

**Spokane County VSP  
Work Group Meeting  
Minutes  
September 21, 2016**

**Work Group Members Present:** David Boleneus, Judy Crowder, Casey Flanagan, Doug Greenlund, Robyn Meenach, Ty Meyer, Crystal Oliver, Amanda Parrish, Kevin Paulson

**Staff:** Lindsay Chutas, Walt Edelen, Seth Flanders

**Facilitator:** Andy Dunau

**Welcome and Minutes:** Walt Edelen and Andy Dunau welcomed participants to the meeting. After discussion, Robyn made a motion to accept the August 24<sup>th</sup> minutes and Ty seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Poster:** Two poster options were introduced to the workgroup. The workgroup chose the poster with the large image. There was also a recommendation to change the image to a picture taken of the Meyer farm. In addition, the committee requested the tag line for the poster be changed to “Committed to maintaining the viability of agriculture while protecting critical areas.” With these recommendations, Robin made the motion to accept the design and proceed with production. Kevin seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

**Roster:** The work group and staff roster were distributed for review, leading to two areas of discussion.

First, given that Tom requested his position change from work group member to staff, the number of work group members is now ten. Crystal asked whether the workgroup should remain an even number or to open up applications to add an 11th member. Possible benefits of adding an eleventh person included adding additional diversity to the work group, and avoiding possibility of a 5 to 5 tie in voting. Others pointed out that regardless of 10 or 11 members, it would require 6 votes to achieve a majority. Discussion also included some feeling comfortable with the current group and relationships being formed, and not seeing a strong benefit to reopening the process. Crystal made a motion to reopen the application process and add an eleventh work group member. Kevin seconded. The motion did not pass by a vote of 3 in favor and six opposed. Further discussion did clarify, however, that if another member of the workgroup dropped out (leaving 9 members), the application process would be reopened.

Second, edits to the contact information for Brent Burger, Judy Crowder, Robyn Meenach and Lindsay Chutas were requested. Unique VSP emails for Judy, Brent and Doug were made. Judy requested that emails go to both her personal and VSP addresses. Doug requested they go only to his VSP address.

**Work Group Charter and Ground Rules:** The work group reviewed a revised draft document, “Spokane County VSP Charter and Ground Rules.” Judy presented a number of additional

changes to what was discussed at the previous work group meeting based on independent discussion with Kevin and David.

The most significant changes included citing of information from ESHB 1886, the Growth Management Act and Spokane County's Critical Areas Ordinance. Of particular concern was highlighting property rights and conversion of farm lands to non-agricultural purposes. In addition, there is concern about whether it's the work group or the SCD that is required to submit the work plan to the state conservation commission.

The group determined that citing of ESHB 1886 and the full set of related RCWs was sufficient for this document, and that on the web site there would be links to both. Further, if there is an instance where the group believes there is non-alignment between the legislation and either the RCWs or direction being given by the state advisory board, Andy and Walt will bring this to the conservation commission and/or the state advisory board with a request for further clarification. Regarding who submits the work plan, SCD made it clear that the work plan submitted to the state commission will only be what has received a majority vote of the work group. Judy indicated she requested the BOCC provide further clarification through amendment of the resolution previously adopted by Spokane County.

Currently on the web site is a PowerPoint from Ron Shultz, Washington State Conservation Commission Policy Director. It provides background, history and purposes of VSP. Work group members were encouraged to review this PowerPoint and raise questions or concerns relative to Spokane County implementation of VSP.

The work group requested revisions be made and put on the next meeting agenda.

**Report on Mapping, Technical Team Input:** Lindsay Chutas reported that the technical team was convened, and the focus was on receiving GIS files from the relevant agencies and sources. Questions were raised about how watersheds would be shown, and the intersections between agricultural land and critical areas accounted for. Lindsay stressed that the work group would review definitions and process for creating a map and related statistical analysis. Although the baseline is to be based on July 2011, in actuality maps were created at different times and will be updated with different frequencies. The work group agrees these variables will need to be taken into account as the work plan is created.

Lindsay also reiterated in response to a question that the accounting is at a watershed level and will not be done on a parcel by parcel basis or call out specific landowners. Establishing goals and objectives to assure the baseline at a watershed level is protected, and identifying priorities for enhancements will be a next step after the workgroup has an acceptable map and baseline in place.

David is interested in reviewing the GIS files being used. Lindsay will determine if receipt of files from agencies can be directly shared with those possessing the software tools and technical ability to review them.

For next meeting, Lindsay will also create a watershed map showing suggested means for accounting of agriculture and critical area intersections in Spokane County.

**Review of Work Plan Outline:** Due to time constraints, review was tabled until the next meeting. It was noted, however, that Judy has submitted a number of edits. Andy will work with Judy before the next meeting to try and integrate these suggestions into a single document for review.

**Additional Business:** Walt proposed taking a field trip out to the different critical areas in Spokane County. The work group selected October 5th at 9:00 am, understanding the trip might last the whole day. Information with details will be sent out.

Andy gave some quick updates from attending state advisory board and technical meetings via webinar.

- The Skagit County plan proposes using VSP for only one of the five critical areas, believing that their CAO is protective enough for the other areas. How the state will respond to this possibility is not known.
- Grant County is using NRCS data as the basis for creating the baseline for agriculture and critical areas intersection. There is also a process by which they can monitor, update information and tie to benchmarks. Their process largely relies on their coordinator being a retired NRCS employee with the “credentials” to mine the NRCS data base. Their work is interesting and staff will continue to follow.
- Definitions for ag viability were developed by the state conservation commission, state department of agriculture and the farm bureau. They are working to combine these definitions into one document. The definitions are broad and will help initiate the discussion of defining ag viability for Spokane County. When a single document is produced, staff suggests review at future work group meeting.

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

- Make recommended work group changes to Charter and Ground Rules. These will go out for review before next meeting.
- Update member roster per work group direction.
- Update and prepare poster per work group direction.
- Continue mapping development process, including preparing watershed map for next meeting.
- Work with Judy to consider work plan outline revisions before next meeting.
- Conduct VSP field trip on October 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Set up conference call ability for next meeting.

The next VSP meeting will be Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 p.m. at the Spokane Conservation District. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.