

**SUMMARY NOTES OF THE AUGUST 18, 2025 MEETING FOR THE  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY PLAN UPDATE PROSPECTUS**

**INTRODUCTION**

The August 18, 2025 meeting of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC or Commission) staff to discuss the Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update Prospectus effort was convened online at 10:30 a.m. The meeting was called to order by SEWRPC Chief Environmental Engineer, Laura K. Herrick. Attendance was taken at the beginning of the meeting via introductions.

**WDNR and Commision Staff Present**

Laura K. Herrick.....	Chief Environmental Engineer, SEWRPC
Joel E. Dietl.....	Chief Land Use Planner, SEWRPC
Thomas M. Slawski.....	Chief Biologist, SEWRPC
Aaron W. Owens.....	Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Emily E. Porter.....	Planner, SEWRPC
Tim Asplund.....	Monitoring Section Manager, WDNR
Craig Helker.....	Water Resources Biologist, WDNR
Tim Ryan.....	Wastewater Field Operations Director, WDNR
Rachel Sabre.....	Water Resources Biologist, WDNR
Brett Schmidt.....	Wastewater Engineer, WDNR
Michelle Scott.....	Watershed Supervisor, WDNR
Michael Thompson.....	Secretary's Director, WDNR
Helena Tiedmann.....	Water Quality Planning Coordinator, WDNR
Nate Willis.....	Wastewater Section Manager, WDNR

Following Commission and WDNR staff introductions, Ms. Herrick introduced the agenda for the meeting to discuss the development of a Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update Prospectus.

[Secretary's Note: The agenda for this meeting is attached herein as Exhibit A.]

**RWQMP BACKGROUND AND PROSPECTUS SCOPE**

Ms. Herrick opened the meeting by sharing PowerPoint slides that outlined the purpose and scope of a Prospectus for a Regional Water Quality Management Plan (RWQMP) update. Ms. Herrick stated that the goal of the Prospectus document is to identify a workplan for a RWQMP update to support the goal of fishable and swimmable waters for the entire seven county Region. She noted that more details about the document's scope can be found in the reference materials shared with the meeting's agenda.

Mr. Asplund asked Ms. Herrick to provide more details about the history of the RWQMP and for additional context as to why an update is necessary. Ms. Herrick responded by referencing a slide with a list of previously published Planning and Technical Reports produced by the Commission. Ms. Herrick explained that the last RWQMP that included the entire seven-county Region was completed in 1979 (SEWRPC Planning Report No. 30, *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan for Southeastern*

*Wisconsin*) and that the most recent 2007 plan (SEWRPC Planning Report No. 50, *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds*) updated plans for the Kinnickinnic River, Oak Creek, Menomonee River, Milwaukee River, and Root River watersheds, as well as the area within the Region that drains directly to Lake Michigan. Mr. Slawski added that PR-50 was amended in 2013, but the amendment only focused on revisions to models and not to the plan itself.

## **PROSPECTUS SCOPE DISCUSSION**

Ms. Herrick introduced the series of agenda questions pertaining to potential scope items of a RWQMP update to be included in the Prospectus.

### Wastewater Treatment Plants

Ms. Herrick explained that wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) were a significant focus of the original RWQMP and that PR-30 proposed that the Region combine or abandon several WWTPs. She asked the group if a RWQMP update should review the current processes, discharges, and needs of public wastewater treatment plants. She expressed that one objective of the Prospectus effort could be to investigate WWTP regionalization again, citing the Cedarburg WWTP and MMSD as an example. Mr. Ryan recommended conducting a review of private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) and of possible WWTPs of concern in northern counties or smaller facilities. Mr. Schmidt added that an analysis of all current WWTP facilities may be valuable from a broader overview perspective. Mr. Asplund mentioned that TMDLs and compliance schedules could be used to help prioritize these efforts.

