

Minutes
Work Group
Spokane County Voluntary Stewardship Program
September 8, 2021
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m

Work Group Members Present: Casey Flannagan, Jay Cronk, Methea Sapp, Alene Lindstrand, Amanda Parrish

Staff: Lindsay Chutas and Joe Zimbric

Facilitator: Andy Dunau

Welcome and Administration: The meeting convened via MS Teams video conference.

A motion to approve minutes from the previous meeting did not occur due to lack of quorum.

Andy reported that Spokane County signed the next biennium contract for VSP with the WA State Conservation Commission. Total available funding over the biennium is \$235,000. Staff will be working on the line-item budget and will submit to the committee for approval.

The CD does not expect to learn about the status of RCP funding before November. The CD is preparing two 319 grant submissions to Ecology. One is for a large project with a single property owner in the Hangman that includes livestock, flood plain and riparian restoration components. The other is a riparian project in the Little Spokane.

From the last funding round, the Lands Council received funding to install beaver dam analogs and riparian restoration on Thompson Creek in WRIA 55/57 and along tributaries of Hangman Creek in WRIA 56. The Spokane Tribe is applying for funding to maintain projects at Spangle, Tekoa, Chattaroy and California Creek. They may also apply for funding for a Hangman project.

5-Year Report Feedback Discussion

Lindsay led discussion of comments from the technical team. She summarized and shared these comments in a MS Word document. The technical team had many positive things to say about the Spokane report. In general terms, concerns focused on methods and level of detail necessary to demonstrate no net loss of critical area functions and values across the county or subbasin (watershed). These included:

- Reporting vegetative gains and losses via aerial imagery as a ratio (percent of critical areas gain or loss on ag lands) vs. absolute numbers.
- Loss of wetland area in WRIA 34
- Fully assessing the direct or indirect effectiveness for BMP's on critical area functions and values
- Assuring on-going interaction with state and local agencies.

Responses to concerns were reviewed. Lindsay and Joe have already met with Levi to discuss approaches to continuing to improve monitoring and reporting. Further, the CD and Andy met with Spokane County to discuss VSP status, increased communication and increased support. After the technical panel meets to further discuss the 5-year report, Lindsay anticipates setting up additional meetings with technical team members to further discuss their comments.

Informational Updates and Program Planning

The workgroup reviewed a biennium scope of work for VSP activities. Joe is initially working on updating the conservation data base. This also includes developing new charts/graphs and analysis to understand and communicate the information more fully. Based on outcomes of discussions with Spokane County, aerial imagery and analysis will occur either annually or every two years. He and Lindsay have also begun working on ground truthing wetland results in WRIA 34. Joe is working on supporting the South and Valley Farm corridor projects. Requests for technical assistance and outreach is on-going.

Staff met with Spokane County personnel from water resources, flood plain permitting, planning and information technology services. County staff were updated on outcomes and status of VSP activities. Positive conversations occurred regarding best ways to collaborate on GIS, land use notifications, policy, and other activities. Lindsay and Joe continue to follow-up with them.

Joe reviewed that all Spokane County land use notifications will be placed on a google drive. He will do an initial analysis to determine if they relate to VSP activities, e.g.—a proposed variance for activity in a critical area that is also on ag land. When there is some correlation to VSP, Joe will send an email to the group with a recommendation as to whether VSP should submit a comment letter. When comment letters are required before the next VSP meeting, Joe will draft and circulate a letter for review via email. As necessary, an ad hoc meeting will be called to review.

On September 9, the VSP state technical team will review their comments to Spokane County in a public meeting. Lindsay will take the lead in presenting and responding to questions. In the state format, VSPs do not formally respond to the written comments but can ask questions of the technical team. After the public meeting, the Executive Director of the Washington State Conservation Commission will make a determination as to whether to approve the 5-year report.

Lindsay shared some pictures of riparian plantings supported by VSP funding that were conducted in the spring.

Action Items and Closing:

Administration:

- VSP Biennium Budget

Project Development:

- Update Conservation Project Data Base
- Update Project Development List

DRAFT

Location: WebEx Conference Call

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- Support South and Valley Farm Corridor projects
- Continue to identify new project opportunities

Outreach:

- Participate in technical team 5-year report review
- Schedule meeting with state technical team members to review their 5-year report comments
- Continue to add projects to Conservation Map

Monitoring:

- Work with Spokane County to determine possibility of acquiring aerial imagery annually
- Continue meetings to begin ground truthing wetlands in WRIA 34
- Continue aerial imagery work
- Continue inputting stewardship plans

Next Meeting

The next VSP meeting will be November 10th.