



Walla Walla County VSP June Work Group Meeting Minutes

Date: June 6th, 2017

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: Conservation
District Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jason Bulay, Blue Mtn. Land Trust

Mark Klicker, Ag. Community

Brian Burns, Tri-State Steelheaders

Robert Riley, Ag. Community

Judith Johnsons, Kooskooskie Commons, via phone

Board Members Absent: Jonathan Hellburg-Wilson, Ag. Community, David Haire, CTUIR, Brian Maiden, Ag. Community

Also present:

Audrey Ahmann, Renee Hadley, of WWCCD

Kevin Scribner, Eleanor Schroeder, John Wells, of Anderson Perry

Tom Glover, WW County Planning

Todd Kimball, WW County Commissioner

Tom Schirm, WDFW

Laura Lose, graduate student

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

Minutes: The minutes were reviewed by those present. Tom Schirm noted that as an employee of WDFW, he is not eligible to be a voting member of the Work Group and the minutes were amended accordingly. Robert Riley moved and Brian Burns seconded to approve the minutes as amended, motion passed.

Designation of an entity to provide technical assistance: The RCW establishing VSP requires the workgroup to “(f) Designate the entity or entities that will provide technical assistance.” After explanation of the requirement, Jason Bulay moved and Robert Riley seconded to designate the Walla Walla County Conservation District as the entity to provide technical assistance in the implementation of the VSP Work Plan.

Updates:

- 1) WW Watershed Partnership** At the May meeting, Hadley was asked to contact the Partnership regarding watershed monitoring efforts. Hadley spoke to Chris Hyland, partnership director, who said the Partnership monitors individual projects, not on a watershed scale.
- 2) Open Space** Hadley spoke to Deb at the county about designating VSP participants' parcels as Open Space. This had been suggested as an incentive to participate. Deb explained the requirements and potential penalties that commonly affect parcels of less than 20 acres and also advised that Open Space would not be a good fit for these smaller parcels due to agriculture income requirements. Brian Burns proposed that perhaps the state should consider granting Open Space designation to include any land enrolled in conservation programs.

- 3) Regulatory Assurance** This was another possible incentive: getting Ecology to give VSP participants regulatory assurance.¹ Hadley explained that it took 6 years to negotiate Farmed Smart BMP's before Ecology agreed to grant regulatory assurance to participants. She reported that Evan Sheffel said the Farmed Smart program goes far beyond the "maintain at 2011 level" required by VSP. It was suggested that VSP participants be given tiers or levels. For example, a Farmed Smart participant could be designated a "Gold Standard" VSP participant.

Work Plan Review: Hadley said the state is reviewing Grant and Skagit. She reported the WW plan is 90% done and could be sent out for an informal public comment period. Hadley suggested that we wait until the Whitman plan is submitted for review. Due to the time commitment involved, the state panel will only review two per month, so the WW plan wouldn't be reviewed for several months at the earliest. Commissioner Kimball and County Planner Tom Glover led a discussion of state funding uncertainty and the possibility of sending the plan out for public comments in June while funds are available instead of waiting. While the state budget has not been passed, VSP is in the budgets of all three government branches. Comments were as follows:

- The 10% remaining is mostly fine touches to the monitoring section, minor proofreading edits, and adding public comment.
- If substantial changes are made, a second round of informal comments could be held.
- There has been little public response to the VSP program thus far.
- Tom Glover said he would see if a SEPA review of the document is required.
- VSP is in the state budgets but only funding through June is guaranteed.
- Hadley will send any updates to Work Group members.

The group directed Hadley to listen to the state review panel discussion of the Grant and Skagit plans, revise the plan if indicated, and then release on the 16th for public comment.

Hadley reviewed the 5.4 version of the Work Plan. The monitoring table shows broad goals and then, left to right, moves toward specific actions and how they will be monitored. On the Summary Table, some actions cannot be monitored. For example, it would not make sense to monitor "creating a wetland" until the wetland exists. A second table shows what we will monitor. Hadley estimates monitoring will require funding one full-time employee.

General Discussion

Tom Schirm had two comments on the current work plan. One was a spelling correction (page 2-2 section 2.1.2 soils). He advised adding that over the last two years, the CTUIR has done Spring and Fall Chinook outplants in the South Fork of the Walla Walla River, Mill Creek, North Touchet, and Wolf Fork. This would be in pages 4-12.

¹ In this context, regulatory assurance means the ag. producer is operating using approved best management practices, is considered in compliance with regulatory agencies, and can operate without fear that farming practices could lead to a regulatory action or fine.


Public Comments: There were no public comments.

With no further business on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



Audrey Ahmann
WWCCD



Mark Klicker
Chairman

Next meeting: July 11th 1:00