Mr. Dietl noted that consistency between sanitary sewer service area (SSSA) plans and WWTP facility plans, EPA nine key element (9KE) plans, and Land and Water Resource Management plans could be improved. He suggested that the next RWQMP update formally incorporate water quality management guidelines, environmental corridors, steep slope calculations, etc. Mr. Slawski mentioned that only some WWTPs are using current TMDLs and an adaptive management approach and that communities don't fully understand reduction and loading goals. He expressed that an update to the RWQMP could include more web-based components and mapping tools to help these communities better understand and have access to Regional water quality information without having to read a lengthy report. This would also make RWQMP components easier to update as reduction goals, corridors, etc. change over time. Mr. Asplund agreed, stating that he thinks that the Commission can play a crucial role as an information distributor and "in the spirit of NR121" help get all involved parties on the same page when it comes to water quality. He sees the Commission as the coordinating entity in this process.

Meeting attendees offered no further discussion on the topic of WWTPs and SSSA reviews to be included in the Prospectus.

### Water Quality Questions

Ms. Herrick asked meeting attendees which water quality constituents they believe should be included in a RWQMP update. She expressed that she is hesitant to include additional fieldwork or water quality modeling in the update effort. She also mentioned that, in the Prospectus scope, Commission staff identified sediment and phosphorus, biological indicators, and emerging contaminants as possible water quality constituents to include. Ms. Herrick asked if anyone knew if any WWTPs in the Region have used biological indicators to prove compliance. Mr. Helker noted that he did not know of many WWTPs that have taken that approach in this region. In response to Ms. Herrick's question about water quality

constituents, Mr. Asplund mentioned that there is a need for a general inventory of existing water quality data in order to identify knowledge gaps.

Ms. Scott provided some context from the agricultural perspective, and noted that, while the WDNR recently completed a nitrogen monitoring training, phosphorus is still the priority nutrient for water quality for the State. Mr. Asplund stated that nitrogen has also only recently been examined in relation to WWTPs and that not much data exists for the southeastern Wisconsin region. Mr. Slawski asked WDNR staff if they are currently monitoring for neonicotinoids and PFAS. Mr. Asplund answered that the WDNR is not currently doing systematic routine monitoring for emerging contaminants but does do targeted monitoring. There is currently PFAS data for targeted WWTP locations. He agreed that neonicotinoids could be a gap in data for the RWQMP update to explore further. He also said that biological indicators have primarily been used to identify successes rather than impairments in the past and therefore might be a valuable tool for monitoring future successes of a RWQMP update. Building off of his biological indicator comment, Mr. Helker added that he believes that it would be helpful for a plan to include the use of improved LiDAR technology and data to help identify potential road crossing fish passage issues. Ms. Scott indicated that chloride is also a priority for the WDNR and Ms. Herrick informed the WDNR staff that a preliminary draft of portions of SEWRPC's most recent Chloride report (Technical Report No. 63, *Chloride Conditions and Trends in Southeastern Wisconsin*) is now available for review.

Mr. Slawski mentioned that it would be beneficial to improve data sharing between WDNR and the Commission to better understand what information gaps may exist. Both Commission and WDNR staff agreed that some current data—such as calculated IBIs, fish inventories, and other biological data—may not be available in SWIMS and other databases. Mr. Thompson explained that there have been recent updates to WDNR informational technology systems and offered to connect the appropriate WDNR IT staff with the Commission.

Meeting attendees offered no additional comments about water quality constituents to be considered in the Prospectus.

#### Other Water Quality Considerations

Ms. Herrick asked meeting attendees if a RWQMP update should include a greater focus on non-point sources, inland lakes, and groundwater quality. She followed up by asking if an inventory of stormwater sewer systems should be considered. Ms. Scott recommended that Pete Wood, WDNR Water Resources Engineer, be included in future conversations involving stormwater. She also noted, as a separate point, that the WDNR is currently receiving numerous complaints about hobby horse farms in the Region. She explained that these hobby farms do not have manure or nutrient management plans and contribute to non-point sources of pollution from the agricultural perspective. Ms. Herrick also identified climate considerations as a priority of a RWQMP update, specifically citing temperature and precipitation. Mr. Asplund agreed that climate considerations should be prioritized and suggested that a focus be placed on “responding to and planning for extreme events.”

Mr. Asplund commented that wetland-related inventory work was largely missing from the discussion and that a wetland inventory should be considered in a RWQMP update. He emphasized the value of wetland restoration and protection when it comes to flooding and water quality issues. Mr. Dietl also expressed that he was considering a wetland component of the RWQMP update, specifically considering the value

of breaking drain tiles in lieu of the currently recommended environmental corridor mitigation ratio of 1.5:1 to restore historic wetlands, and to consider the role of artificial wetlands.

