chris Straight of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission facilitates the Coalition discussion of Eau Claire River Watershed issues and opportunities.