

**Spokane County VSP
Work Group Meeting
Minutes
April 19, 2017**

Work Group Members Present: David Boleneus, Brent Burger, Judy Crowder (phone), Casey Flanagan, Doug Greenlund, Ty Meyer, Crystal Oliver, Kevin Paulson

Staff: Lindsay Chutas

Facilitator: Andy Dunau

Guests: Scott Kuhta, Rob Lindsay

Welcome, Minutes and Announcements: Andy Dunau welcomed participants to the meeting. Casey made a motion to accept the March 15 minutes and Doug seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Andy announced there is a Water to Wine fundraiser to support Spokane River Forum river access and restoration work. May 19, Chateau Rive, 5:30 pm. Tickets and more information available at www.spokaneriver.net/watertowine.

The group welcomed Scott Kuhta, the VSP contact for the Washington Department of Commerce, and Rob Lindsay, Spokane County Utilities Waters Program Manager.

Chelan and Thurston VSP Plans:

Chelan and Thurston VSP plans were submitted to the state conservation commission, and the state technical team is completing review. The approach of both plans has strong similarities to what Spokane is developing.

Sections of each plan relating to benchmarks, goals and monitoring were reviewed. This was done with an eye toward firming up the Spokane work group approach to these sections. Discussion included the following points:

- The group likes Chelan's methodology of highlighting agricultural interests alongside critical area benchmarks.
- The group liked the Thurston approach of starting each critical area benchmark section with definition and additional considerations.
- Whether through mapping of ag and critical area intersections and/or a collection tool to identify type, number and extent of conservation practices, both plans use parcel level data. But neither plan reports out specific parcel level information. Instead, the parcel level data is rolled up to provide watershed analysis. Members of the group concerned with use of parcel level data again indicated they wish to assure the Spokane plan will not share specific parcel level information as a product of activities.

- Spokane County has a significant amount of lands in CRP. For tracking and reporting purposes, it's important to establish the current amount of lands in CRP. This will support future reporting on whether CRP lands are growing or declining, and possible effect on critical area intersects. Staff will follow-up with NRCS to begin obtaining county wide numbers with which to do this.
- Casey noted tracking the total acres of riparian area and changes over time is very difficult and potentially expensive. For instance, the Thurston plan says "Maintain or increase stream miles or total area of riparian areas." Spokane County has no currently available tools to do this.

This observation led to staff noting that Chelan is using satellite imagery being made available via WDFW for this type of purpose. WDFW refers to it as High Resolution Change Detection (HRCDD). The cost is within VSP budget parameters.

Some members had concerns regarding subjectivity of such a tool and potential provision of information to agencies interested in pursuing enforcement. There are also questions about when imagery is being acquired relative to what agricultural practices are occurring at that time. Other members see the value of using this tool as a way to avoid assumptions and issues associated with trying to ground truth practices by accessing landowner properties.

Another idea was to not focus a tool like this on all critical area intersects, but use it to focus on particular high priority areas. For instance, the Chelan plan refers to using satellite imagery to support monitoring in sample areas. Thus, it wouldn't be used for overall watershed assessment, but to provide depth and texture to priority function and value changes being observed. Edge of field monitoring SCD is exploring could contribute in the same way.

Andy and Scott were asked to follow-up with WDFW on use of HRCDD. The hope is to have a presentation on this tool given to the group. This would be used to help the group determine if this tool is helpful to Spokane work plan.

The group asked Lindsay to continue to meet with the local technical team to discuss their priorities and next steps in benchmarks. Based on work group feedback, Andy and Lindsay will begin making a template for Spokane work plan.

Mapping, Critical Area Intersect Progress Report:

Lindsay reported having local technical team meetings with WDFW and Spokane County. The discussion with WDFW discussed what the priorities are for Priority Habitat Species from WDFW's perspective. Karin Divins with WDFW reviewed the Spokane mapping approach and noted that the department was having a statewide meeting of personnel assisting VSP to discuss direction. Lindsay will follow-up with Karin to receive further input on benchmarks and monitoring.

Spokane County, Aquifer Recharge Critical Aquifer:

Rob Lindsay from Spokane County provided the group an overview of the comprehensive plan regulatory authority to protect Critical Area Recharge Areas (CARAs). This was accompanied by a map that Lindsay presented showing the Low, Moderate and Critical Aquifer Recharge Susceptibility areas.

Rob's presentation included Spokane County definition of the Critical Aquifer Recharge Area; susceptibility ratings of different recharge zones; and conditions under which land use activities are allowed. In low susceptibility zones, the vast majority of land use activities are allowed. Specific to ag land intersects with critical areas, in moderate or high zones many of the land use activities require that the applicant prepare a conservation plan, in coordination with the NRCS. Rob discussed with the group some additional investigation to look at the definition between commercial and personal enjoyment of a resident's property relative to ag activities. This would be to establish whether related exemptions are of material concern to VSP work plan.

Spokane County Code also protects aquifers by requiring many non-residential building permit applications to include a Critical and Hazardous Materials List. This is a listing of any chemicals (solid or liquid) used or stored in or on the site. Additional protections occur through the federal clean water act and state regulations.

Given the robust nature of the current regulatory backstop and that it applies to all new activities, the group asked Lindsay and Rob to continue due diligence as to whether the regulatory backstop "as is" meets Spokane County VSP needs. The Chelan plan, for instance, takes the position that for their aquifers "Intersect areas are protected by the regulatory backstop including pesticide regulations. No benchmarks required."

Field Trip

Walt has been looking at a field trip that would go from 9 am to about 3 pm. Stops would look at critical area and ag intersects showing conditions and practices in riparian areas, wetlands, livestock and flooding. The group asked for a date later in May and to be given at least two weeks' notice.

Additional Business

Scott provided an overview of Department of Commerce's role in VSP and updates to GMA he is taking the lead in developing.

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

- Andy will draft and distribute April minutes.
- Walt will continue to work on field trip.
- Walt will explore WSU Extension Urban Farmers Group.
- Lindsay will continue mapping, including seeking local technical team input on benchmark and monitoring development.

- Lindsay will continue work with Rob on due diligence to determine if regulatory backstop “as is” meets Spokane County VSP needs for aquifer recharge areas.
- Staff will follow-up with NRCS to identify CRP acres in Spokane County.
- Andy will follow-up with WDFW on presentation of HRCD.
- Seth will continue summarizing related plans.