



## Walla Walla County VSP Work Group Dec. 2021 Meeting Minutes

Date: Dec. 7th, 2021 Time: 1:00 p.m. Via: Zoom, call-in only

### **Work Group Members Present:**

Robert Riley, Ag. Community  
Brian Burns, Tri-State Steelheaders  
David Haire, CTUIR  
Lindsey Williams, WWC Ag. and Nat. Center of Excellence

**Absent:** Brian Maiden, Ag. Community; Judith Johnson, Kooskooski Commons; Jonathan Hellberg-Wilson, Ag. Community

**Also present:** Grant Traynor, Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann of WWCDD; Brian Cochran, SCC, Morgan Morris, TSS

***The meeting began in absence of a quorum with Brian Burns joining at 1:20.***

**The meeting began with introductions.** Brian Cochran, State Conservation Commission explained that he is the Commission representative on the state review panel for VSP. SCC VSP staff are trying to attend meetings for each VSP work group to offer support and assistance.

Public Comment: There were no members of the general public in attendance.

### **Updates on VSP Activities:**

- 1. Outreach:** Traynor reported that of the six landowners who attended the Virtual VSP Outreach meeting in October, two have completed the on-line VSP landowner survey. Traynor developed the survey to balance landowner privacy with the need to demonstrate VSP progress. Other stakeholders were also in attendance at the meeting.
- 2. Monitoring:** Traynor showed a monitoring tool developed by WSU that shows land use and vegetative analysis. Cochran commented that in general, we need to make sure monitoring tools answer questions related to VSP. For example, does the monitoring tool demonstrate that critical areas are the same or better than the 2011 baseline? Cochran explained that in reviewing 5-Year reports, most counties completed monitoring but their efforts didn't necessarily address questions about specific progress (or lack thereof).
- 3. Projects.** Traynor said fall work included planting over 8,900 trees for the Touchet Canopy Cover project. He then asked those present to give some guidance on whether several proposed projects should be pursued. He clarified that he was not seeking formal project approval, but just advice on whether work group members felt projects were worth pursuing. If these projects look promising after further development, they could be approved at the March VSP meeting.
  - East Little Walla Walla: this is a small project with a buffer somewhat greater than 35' totaling 1 acre along a small alfalfa field. The project is too small for contractors to install under hold-down rates for CREP. The buffer area is currently overrun with reed canary grass and blackberries. Landowners are aware they will need to control

weeds after installation. The group agreed further project development was warranted. As an aside, Cochran mentioned that local county committee sets minimum buffer project size and should have a policy rather than having these decisions made based on staff recommendations.

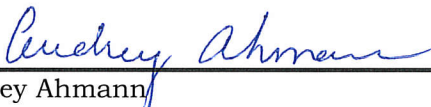
- Dry Creek Buffer and Pasture/Native grass establishment: New owners are willing to install a 35' buffer along Dry Creek and also are seeking help in rehabilitating pasture ground that has degraded due to overuse. The area is subject to wind erosion due to lack of cover. Work group members asked for more specifics and clarification on the critical area concern, and asked that project development proceed.
- Habitat planting on Pivot Corners: These landowners would like to upgrade their irrigation system and plant areas for endangered hawk habitat. The work group approved further project development.
- Edge of Field Buffer: This unusual project would consist of a 12' wide edge of field buffer intended to intercept overland flow and cross-contamination from a conventionally farmed field into an organic field. The ground would serve similar to a grassed waterway and could help reduce nutrient transfer to a perennial stream.

- 4. Discussion:** The group was generally in favor of the riparian planting projects as they would have multiple benefits impacting several critical areas. The group asked Traynor to develop the projects further so the group can have a better understanding of the area of impact, specific critical areas impacted and estimated budget ranges.

**Minutes:** The Sept 2021 minutes were presented and reviewed. Jonathan Hellberg-Wilson moved and Judith Johnson seconded to approve the minutes, motion passed.

The meeting was closed at 2:40 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted

  
Audrey Ahmann  
WWCCD

/S/: David H. Haire (on 3-22-2022)

David Haire  
Vice- Chairman

Next meeting: March 1, 1:00 pm