

**Spokane County VSP
Work Group Meeting
Minutes
October 19, 2016**

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

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 24th minutes and Ty seconded. Walt asked that the spelling of Robyn's name be corrected in first the paragraph. The motion passed unanimously.

Andy asked if an update on RCPP could be added to the agenda, which was agreed to. No further additions were requested.

RCPP Update: Walt gave an update that focused on November being the month that ag producers and private forest landowners could apply for RCPP funds. Approximately 2.3 million dollars will be made available this round. A flyer providing a program overview was passed out, including descriptions and eligibility for various funding categories. A flyer promoting 3 public meetings beginning October 24th was handed out. Meetings will help answer questions for those interested in applying for RCPP funds.

Poster: The VSP Poster was presented and well received. Walt proposed creating a "retractable," which is a method of being able to easily transport the poster to meetings, workshops, conferences, etc. for public display. The work group supported this idea and staff will continue to work on it.

Roster: An updated roster was distributed with corrections made that were noted from last meeting. Judy Crowder corresponded with staff between meetings asking that the facilitator's contact information be added to the roster. With no further corrections or additions, the roster will not be updated again until membership or someone's contact information changes.

Work Group Charter and Ground Rules: An updated draft of the Charter and Ground rules was distributed. Recommended changes from previous meetings were shown in red. After discussion, Doug moved and Casey seconded approval with no further edits. The motion passed unanimously.

Report on mapping: Lindsay showed a map distinguishing between watersheds that flow into the Spokane River and ultimately the Columbia, and those that flow through the Palouse and into the Snake River. For critical areas, the first level of distinction will be based on which drainage a

watershed flows into. Further detail will be based on what makes sense to best show where agricultural and critical areas intersect.

As a GIS layer, she imported watershed information into Google Earth as well. Because Google Earth is readily available, she suggested that as she adds GIS layers she also import them into Google Earth, which will make viewing for the work group at meetings and home much easier. The work group appreciated this and approved by consensus.

Per previous meeting, Lindsay is continuing to complete paperwork and receive GIS layers recommended by the technical team. As they come in, she'll start prepping for work group review.

Review of Work Plan Outline:

A Spokane County VSP Work Plan outline was reviewed. Andy referred to this as a “living document,” meaning that changes will be on-going as the work group deliberates on specific pieces and additional information is provided by the state advisory group and technical team. The outline serves the purpose of assuring that the work group has a common understanding of the essential elements of a successful work plan. Staff will develop a time line for developing sections of the outline for work group review.

Andy also noted that the “guidance” sections are only placeholders, reflecting initial information developed by the technical team. The technical team has replaced the word guidance with “tips.” While a lot of work has been done by the technical team, no consensus on direction to work groups has been provided. Once this is done, Andy will update these sections and review with the work group.

Robyn received extensive comments from Evan Sheffels with the Farm Bureau. The facilitator included these comments as part of work group review. Discussion points included the following:

- It's still not clear what “approval test” the state technical team may use to determine if the work plan adequately protects and enhances critical areas and ag viability. As initial plans are approved, the work group and staff hopes this becomes clearer.
- Along these lines, distinctions between goals and benchmarks designed to protect critical areas as required by legislation, and those that encourage enhancing critical areas beyond protection requirements is the subject of a great deal of discussion. In either case, except for what Skagit is currently proposing, a voluntary, incentive based approach to implementation is expected.
- GIS mapping of critical areas and ag lands has two limitations: 1) maps were created at different times, and 2) there is no certainty when maps will be updated. For these reasons and other reasons, Sheffels recommended the following mapping disclaimer be added:
 - This map is not to be used for regulatory purposes. It does not serve to designate critical areas and only illustrates possible critical area and agricultural intersections to help technical service providers promote voluntary VSP participation. In the event of a conflict between this map and county critical area

designations, the actual designation, criteria and case-by-case field conditions control.

Andy noted that while the state advisory group and technical team have discussed this disclaimer, it has not been issued as guidance from the state. It will only be included in the outline as a placeholder to highlight the issue and related concerns.

- The definition of ag viability will be assisted by a joint definition being developed by the state conservation commission, farm bureau and WA Department of Agriculture. Andy noted, however, that the draft definitions he has seen are very broad, most likely requiring significant further development by the work group to fit the character and needs of Spokane County VSP work plan.
- The outline notes doing a SWOT analysis to support ag viability development. This idea comes from the Department of Agriculture, and may be included in the joint definition being worked on. A work group decision regarding whether to do a SWOT analysis will come at a later time.
- Sheffels commented that VSP only requires goals and benchmarks for critical areas, not ag viability. He suggested using the alternative term “objectives” for ag viability section.
- To satisfy monitoring needs demonstrating benchmarks have been met, it’s important to come up with a means to identify “credits” for critical area improvements that date back to July, 2011. As part of a 319 grant, SCD is working on a tool to assist with this.
- The assumption is that SCD will be the technical assistance provider identified in the work plan.
- There is on-going concern that there will be sufficient funding to implement and monitor the work plan.

Additional Business: Due to holidays, the work group altered it’s normal 3rd Wednesday of every month meeting schedule for November and December. For these months, there will be one meeting on Wednesday, December 7th.

Walt will continue to identify field trip opportunities. Rather than spending a full day going to several locations, the idea was floated to find one or two locations that could be done in half a day. These would be scheduled over the work plan development period to increase understanding and awareness of perspectives, issues and concerns. Another idea was to show PowerPoints, videos and/or have guest speakers at work group meetings. Both ideas are considered viable and will be explored by staff.

The content of state meetings participated in by Andy are largely reflected in the work plan outline discussion. He noted that there was no further information on the status of the Skagit plan, which has an alternative means of mixing VSP with existing GMA regulation. The state may also release a memo clarifying time lines for work group activity and submission of plans.

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

- Finalize and post on web site approved September minutes.
- Draft and distribute October minutes.
- Finalize and post on web site approved charter and ground rules.
- Update work plan outline per discussion.

- Continue mapping development process.
- Begin development of materials to support ag viability discussion.
- Develop broad time line for developing work sections of the work plan.
- Continue to identify field trip opportunities.

The next VSP meeting will be Wednesday, December 7th, 6:00—8:00 p.m. at the Spokane Conservation District. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.