



## Kewaunee County Groundwater Task Force Agenda Regular Monthly Meeting

May 7, 2015 1:00 PM

Kewaunee County Administration Building  
810 Lincoln Street - Kewaunee, WI 54216 Large Conference Room

- 1) Call To Order – Chairman Luft
- 2) Roll Call – Secretary Bonness
- 3) Approval/Repair of Agenda
- 4) Discuss recent ground and surface water related events or issues.
  - A) Review of Published Well Testing Information and assistance.
  - B) Passage of the Public Safety and Groundwater Protection Ordinance - Lee
  - C) Copy of Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association Resolution asking for implementation of a State-Wide Task Force to Research and Implement On-Farm Liquid Manure Management Systems.
  - D) Davina Bonness, Ron Heuer, Tom Kleiman, Lee Luft recap as appropriate the recent Door-Kewaunee Legislative Days (See handouts)
  - E) Ron Heuer, John Pagel, Lee Luft recap recent meeting of DNR and EPA here in Kewaunee County. Next steps. (See handouts)
  - F) Information on the November 2014 Petition to EPA for Kewaunee County with Township well contamination information. (See handouts)
- 5) Discuss mission statement for the Task Force
  - A) Lee to review current suggestions
  - B) Other suggestions from Task Force members
  - C) Vote to approve Mission Statement
- 6) Discuss expected outcome of Task Force work
  - A) See short list of possible Task Force goals
  - B) Add goals
  - C) Prepare to discuss and potentially vote on goals at next Task Force meeting
- 7) Public Comments (3 minutes per person – 20 minutes total)
- 8) Other matters to discuss
- 9) Set next meeting date
- 10) Adjournment

# Kewaunee County's Groundwater Task Force

## Mission Statement

For Discussion on May 7, 2015

**Please note:** In attempting to formulate our mission statement, it would not be difficult to duplicate some portions of the mission just approved by the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Committee. That mission statement is as follows:

*The mission of the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Committee is to provide leadership in the conservation of our ground and surface water, soil and natural resources through the communication, education, and implementation of sound practices and policies.*

**With the above information in mind, here are some suggested Kewaunee County Groundwater Task Force Mission Statements (please remember these are suggestions only and your ideas are encouraged!):**

1. The Kewaunee County Groundwater Task Force recognizes that clean groundwater is vital to the health and general welfare of the citizens of Kewaunee County and is committed to researching and recommending water quality solutions through on-going communication with the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Committee, the Kewaunee County Board and the general public.
2. The mission of the Kewaunee County Groundwater Task Force is to seek accurate information regarding the County's water quality concerns, to understand the resources available to deal with the existing impacts of unsafe water, and to provide practical recommendations aimed at improving water quality to the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Committee, the County Board and the community at large.
3. The Kewaunee County Groundwater Task Force is dedicated to the on-going improvement of our County's groundwater through a solid understanding of the causes of unsafe water, identifying the local, state and federal resources available to address these causes and the timely education and communication of our groundwater status to our Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Committee, the full Kewaunee County Board and the general public.
4. The Task Force's Mission is to provide leadership in protecting Kewaunee County's groundwater resource through communication and education; and to support local implementation of select Karst Task Force recommendations to improve groundwater quality.

## Notes from April 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting between Lee Luft and Russ Rasmussen – Wisconsin DNR Water Division Administrator

Lee Luft requested a meeting with Russ Rasmussen to discuss a non-public meeting entitled “**Kewaunee County Groundwater Meeting**” held on March 31, 2015 at Pagel’s Ponderosa farm in Kewaunee County. This meeting included the following attendees as named on the attached agenda:

- Russ Rasmussen – DNR Water Division Administrator
- Andrew Craig – DNR Nutrient Management Specialist
- Amy Callis – DNR Agricultural Specialist
- John Pagel – Kewaunee Farmer, Kewaunee County Board Member, Chair of KCLWCC
- Ron Heuer – Kewaunee County Board Chair
- Laurie Fisher – Dairy Business Association
- Tom Davenport – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Also in attendance were other Kewaunee County Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) owners who are not named on the agenda but acknowledged to be in attendance by Russ Rasmussen.

Luft requested the meeting with Russ Rasmussen to clarify why a meeting regarding what most Kewaunee Board members believe is our number-one issue, would be held without public notice and why such a meeting would not have included (at a minimum) members of Kewaunee County’s Land and Water Conservation Department. Luft felt this was a high-level meeting with a DNR Division Administrator (among other DNR staff) and should have been attended by those in Kewaunee County who we as citizens pay to address our ground and surface water concerns.

Russ Rasmussen agreed to meet with Luft on Thursday April 16<sup>th</sup> at his offices in Madison at 11:30 AM. Luft arrived early and Russ Rasmussen graciously agreed to see him right away. The meeting lasted approximately 45 minutes and included a frank discussion of Luft’s concerns about this specific meeting as well as the overall issues of ground and surface water contamination in Kewaunee County.

