Walla Walla County VSP
Nov. Work Group Meeting

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

Board Members Present:

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

Representatives of Other Agencies: Kelly McLain, WA Dept. of Ag.; Bill Eller, Washington Conservation Commission

Also present:

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

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Vice-Chairman David Haire

Minutes: The minutes were reviewed by those present. Robert Riley moved and Brian Maiden seconded to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.

1. **Brainstorming Work Session directing Anderson-Perry and work plan development**
    a. An outline was included in the meeting packets. Section 3 was suggested as a focus for the meeting as determining benchmarks has been difficult for other groups. Anderson/Perry expects to draft section 5 which covers monitoring, reporting, adaptive management
    b. Program enrollment is not a good measure of success as not all critical areas protected/enhanced are enrolled in conservation programs
    c. Stream temp. may not be the best factor to monitor for success because of a lack of baseline data; we need to measure factors under the control of the landowner
    d. An evaluation tool called Total Habitat Value may be useful in evaluating parcels
    e. Benchmarks: some VSP groups are using 2011 information currently available as benchmarks which may be flawed as that information was not gathered for this purpose
    f. Overall ag. value per county is an inaccurate measurement of ag. viability because substantial drops in some crops (like wheat) can be skewed by other crops (grapes). Work plan could include community outreach about ag. issues. E.g., port strike was very detrimental to ag. producers but few in the general public were aware of this, even locally in a heavily ag dependent county
    g. Some VSP groups are using current information to set baselines instead of 2011 values
    h. Could work plan and VSP program offer financial or other incentives to ag. producers? Incentives included looking for sources of financial support, decreasing or streamlining permitting, modified SEPA process, celebrations of ag., etc.

i. It was suggested that the 5-year and 10-year review plan required by the work plan describe factors outside the control of producers for consideration by the state evaluation team when evaluating success in meeting benchmarks.
j. Jason Bulay gave an overview of the work of the Land Trust: this organization arranges for conservation easements meaning purchase of the development rights in the form of an easement that allow continued ag. use in perpetuity, protecting the ag. land base from development.
k. Development and zoning, especially the division of ag ground into parcels too small to farm efficiently, was discussed as a possible ag. viability issue.
l. Brian Mahoney, noting the discussion was important but somewhat tangential, urged the work group members to review the draft document and supply him with comments before the December meetings. Anderson Perry would like direction from the group even as they write and present draft documents.

2. **Discussion: Ag. Viability** Kelly McLain explained that the state task force plans to offer their definition of what constitutes ag. viability, so the work group tabled discussion for the time being.

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

Respectfully submitted

Audrey Ahmann
WWCCD

David Haire
Vice- Chairman

Next meeting: December 6, 1:00