



Walla Walla County VSP Work Group February 2021 Meeting Minutes

Date: February 2nd, 2021 Time: 1:00 p.m. Via: Zoom, call-in only

Board Members Present:

Robert Riley, Ag. Community

Judith Johnson, Kooskooski Commons

Brian Burns, Tri-State Steelheaders

David Hair, CTUIR

Absent: Jonathan Hellberg-Wilson, Brian Maiden

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann of WWCCD; Donald Sims, WW County Planning

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

Minutes: The March 2020 minutes were presented and reviewed. Johnson moved and Haire seconded to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.

Action items/Discussion:

1. **Vacancies on the Work Group:** Hadley explained that with Mark Klicker's resignation and Jason Bulay moving from the area, we have two openings on the Work Group. Members will be recruited.
2. **Chair position:** Those present declined to assume the chair position. The work group will take this up when more members are present.
3. **Outreach:** Hadley reported that little outreach was possible under Covid restrictions, but it is hoped that in the coming year this will change.
4. **Implementation:**
 - a. Meters Installed: Several meters were installed using VSP cost share funds.
 - b. Willow whips: Landowners sought assistance in replanting flood damaged riparian areas, and district staff were able to cut and plant willow whips during the spring planting window.
 - c. Riparian plantings along Coppei Creek took place with the assistance of the Conservation Corps using VSP cost share funds.
 - d. In addition to these projects, staff identified instream restoration projects that are too costly for the limited VSP cost share funds. Staff have successfully applied for grants from other sources for these projects that will help the county meet VSP benchmarks.
5. **Reporting/Adaptive Management.:** The 5-Year plan is drafted. Hadley noted that the time frame is 5 years from when the county opted in to the VSP program, not 5 years from acceptance of the Work Plan. The report is submitted via an online portal. Hadley is to submit the Table 5 which lists the VSP Work Plans benchmarks and actions and then identify which goals, if any, were not met. One area of concern is the Shallow Aquifer Recharge, where maintaining meters and sustaining local water plans were identified as the metrics for attaining the goals. However, staff took a random sample of meter users and


found the majority of the meters were unusable due to mechanical failure of one type or another (batteries, water seal failure, etc) so the county does not meet that benchmark. The Partnership, which developed and maintained the local water plans, is closing which means local water plans will also be a poor metric to measure success. Johnson asked if we can report that we met goals with a caveat about meters and water plans? Hadley answered that we can report that we did not meet the goals and then explain it is only in this one area, and this will be accepted.

Adaptive Management. Hadley explained that in general, Table 5 should have adaptive management thresholds changed to an average, rather than a specific per year number. For example, instead of the threshold being 30 landowners contacted per year, it should be an average of 30 per year over a 5-year period, so as to allow for situations like last year when things beyond our control impact the numbers reached. Prior to the lockdowns, District-led mini-sessions with area producers, the annual meeting, and newsletter articles easily exceeded the 30 landowner threshold. To sum it up, the action proposed is to explain why the meter and water plan goals were not met, and change benchmarks to require "an average of" instead of a yearly number. Those present approved of the changes, but Johnson suggested the revisions be sent out and the report approved at the March 2nd meeting.

Public Comment: Brian Burns with the Tri-State Steelheaders spoke of the City of Walla Walla plans to replace the 4th Ave. bridge over Mill Creek. The bridge over 6th Ave will be replaced with a pedestrian access only. The bridge over 5th will not be replaced. Burns invited those present to comment via an on-line public comment page at the City of Walla Walla website. Hadley will share the link with Don Sims.

With no further business on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted



Audrey Ahmann
WWCCD

/S/: David H. Haire 3-3-2021

David Haire
Vice- Chairman

Next meeting: March 2nd, 2021 at 1:00