

**Spokane County VSP
Work Group Meeting
Minutes
December 7, 2016**

Work Group Members Present: David Boleneus, Casey Flanagan, Doug Greenlund, Robyn Meenach, Ty Meyer, Crystal Oliver, Brent Burger, Judy Crowder

Staff: Lindsay Chutas, Walt Edelen, Seth Flanders

Facilitator: Andy Dunau

Welcome and Minutes: Walt Edelen and Andy Dunau welcomed participants to the meeting. Robyn made a motion to accept the October 19 minutes and Doug seconded.

Andy asked for any amendments to the agenda, and none were requested.

Mapping Report and Progress: For each critical area, Lindsay showed overlay with agricultural lands. A rangeland GIS layer still needs to be acquired. The floodplains layer that Lindsay was given by Spokane County is missing details that would be necessary for use for the VSP. Lindsay will continue to look for a better floodplains layer for the program.

Using example shown by Lindsay, group discussed doing maps for each WIRA area. As there are 5 critical areas and 5 WIRAs (not including the small portion Crab Creek watershed and the Coeur d'Alene Lake watershed which have very small significance in Spokane County), a total of 30 maps will initially be created. The group decided that lands inside the county but outside the selected WIRAs be added to the adjacent WIRA. This will be annotated in the maps and statistical information. The group also discussed:

-) Each map will include definitions of where source data came from and date. Staff will work with agencies to determine likelihood of possible updates being available.
-) Maps will be brought to the next meeting to begin understanding where the intersections between ag and critical areas is most significant.
-) Some members would like to be able to access maps from home. How this can be done in Google Earth and stay within parameters of use agreements will be explored.

Per time line discussion later in meeting, the objective is for initial mapping to be complete by late winter, early spring of 2017. Adjustments will be made throughout the project based on availability of new data and additional granularity that may be required based on development of proposed goals, benchmarks and monitoring. Ag Viability discussion provides examples of additional information needs mapping may be able to support.

Ag Viability Discussion and Framework: Andy distributed an "Agricultural Viability Toolkit" and definition provided by the WA State Conservation Commission, Farm Bureau and Washington Department of Agriculture. He also distributed SWOT analysis Judy Crowder did based on state definition; a Spokane Ag Viability Framework developed by Andy to begin

knitting thoughts and objectives together; and email provided by Kevin articulating some considerations.

Discussion mostly focused on strengths and weaknesses of state definition and how it applies to Spokane County. The other documents were used to support this conversation. The group agreed to use the state definition as the initial starting point for the Spokane County work plan. Per time line discussion later in the meeting, initial background materials and objectives are expected to be complete during the spring of 2017. The group provided the following feedback:

-) Farmland preservation tools need to be balanced against protection of personal property rights, e.g.— preservation tools are not viable if they lead to farming not being profitable or impair an owner to purchase and sell property that supports their needs.
-) The perception is that Spokane County, relative to other counties, has a limited amount of irrigation and thus addressing this issue may not play a large role in establishing ag viability objectives. The group asked Lindsay to explore mapping tools available to show amount of irrigation in Spokane County.
-) Spokane County, unlike other counties, does not have a “right to farm” ordinance. Such ordinances are intended to assure through disclosure the understanding and acceptance of conditions resulting from living near farming, ranching and forestry operations before purchasing property. The Spokane County comp plan does have a provision with similar intent. The group will evaluate whether recommending an ordinance to the BOCC should become an ag viability objective.
-) Spokane County no longer has a meat processing facility.
-) In 2016, ag infrastructure was supported by the addition of Highline Grain's shuttle facility in Four Lakes. From this facility, up to 15 million bushels of grain can be economically transported by rail rather than reliance on trucks.
-) Determining Ag viability on public lands (such as rangelands) is an area of uncertainty in mapping. Lindsay will investigate the intersection of these sorts of lands with critical areas and report on her findings.
-) There is concern that regulations pertaining to water right relinquishment due to non-use in some cases works against water conservation. This is an example of a concern that may be described in the ag viability section without an objective to address because policy for this circumstance is administered at the state not county level.
-) Understanding measures and regulations to protect water sources in Spokane County, including critical areas, is complex. There is a plethora of documentation that Seth and Walt will be going through and summarizing. These summaries will be shared with the group and looped back to setting ag viability objectives as well as critical area benchmarks.
-) Farm to market activities are growing and the group may consider objectives to support their development. For instance, promotion of established markets as well as supporting new ones can help keep farming in the community viable.
-) Along with farm to market activities, the perception is that non-commercial farms and urban agriculture are significantly rising and may not, based on statistical criteria, be fully captured. Further work will be done to try and assess this circumstance. One possibility is to determine if there are mapping tools that can be employed.

-) Defining robust technical, outreach and education support from the SCD and partners is critical to ag viability. The group is particularly concerned with outreach to small and mid-size farmers who may not be aware of technical and/or capital programs to support their needs.

Andy will work with contact provided by Robyn to use Washington Ag Census and other data to profile agricultural activities in Spokane County. The group will continue discussion and development at the next meeting.

Identification and summary of related plans and regulations: Seth showed a one page summary of a watershed (WRIA) plan. Summaries of key documents such as this are a required part of the work plan. The group agreed that the summary and format were appropriate. Seth will, month by month, continue to identify and summarize key documents. Relative to regulations, particularly the comp plan, the group will first complete drafts of mapping, goals and benchmarks, and ag viability. This will enable the group to work with Spokane County and others to identify regulatory intersections of most interest and need to be evaluated.

Time Line: Andy provided and the group reviewed a high-level time line for work group activities. Activities conform with needs identified in the work plan outline. In general terms, the notion is to collect as much information and data as possible in 2017, including drafting of sections, benchmarks, etc. This will provide sufficient time in 2018 to fully deliberate on plan components, including receiving public and stakeholder input. This time line will also benefit from possible lessons learned from work plans due for submittal before Spokane's. The first of these plans from Thurston and Chelan counties are due for submission in June. The group supported the time line with the understanding that details and shifts are expected as the group moves forward.

State Updates: WA State Conservation Commission is scheduling regional VSP meetings for January and February. Andy's impression is that two will be held. Locations and agenda are being determined. In general terms, these meetings are to provide VSP updates and address questions being asked by various work groups.

Joint state advisory board and technical work group meetings have considered the following:

-) There appears to be consensus that while a work plan can rely on regulations to demonstrate protection of critical areas, opting in to VSP means that the work plan must still include a benchmark and monitoring for each critical area.
-) Use of "best available science" in a work plan has semantic issues. On the one hand, benchmarks and monitoring need only demonstrate attaining legislative intent. On the other hand, the technical team will be reviewing a plan with an eye toward whether best available science and/or best management practices were used to establish benchmarks and actions. If not, why not.
-) Ecology drafted a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) memo to clarify confusion between VSP workplan and implementation, and Ecology enforcing SMP. Further discussion will take place at the next meeting.

Closing and Action Items: Follow-up and action items include:

-) Post October minutes on web site approved.
-) Draft and distribute December minutes.
-) Continue mapping development process.
-) Develop materials profiling ag in Spokane County.
-) Continue summarizing related plans.
-) Continue to identify field trip opportunities.

The next VSP meeting will be Wednesday, January 18th, 6:00—8:00 p.m. at the Spokane Conservation District. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.