



# Walla Walla County VSP

## Oct. Work Group Meeting

Date: Oct. 4, 2016      Time: 1:00 p.m.      Place: Conservation District  
Conference Room

**Board Members Present:**

Robert Riley, Ag. Community	Jason Bulay, Blue Mtn. Land Trust
David Haire, CTUIR	Mark Klicker, Ag. Community
Brian Burns, Tri-State Steelheaders	Judith Johnson, Kooskooskie Commons
Jonathan Hellburg-Wilson, Ag. Community	

**Absent:** Tom Schirm, WDFW; Chris Marks, CTUIR (alternate), Brian Maiden, Ag. Community

**Representatives of Other Agencies:** Zach Meyer, Ecology; Bill Eller, Washington Conservation Commission via phone

**Also present:**

Joanna Cowles, Lisa Stearns, Audrey Ahmann, Renee Hadley, WWCCD:  
Kevin Scribner, Brian Mahoney, Brandi Pettit, Anderson-Perry

***The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chairman Mark Klicker***

**Minutes:** The minutes were reviewed by those present. Jonathan Hellburg-Wilson moved and David Haire seconded to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.

1. Renee Hadley presented two reports generated by the Farm Service Agency. Using statistics based on FSA program participant information, a state summary listed the top commodities produced in the state (of FSA program participants), # of farms in the state, and other data, along with a similar sheet for Walla Walla County. The state report showed the fall in wheat prices since 2014 - 15 and a projection for continued low prices for 2016-2017.
2. Renee Hadley opened discussion of agriculture viability using her family farms as an example, and was followed by the ag. producers of the Work Group. Access to water, including the drop in the aquifer, was the primary concern along with the following:
  - Maintaining soil fertility
  - Erosion: water and wind (soils are light)
  - Low wheat prices
  - Succession planning
  - Urban encroachment
  - Deeply incised, sometimes channelized creeks with no storage capacity
  - Lack of water, especially in summer
  - Herbicide resistance developing in areas of chem. fallow

- Government programs can be restrictive, sometime inhibiting and are not always applicable to farmer operations (e.g. drought relief program for cattleman disqualified irrigated pastures, even though drought curtailed irrigation)
- Washington state regulations that limit aquifer recharge
- Maintenance of fencing on cattle operations (rocky areas hard to fence, fences can be a hazard to range cattle and wildlife)
- Control of weeds in riparian areas when cattle are excluded
- Patchwork of production ag. and urban areas
- CRP not a panacea: weeds

The group also discussed the benefits seen with the wide-spread adoption of low-disturbance tillage resulting in increased water retention, markedly less sedimentation in drainages and waterways, and that CRP and CREP benefited the ag. community and other stakeholders.

**3. Discussion: Ag. Viability** After discussion, the group decided to delay defining Ag. viability until the November meeting.

**4. Discussion: Anderson Perry progress**

- a. Scribner began with an explanation of the protection goals of VSP. The work plan needs to have *protection and enhancement* goals. Both are needed but only protection is required. Enhancement is not required unless funds are available.<sup>1</sup>
- b. Practices and Planning Matrix. Scribner explained the matrix (developed in Grant County) which shows the NRCS practices that have been applied since 2011 by participants in the NRCS/FSA farm programs offered. This list can be expanded to include other practices. The matrix shows the practices available, type of operation implementing the practices, the number of acres, and the critical areas each practice protects or improves. (Note: For example, the matrix shows that 345, mulch till, is a practice that could be applied to irrigated or dryland cropland to protect/enhance 4 critical areas within the cropland [wetlands, frequently flooded areas, hazardous areas, fish/wildlife habitat] and that mulch till typically would not be applied to rangeland or orchards.)
- c. Map of Critical Areas: Hadley and Stearns developed a county map with areas outlined by type of critical area most prevalent in that area. For example, the center north area is identified most often with high potential wind erosion and is marked in blue. This map will be used to target outreach and set benchmarks.
- d. Scribner attended the August state meeting where, among other things, producers were categorized as those who actively work to protect critical areas, those who are willing to do so under the right circumstances, and those who will not participate in any programs. It is

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<sup>1</sup> Additional information: After 5 years, VSP will be evaluated in the counties, and if the benchmarks are met with the protection goals, then the plan is working and enhancement goals will be pursued. However, if the protection goals *are not met* then the Work Group needs to develop and submit an adaptive management plan to achieve protection of critical areas and further action must be taken to avoid reverting to the GMO. The same process occurs at the 10 year review. Although protection and enhancement are both goals of the program, protection is required to continue under VSP while enhancement is only required if funded.

assumed that those who actively participate in NRCS programs to protect critical areas and/or implement the same practices on their own will meet both the viability and protection goals of VSP by improving wetland and riparian function.

- e. Brian Mahoney hopes to have a rough outline of the work plan complete by the November meeting time. It will include the green flowchart which shows what we want to achieve and complements the matrix.
- 5. Approval of the Planning Matrix: The work group discussed the planning matrix. The matrix will not be limited to NRCS practices and the parcels are defined by the county as Ag. use (that is, not residential or industrial). After additional discussion, Jonathan Hellburg-Wilson moved and Robert Riley seconded to approve the Planning Matrix as a format and add it to the Work Plan. Motion passed.
- 6. Next meeting: At the next meeting, the Work Group expects to adopt a definition of Ag. viability, add information to the green flowchart, add information to the Planning Matrix, and possibly consider a draft outline of the work plan.

**With no further business on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted



Audrey Ahmann  
WWCCD



Mark Klicker  
Chairman

Next meeting: November 1, 1:00