In relation to Ms. Herrick's question regarding a groundwater component to a RWQMP update, she mentioned that there may be value in recommending that community SSSAs match their water supply areas. This recommendation would be either wells and septic systems or water and wastewater service to protect groundwater supplies. The WDNR staff recommended Jesse Jensen, WDNR Drinking Water & Groundwater Southeast Region Field Supervisor, be brought into this water supply discussion.

Ms. Herrick asked how TMDLs could aid in prioritization during a RWQMP update. Mr. Asplund mentioned that TMDLs where available and approved are currently used for permitting purposes and that there are calculated TMDLs for the Rock, Milwaukee, and soon-to-be Fox River watersheds in the Region. He mentioned that monitoring gaps still exist but TMDLs can help set reduction goals for non-point and point source pollution sources alike. They also provide compliance alternatives for WWTPs, which is a tool that the WDNR is trying to incentivize. Mr. Asplund recommended reaching out to Mark Riedel, WDNR Water Resources Management Specialist, for additional insight on TMDL implementation. Ms. Tiedmann mentioned that integrating SSSA and TMDL plans is a planning program, and work is in early stages to do this for some SSSA plans in other parts of the state. Mr. Asplund added that the WDNR has TMDL calculations on a basin-scale, but that implementation happens at the smaller scale, including in 9KE plans. He recommended that the Commission's role be to connect those dots between state level HUC TMDLs and 9KE plan implementation. Meeting attendees offered no further comments about additional water quality considerations.

#### **NEXT STEPS FOR THE PROSPECTUS**

Ms. Herrick noted that Commission staff would like to involve the public by holding future meetings in each of the Region's counties during the actual RWQMP update process and through sharing the Prospectus documents on the SEWRPC website and encouraging public comment. Mr. Asplund recommended that Commission staff think about communities on the watershed scale rather than exclusively on the county scale when involving the public. There are several watershed groups and associations in the Region that may have existing forums and outreach opportunities in place. In addition, Commission staff will form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the RWQMP update Prospectus effort. A subset of WDNR staff will serve on the TAC and Mr. Asplund will inform Ms. Herrick of which WDNR staff will serve on the committee by September 12, 2025.

The meeting concluded with a brief schedule and funding discussion. Ms. Herrick noted that the schedule for the Prospectus effort was compressed from 2 years to 1.5 years with no change in scope. Completing the meetings and the prospectus document in this timeframe will be challenging. Ms. Herrick also identified a few possible sources of funding in the Region but noted that finding funding for the RWQMP update will be a challenge. Commission staff plan to pursue funding through local Counties, the WDNR, grants, and other sources.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 11:54 a.m.

## **ATTACHMENT**

Exhibit A - Meeting Agenda (00277826)

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300-5100

EEP/LKH/AWO

08/19/25, 08/28/25, 09/02/25, 09/25/25

DRAFT

***A PROSPECTUS FOR THE REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE  
KICKOFF MEETING BETWEEN WDNR AND SEWRPC STAFF***

DATE: Monday, August 18, 2025

TIME: 10:30 am to 12:00 pm

**Microsoft Teams**

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

Meeting ID: 283 868 953 711 9

Passcode: yf3Ms7g7

**AGENDA:**

1. Introductions
2. Brief Review of Project Scope
3. Brainstorm Water Quality Priorities (NR 121 as a guide)
  - a. To what degree should the RWQMPPU review the current processes, discharges and needs of public wastewater treatment plants? Should a greater focus be on POWTS?
  - b. Which surface water quality constituents should the RWQMP update focus on?
    - i. Sediment and nutrients
    - ii. Biological indicators of water quality (HBI, IBI, freshwater mussels, etc.)
    - iii. Emerging contaminants
    - iv. Need for additional fieldwork
  - c. Should a plan update include a greater focus on
    - i. nonpoint sources (stormwater, agriculture)
    - ii. inland lake water quality
    - iii. groundwater quality
    - iv. future climate conditions
  - d. How should TMDLs be incorporated?
  - e. How should the public be involved in the RWQMP update process?
4. Next Steps
  - a. Technical Advisory Committee formation and kickoff meeting
5. Adjourn