

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

Work Group Members Present: Brent Burger, Judy Crowder, Doug Greenlund, Robyn Meenach, Ty Meyer, Amanda Parrish, Kevin Paulson, David Boleneus

Staff: Lindsay Chutas, Seth Flanders

Facilitator: Andy Dunau

Guest: Karin Divens, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife

Welcome, Minutes and Announcements: Andy Dunau welcomed participants to the meeting. August minutes were discussed. Robyn asked that in the future language for passage of motions say “approved” rather than “passed unanimously.” She then made a motion to approve the minute. Ty seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Andy asked work group members and staff to sign a signatory page if they had viewed the Open Public Meeting Act training video. Andy requested that those who had not watched the video please do so before the next workgroup meeting.

The regularly scheduled VSP meeting date was discussed. Brent and Crystal have conflicts with Tuesday nights, and David has conflicts with Wednesday. After checking available options, the group agreed to the following for the next couple of months:

- Wednesday, October 18th
- Tuesday, November 21st

Andy will send a poll out to better understand long term meeting options. The subject will be revisited at the next meeting.

Andy provided more information about the Spokane River Forum Conference and passed out information. The second day of the conference features a keynote speaker, a Canadian farmer, that Walt helped recruit. She has an interesting and timely message about the need for ag to engage with the community. In addition, the following sessions directly relate to VSP interests:

- Nov 15th 3:45 – 4:45 Healthy Waters. Spokane Riverkeeper and Puget Soundkeeper provide their take on clean water priorities, regulation and enforcement.
- Nov 16th, 10:15 – 11:45 Ecology overview of nonpoint source pollution incentives, regulation and enforcement
- Nov 16th, 12:45 Aligning Farmers, Ag, and Clean water. Cherilyn Nagel keynote.
- Nov 16th, 2:00 – 3:30 Ag and Nonpoint source pollution: Comprehensive approached to understanding voluntary conservation and collaboration. Conservation District, Lands Council and farmer strategies, action and perspective.

- Nov 16th 3:30 – 4:30 Case study activity from Spokane Conservation District, Coeur d’Alene Tribe of Indians and others.

All workgroup members who cannot be sponsored by their organization are eligible to receive scholarships to attend. More information can be found at www.spokaneriver.net/conf.

Judy requested that available material be provided prior to workgroup meetings. Staff indicated this will be done with two caveats: 1) staff is often dependent on outside agency staff and experts to provide information that often does not come back in time to be processed and shared with work group members prior to a committee meeting, and 2) materials may require explanation in order to interpret and appropriately review, making it easier for full work group to initially work through together. Robyn noted staff has not presented material and asked for work group approval at the same meeting.

Review of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Area Goal, Benchmarks and Monitoring

Staff shared a matrix showing overall and habitat conservation benchmarks, description, performance metric, monitoring method, when, who, adaptive management trigger, and adaptive management action. Andy noted the matrix is an adaptation of what Chelan, Thurston and Skagit counties had put together with their approved plans. Judy asked why the work group was not asked to first approve a template, and why Stevens County was not used. Staff explained the work group had previously approved staff putting a draft together and that they looked at plans being developed that were most like Spokane’s. Stevens County draft plan is being reviewed, but for this piece their plan most closely resembles a modeling methodology the work group chose not to pursue.

The work group reviewed and provided many suggestions for the matrix. These changes will be shown as track changes, reviewed by WDFW, and sent out before the next meeting. The most in-depth conversations related to monitoring and associated adaptive management triggers for additional voluntary actions. As part of continuing to investigate monitoring, staff will update options and reconsider triggers with the work group.

HRCF Follow-up with WDFW and Stevens County Monitoring Approach

This agenda item was moved up because it dovetails with previous agenda item.

Per work group’s August request, staff followed up with WDFW regarding potential use of HRCF. The work group reviewed the questions and responses by WDFW, which are summarized as follows:

- 1) Can change detection accurately evaluate vegetation/foilage for what is commonly found in our area?
Answer: WDFW believes it can, and is willing to do a proof of concept in our area to validate.

2) What is the statistical confidence that:

a. change detection outcomes are accurate.

Answer: Between machine based detection and human review, about 85%.

b. if a trigger for adaptive management is set at 5 or 10 percent loss, what probability would be required to meet that trigger?

Answer: There is an 85% probability that the 5 or 10 percent trigger has been met.

3) Repeatability. In particular, how to assess technical bias or human error that may be introduced with different staff interpreting results over time.

Answer: The same two people have been doing interpretation for a number of years. If more personnel are needed or someone leaves, the assumption should be that there would not be much, if any, change in how they would assess and record change detection.

4) Ability of WDFW to further develop program to measure gains as well as loss.

Answer: WDFW has no plans to further develop program to detect positive change.

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.

Answer: While an MOU for use can be written, results will be available and subject to a public information request.

Andy also reviewed options being considered by Stevens County. The Stevens County VSP coordinator has been invited to the next meeting to discuss monitoring. SCD staff will continue to work with him over the next month.

Ty discussed local and international options for obtaining and interpreting imagery for VSP needs. He was encouraged to continue looking at options.

Staff reiterated that a monitoring recommendation has not been made. The staff is interested in making sure the group uses consistent criteria across options (e.g.—meeting monitoring need for the benchmark and goal, repeatability and confidentiality) before a monitoring decision is made.

Next Steps for Critical Area Intersects and Benchmarks

Staff recommended that wetlands and aquifer recharge be the next critical areas for benchmarks, goals, etc. to be drafted. Drafting of wetlands requires a meeting with Ecology, which has been difficult to schedule as their person is working on a large project north of Spokane. Per previous research, aquifer recharge will rely on the existing regulatory backstop in place by Spokane County.

Additional Business

There was no additional business reported.

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

- Andy will draft and distribute September minutes.
- Andy will poll members for regular meeting time options.
- Lindsay will begin drafting benchmarks for additional critical areas.
- Lindsay and Andy will continue to work with Stevens County VSP on monitoring options.
- 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.