

**Spokane County VSP
Work Group Meeting
Minutes
August 15, 2017**

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

Staff: Walt Edelen, Lindsay Chutas

Facilitator: Andy Dunau

Guest: Scott Kuhta, WA Department of Commerce

Welcome, Minutes and Announcements: Andy Dunau welcomed participants to the meeting. June minutes were discussed. Robin made a motion to approve the minutes with the following changes: Casey Flanagan should be noted as present in person rather than phone; Brent arrived late and did not vote for changing the meeting date to the third Tuesday of the month. Casey seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

After the group learned that Brent cannot make Tuesday meetings, Andy was asked to contact David to see if there is an alternative Wednesday in the month that will work for him. September's meeting date will be Tuesday the 19th. At that meeting, the group will revisit the best available monthly meeting date.

The group agreed minutes for July meeting were not necessary as July's meeting was a presentation of HRCD by WDFW and included representatives from other eastern Washington VSP work groups. Andy has received a copy of the HRCD presentation and will distribute to the group.

Walt showed a drone that SCD has bought and received training to use. This will be used with landowners and programs interested in monitoring conservation and restoration projects. Initially, EWU's Palouse Prairie Restoration Project and the Inland Northwest Lands Conservancy are interested in using its capabilities.

Andy announced that the Spokane River Forum Conference will be November 15-16 at the Coeur d'Alene resort. On November 16th, there is a strand of nonpoint source pollution sessions that are very relevant to VSP. In addition, the keynote speaker at lunch is Cherilyn Nagel, a Canadian farmer and Director of the Global Farmer Network. She highlights positive changes in the agriculture sector through communication and collaboration.

HRCD presentation debrief and next steps

Matthew Muller from WDFW gave a detailed presentation on High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD). The group was very appreciative of Matt visiting the eastside to clarify its

capabilities, how this tool has been used to support monitoring, and potential support for VSP plans.

A robust discussion resulted in the following questions/concerns being articulated:

- 1) Can change detection accurately evaluate vegetation/foliage for what is commonly found in our area?
- 2) What is the statistical confidence that:
 - a. change detection outcomes are accurate, e.g. 85 or 95 %,
 - b. if a trigger for adaptive management is set at 5 or 10 percent loss, what probability would be required to meet that trigger?
- 3) Repeatability. In particular, how to assess technical bias or human error that may be introduced with different staff interpreting results over time.
- 4) Ability of WDFW to further develop program to measure gains as well as loss.
- 5) Whether WDFW is willing not to share or publish outcomes of analysis. This stems from some work group member concerns regarding privacy and that other agencies may use analysis as a means to support enforcement actions.

The group discussed approaching WDFW with the possibility of doing a proof of concept regarding expected results for our area.

Amanda provided a broad outline of an alternative approach being explored by Stevens County. Here, sample areas representing a 95% confidence level would be compared from one-time period to another. Comparisons of NAIP ortho imagery (same as what is being used for HRCD) would be scored by an individual according to criteria. The scores would be rolled up to determine if there are net positive or negative changes. This avoids confidentiality issues by analysis being done internally; and individual scores and imagery not being shared.

Possible steps forward were summarized as follows:

- 1) Do not further consider HRCD due to questions/concerns noted.
- 2) Opt into HRCD and hope challenges can be worked through.
- 3) Due further due diligence with HRCD
- 4) Come up with an alternative to HRCD to measure change.
- 5) Wait to make a decision until further information and state response to Steven's County's alternative can be acquired.

Judy made a motion to dismiss HRCD as a consideration and it was seconded by Robyn. The group voted unanimously not to pass the motion.

Doug made a motion to present a list of concerns about HRCD to WDFW, and request the agency to respond and/or put together a proposal to address those concerns. It was seconded by Robyn. The motion passed with 1 dissenting vote (Judy).

In addition, Andy was asked to follow-up with Steven County to learn more about the alternative they are developing.

Mapping, Critical Area Intersect and Benchmarks Progress Report

Lindsay met with Karin from WDFW in July. They started the discussion of benchmarks and goals for priority habitats. The discussion is ongoing and they came up with some priorities by watersheds. Andy is developing a template for critical area goal, benchmarks, monitoring, etc. Lindsay and Karin will be meeting with Andy to populate the template and prepare for review at next meeting.

Additional Business

Andy reported out the following:

- The Skagit and Whitman County VSP plans were approved. Andy will be reviewing the Skagit plan, and Walt the Whitman County plan.
- The state budget includes VSP funding for the biennium in the same amount as the previous biennium. Walt is working with the state and Spokane County on the 2017—2019 biennium contract.
- The Conservation Commission, based on input from the VSP state advisory committee, has created two policy advisories for work groups. One addresses the confidentiality of VSP stewardship plans, and the other the schedule for VSP work plan submittal. Both can be found on the commission web page.
- The VSP Work Plan “practice pointers” were updated and can be found on the Commission VSP page.
- The Commission recommends that each work group view a video to receive training on the Open Public Meetings Act. After learning this, the group asked Andy to send the video link out and create a signature sheet establishing that each work group member has viewed the video during their own time.

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

- Andy will draft and distribute August minutes.
- Lindsay will meet with Andy and Karin to draft habit conservation goal, benchmarks, etc.
- Andy will contact David to determine if there is an alternate Wednesday for VSP monthly meeting that works with his schedule.
- Andy will contact WDFW regarding HRCD concerns and ask for response.
- Andy will contact Stevens County to learn more about their alternative to HRCD.
- Andy will send out link to receive training on the Open Public Meetings Act.
- Staff will follow-up with NRCS to identify CRP acres in Spokane County.
- Seth will continue summarizing related plans.
- SCD will develop a strategy for a staff person to possibly be an ag viability liaison.
- SCD will begin to research with county opportunities to amend Conservation Futures Funding options to support commodity buffer program.