Here are some of the following discussion points:

1. In response to Luft’s questions about the unpublished meeting of March 31<sup>st</sup>, Rasmussen said he felt it was appropriate to have a meeting with just the CAFO owner/operators of Kewaunee County so that a very candid discussion could take place without concern for interaction from groups who have been publically opposed to some of the land use practices of local CAFOs. Luft said he could understand some of this concern but Luft commented that he remained uneasy that members of the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Department or other members of the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Committee (some of whom are farmers or rent to other farmers) were not invited while a major farm lobbying group (the DBA) was present.

2. Russ Rasmussen then indicated that the purpose of the meeting was, as stated in the agenda, to discuss the current state of ground and surface water issues, how the area got to the point it is now and some possible solutions. As part of this discussion, some of the issues raised by the recent (November, 2014) petition to the U.S. EPA to use its emergency powers under the Safe Drinking Water Act to assist with the groundwater contamination in Kewaunee County were reviewed. Russ Rasmussen said he felt it was imperative that the DNR, local farmers, the petitioners to the EPA, and other residents who share concerns about ground and surface waters in NE Wisconsin work together. He felt it would be best if all the concerned parties could formulate solutions for our area's water contamination issues in collaboration with the EPA. Russ Rasmussen indicated that the EPA's involvement in a similar situation in Washington State's Yakima Valley had been very expensive and the results to date had not been particularly effective. A substantial number of law suits were still underway in the Yakima Valley and Russ Rasmussen felt NE Wisconsin might avoid this on-going litigation if we could work together on mutually agreed upon solutions. Luft indicated he was aware of the situation in Yakima Valley and that there had been a number of prosecutions of local farmers for water contamination, some involving fines and incarceration. Rasmussen also said that this meeting was, in part, a follow up to an initial meeting on February 4<sup>th</sup> that had included the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Committee, the Door County Land and Water Conservation Committee, the U.S. EPA, the Wisconsin DNR, DATCP (Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Kewaunee County CAFO representatives.
3. Rasmussen also felt that in this meeting it was important for the Wisconsin DNR to gain CAFO owner support for some of the actions that will be required to slow and then reverse the water contamination issues. He also felt it imperative to dispel a potential rumor that the DNR wishes to eliminate CAFOs. In addition, Rasmussen felt it would be very important that other non-CAFO farms be a part of any proposed solution(s). Some non-CAFO farms are very near CAFO size (700 animal units or more) and that they too must become part of the effort to repair the water concerns in Kewaunee County.
4. Russ Rasmussen felt other entities will need to be involved in a viable solution and that these entities would include, hydrologists, agronomists, drinking water specialists. In addition, solid communications between all parties and all citizens will be critical.
5. Russ Rasmussen said the goal of this Kewaunee County group would be preventing ground water contamination. It was acknowledged that there are treatments for contaminated groundwater but that it is far better to avoid the contamination in the first place.
6. Russ Rasmussen indicated that there would be follow-up to this meeting that would include:
  - A. A subsequent meeting with the petitioners to the EPA and the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Department.

- B. A series of short-term solutions to stem the water contamination of both ground and surface waters.
  - C. Longer-term solutions to reverse the current levels of ground and surface water contamination. This could include such advances as computer controlled application of manure based upon GPS information provided directly to the tractors used to apply and integrate liquid manure. This information would be customized for every field used for spreading and that it would consider sensitive geological areas (such as sinkholes) and shallow soils. Russ Rasmussen commented that on-site treatment of liquid manure at various CAFOs, while an option that should be pursued, was “years away” from having a significant impact on the volumes of waste generated on CAFOs in Kewaunee County. With that in mind, it would be better to focus attention of the amounts and the methods of applying manure to the shallow soils and Karst bedrock of NE Wisconsin.
7. Finally, the discussion between Luft and Russ Rasmussen touched on spray irrigation of liquid manure and the significant opposition to this practice, especially in NE Wisconsin (Door and Kewaunee County). Russ Rasmussen said he was aware that a number of Door and Kewaunee County Townships had already banned the practice of spray irrigation. Luft said that he felt these Townships were taking early action on this practice because they are doubtful there will be the kind of monitoring and enforcement of spray irrigation that would maintain its safety for those near to farming operations that choose to use center pivot sprayers or traveling guns to apply liquid manure. Luft said that the DNR had, in the past, assured the residents in NE Wisconsin that strict regulation of permitted farms (through permitting and Nutrient Management Plans) would prevent ground and surface water contamination. The reality is that these regulations, while well intentioned, had failed to prevent contamination of our beaches, the bay of Green Bay and our groundwater supplies. Consequently, some residents are concerned that the highly touted regulations for spray irrigation will provide the protections necessary for citizen health and safety.
8. The meeting between Lee Luft and Russ Rasmussen ended at approximately 12:00 Noon. Russ Rasmussen indicated that he would invite Luft to the follow-up meeting with the petitioners. Luft thanked Russ Rasmussen for his generous commitment of time and for his involvement in this issue. Luft indicated he would work with others in the community to communicate progress on the water issues and proposed solutions. Luft closed by saying the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Department had just established its goals for 2015 and that the newly formed Kewaunee County Groundwater Task Force would be working on its goals over the next few months.