



Walla Walla County
VSP Work Group
June 2nd, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Date: June 3, 2025 Time: 4:00 p.m. Via: Zoom and in person

Work Group Members Present:

Dana Sheedy, CTUIR

Judith Johnson, Kooskooskie Commons

David Talkington, TSS

Lindsey Williams, WWCC

Phil Neumann, Mainstem Malt

Absent:

Ryan Rea, Ag. Community,

Brian Burns, TSS,

Tom Schirm, WDFW ex-officio,

Jackie McCool, WDFW

Randy Bright, Ag. Community

Also present: Grace Cooper, Jenny Freer, Renee Hadley of WWCCD. Lauren Prentice, Walla Walla Community Development, zoom.

The meeting began with welcome and introductions.

New or interested work group members: None at this time.

Meeting paused at this time for a request of public comments. There were none.

Approval of meeting minutes: After review, **Williams motioned and Johnson seconded to approve the March 2025 minutes as presented; motion passed.**

VSP Recap: A recap of how VSP was established as an alternative for urban growth area agricultural activities. This is a voluntary program, not a regulatory program. A limited budget requires landowner involvement with technical help from staff.

Project Approvals:

- **Request to approve applying for maintenance funds for Riparian Projects.**
Two projects were completed in the 23-25 biennium utilizing VSP funds, Lower Waitsburg Rd and Mojonnier Rd. A request is being made to apply for funds to keep up on maintenance.
Neuman motioned and Williams seconded to approve applying for maintenance funding for Lower Waitsburg Rd and Mojonnier Rd projects as presented; motion passed.
- **Request to approve applying for funds for Screen and Meter replacements:**
There is a request to apply for funds for one meter on Yellowhawk.
Williams motioned and Johnson seconded to approve applying for funds for one meter on Yellowhawk as presented; motion passed.
There is another request to apply for funds to replace four meters and two fish screens on Dry Creek.
Williams motioned and Neuman seconded to approve applying for four meters and two fish screens on Dry Creek as presented; motion passed.

VSP project updates: Cooper updated the work group on projects:

- Mojonner Rd Riparian – This project is completed
- Lower Waitsburg Rd Riparian – This project is completed
- Lewis Peak Rd- This project is completed, and was a learning experience using the Dew Drop Drill which is available for producers to rent.

Program Updates:

Monitoring efforts: WSDA well testing is a two-year process and year one is complete. A preliminary report should be shared soon with the district. Fish passage barrier assessments efforts; in 2025 we reached out to forty-eight landowners, eleven of those did not respond. Staff had enough landowner response to assess 11 sites, but 3 of those sites were not feasible for assessment. In total (2024-2025) WWCCD staff assessed 21 “unknown” barriers. WDFW confirmed that 5 were barriers, 2 were non-barriers, and 14 will require an additional level B assessment. This data can be viewed on the WDFW Fish Passage Map.

Using the WSDA Ag Land Use Data that was published late April, Cooper has completed the Irrigation Efficiency analysis to assess irrigation use in GHA: Liquefaction Zones and Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas. Overall, Walla Walla County producers seem to be transitioning to more efficient irrigation systems, especially in Liquefaction zones. In May, Cooper and Hadley presented Walla Walla County VSP challenges for monitoring and reporting in the VSP Joint Statewide Advisory Committee and Technical Panel meeting held in Tri-Cities. To view this meeting the recording is posted on the VSP website hosted by the State Conservation Commission.

Walla Walla County VSP has two upcoming reports; the two-year status report is due August 30th and the five-year (referred to as the 10-Year) status report is due in March 2026. The five-year report will be done on a new reporting template, and trainings for submission are ongoing and look promising. Cooper noted the importance for preparing for the five-year, as this report will result in a pass or fail and will determine if VSP continues in Walla Walla County. The monitoring report was submitted in August of 2024 and we are still waiting on feedback. June 30th is a one-on-one meeting with the SCC about adaptive management, which will address recent approvals for adaptive management made by the Walla Walla County VSP Work Group.

Partner Updates:

R. Hadley, WWCCD: shared that the district had 3 million dollars go out and 3 million come back in mainly through instream projects (4) and pivots (7). Hadley also shared that the Department of Ecology is shifting on how they are looking at in fields drainage ways, especially in regards to 30–50-foot buffers.

P. Neuman, Mainstem Malt: After dealing with changes in the funding from the federal government, the project funds have been unfrozen and new equipment has been purchased. The design and architecture is taking shape. Goal is to be operational in the first half of 2027.

D. Talkington, TSS: The department is working through some permit issues and the fish passage project downstream of Gose Street will be done next year. A reading on fish showed that 16 spring Chinook made it past the dam. The low flow channel is at 80% design.

D. Sheedy, CTUIR: shared that there is a new grant for irrigation efficiency. In Umatilla, they are working on small dam removal and a pipeline that would run through the reservation to Hermiston.

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J. Johnson, Kooskooski Commons: has a project on Yellowhawk and the district is also helping.

L. Williams, WWCC: shared that 86 acres next to the campus will be used for Ag programs; cattle, weed control, pump replacement, and irrigation pumps. There do seem to be some beavers up Titus Creek.

L. Prentice, WWCD: A growth management update is being worked on. In June they will be doing a public outreach; with a public hearing with a schedule to complete by June 30, 2026.

2025 Meeting Dates:

- October 7th at 1 pm
- December 2nd at 1 pm

The meeting was unofficially adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Freer

Work Group Member

WWCCD

Next meeting: October 7th 2025 at 1 pm