



Walla Walla County VSP Work Group
Sept.2019 Meeting Minutes

Date: September 10th, 2019 Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: Conservation
District Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Mark Klicker, Ag. Community (at 1:15)
Brian Burns, Tri-State Steelheaders
Jonathan Hellberg-Wilson, Ag. Community

David Haire, CTUIR
Brian Maiden, Ag. Community
Robert Riley, Ag. Community

Advisory: Tom Schirm, WDFW

Absent: Judith Johnson and Jason Bulay

Also present: Renee Hadley, Joanna Cowles Cleveland, Lisa Stearns, Audrey Ahmann of WWCCD

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

Minutes: The January 2019 minutes were presented and reviewed. Brian Maiden moved and Jonathan Hellberg-Wilson seconded to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.

- 1. Changes at WW County:** Tom Glover has moved on and his position filled by Lauren Prentice. Hadley reported meeting with Prentice and the Commissioners at their July meeting.
- 2. Reporting:** Hadley submitted the two-year report and will send a copy to all members. The 5-year report is due in 18 months. This report is meant to show through VSP, the county is meeting the benchmarks to protect critical areas. Quarterly reports have been submitted.
- 3. Outreach:** Staff have met with about 40 landowner/producers. Most received a GIS analysis and offers of technical assistance in developing practices to protect critical areas. Some received assistance in the SEPA process.
- 4. Implementation:** After meeting with staff, one landowner implemented some critical area protection practices on her own (i.e. without cost share). On the Walsh Creek project, concerns included invasive reed canary grass and pasture flooding due to an undersized culvert, which led to water quality concerns while limiting the landowner's access to the area. The project helped with replacing the culvert, removing reed canary grass, and planting trees and shrubs, plus some sedges and rushes. Once the trees shade the area, the reed canary grass should become more manageable. VSP work group members agreed that reed canary grass is really a problem and requires a lot of maintenance. VSP staff will continue to assist the landowner in dealing with it.
Hadley also reported that other projects could not be done in the time remaining. The raptor perch projects were eligible for WDFW support so staff assisted WDFW. VSP funds were not used as cost share for these projects.
- 5. SCC Policy Advisory #4-19: Defining Ag. Activities in VSP:** Hadley explained that the policy advisory from the Conservation Commission is related to what constitutes ag. activities and what/how these can be modified. The advisory states that current rules define ag. activities as "having the same definition of those under the shoreline management act" and then goes on to describe the process by which a work group might add additional ag. activities to the definition. It advises work groups to help add new ag. activities to the county critical area ordinance

(thereby making them subject to VSP) when appropriate and also discuss conversion from non-ag to agriculture use. Work group members mentioned that while it seems a change of use to go from poplar farms to irrigated crops, both are considered ag. activities.

New Projects for review:

Project 1: 12 acres conservation cover. Stearns described the project site as a 20-acre field with 2 CREP projects and 12 acres remaining. The owners could not find interested farmers to manage the 12 acres but didn't want it to become a weed patch which could impact adjacent ag. The plan is to establish native grasses and then interseed it with forbes and other plants species to improve stand diversity as a demonstration for other small acreages. Haire asked for more information as the CTUIR might be able to offer assistance on some of the restoration work needed near the riparian area. Discussion included acknowledging that noxious weed control is a benefit to everyone. It was moved by Jonathan Hellman-Wilson and seconded by David Haire to approve the project. In discussion, the motion was amended to set a cap of \$5,000 for the complete demonstration project. The final motion was as follows: **To approve \$5,000 of VSP fund cost share for the 12-acre Mill Creek conservation cover demonstration project, motion passed.**

Project 2: Native grass planting with conservation easement. Stearns described the project as a plan to interplant native grasses in between trees planted for lumber harvest and also on an unfarmed slope. She explained the project is in its preliminary stages, so cost estimates and the number of acres is still in discussion. She was submitting the project for consideration as the work group does not meet often and needs approval before the landowner agreement can be signed. Jonathan Hellman-Wilson moved to approve the project but there was no second. Mark Klicker suggested the VSP work group meet in December and will reconsider this project at that time.

Public Comments: There were no public comments.

Misc.: Hadley invited the Work Group members to attend the State Conservation Commission tour on September 18th which will feature the VSP project planted in June.

With no further business on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



Audrey Ahmann
WWCCD



Mark Klicker
Chairman

Next meeting (tentative): December 10, 2019