Minutes
Work Group
Spokane County Voluntary Stewardship Program
November 13, 2019
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m

Work Group Members Present: Chad Atkins, David Boleneus, Jay Cronk, Doug Greenlund, Alene Lindstrand, Ty Meyer, Crystal Oliver, Amanda Parrish, Kevin Paulson

Staff: Doug Phelps

Facilitator: Andy Dunau

Handouts: September Minutes, October Minutes, Today’s Agenda, article by Doug, article by Andy, Rack Card draft, Article about WA Senate Bill 5947, 2019 draft of SB 5947.

Welcome, Introductions, Minutes and Announcements: Andy welcomed everyone to the meeting. Minutes from the September and October meetings were reviewed. Alene motioned to accept both and Ty seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Doug Phelps brought up the fact that WSCC now requires meeting refreshments to be pre-approved. Doug Greenlund motioned to forego VSP buying snacks and instead have a sign-up sheet for members to voluntarily bring snacks to the group. David seconded. Five were in favor, one was against and two abstained. Motion passed. Andy agreed to bring snacks to next meeting, at which time a sign-up sheet will be passed to bring snacks to future meetings. Signing-up to bring snacks is voluntary and will not be reimbursed.

Project Development

Doug Phelps read from notes prepared by Walt Edelen that summarized current SCD projects in the works. The summary included:

- Completion of the RM-17 streambank stabilization project.
- $45,000 from WSCC to provide technical and financial assistance to over a dozen producers in the Hangman area dealing with erosion and livestock water quality issues.
- RCPP: over 100,000 acres of conservation tillage implemented over the last four years. Renewal of funding will be requested in 2020.
- Commodity Buffer Program: About 42 miles of buffer in Spokane County is currently contracted.
- 2 grant applications submitted to Ecology. One for large streambank stabilization project downstream of RM 17. A second that addresses outreach, technical/financial assistance, inventory and restoration needs in Hangman watershed.
- FFFPP project to address fish barrier on Little Deer Creek.
- Partnering with WDFW on inventoring fish barriers in the Little Spokane Watershed.
• Developing habitat projects with WRIA 55.
• Developing with CDA Tribe a streamflow restoration project for Hangman that would be submitted to Ecology.

Additional activities noted by the group:

• Ty submitted a separate 3-million-dollar application to Ecology to support direct seed equipment loans.
• Chad noted there are 30 landowner conservation projects DOE is currently in discussion with that is resulting from Hangman Settlement agreement. 3 of these projects may use Direct Implementation Funds (DIF) from Ecology. In addition to SCD, Ecology is partnering with the Spokane Tribe of Indians and Riverkeeper to implement these projects.
• Chad noted there is Floodplains by Design funding becoming available in February. These are generally for large projects. This only opens up every two years.
• Lands Council and Ecology are developing a project for streambank stabilization/restoration at the Hangman Valley golf course. They are moving portions of the golf course away from the creek and doing plantings. This would be funded by an Ecology Terry Hussman grant with 100% cost share.
• The Lands Council recently completed a Beaver dam analog project on Rattler Run Creek. It was completed by an engineering class at Gonzaga. TLC is also applying for habitat projects in WRIA 55, especially Deadman Creek.

For Ecology requests, Chad discussed the application process, timing, ranking and budget. Available funding for this year is expected to be less than previous years because it’s part of a state supplemental budget request and funds are already dedicated for west side projects.

The work group requested staff to start a list of all known local conservation projects related to VSP. Information would include name, location, funding source, and dates that are either in implementation or being developed for a funding request.

Project Updates

Doug Phelps updated the group on his VSP presentation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on Oct. 21st. The presentation reviewed Spokane County VSP’s two-year report, which is a funding requirement. The BOCC was pleased with the report.

Per work group request, a letter commenting on proposed changes to the comprehensive plan with VSP ramifications was submitted. Based on the letter’s request for clarification of agricultural lands being rezoned, the County acknowledged an error in what was being proposed and updated the plan accordingly.
The group read an article about WA Senate Bill 5947 and SB 5947. This bill did not make it out of committee in the last session. A new version is being prepared that is narrower in scope and would benefit technical assistance and funding related to VSP. Ty is on a committee that is reviewing the legislation and will update the work group on developments. Early indications are that the current legislation being developed has bipartisan support.

Doug Phelps brought the group up to speed on efforts to partner with the County Assessor on the acquisition of the aerial imagery necessary for VSP’s vegetative change analysis.

There was general discussion about Doug’s presentation before the Spokane Cattlemen on November 7th. Alene agreed to follow up with the Cattlemen about their thoughts on the presentation and interest in receiving technical assistance. She will work with Doug and they will report back to the group.

Outreach

A draft of the VSP Rack Card was reviewed by the group. Edits were agreed upon. Doug will make the edits and print Rack Cards.

Two possible articles for placement in publications were read and discussed by the group. The group decided that the article titled “Spokane County Voluntary Stewardship Program brings opportunities for agricultural producers” should move forward, pending edits. Publications to target include Wheat Life and the SRF newsletter.

The current outreach strategy was discussed with the group. Doug Phelps plans to target current and former SCD clients with the goals of finding new potential conservation projects, monitoring past projects, and recruiting landowners to share their stewardship stories and become a part of VSP. There will also be presentations and workshops to various groups throughout the winter and spring months. Ty mentioned that he will be doing workshops associated with direct seed/no till and suggested partnering with VSP on the outreach effort. Amanda and TLC will also be doing workshops and also suggested partnering. Doug will follow-up with both.

Doug showed the group the story mapping, now called “Conservation Map” web site. The easiest way to access the site is via the SCD’s main page, www.sccd.org, or the VSP landing page, http://sccd.org/voluntary-stewardship-program. Doug is committed to adding 3 to 5 projects to the site monthly. Amanda, Ty and others will work with Doug to identify projects to be added.

Work Group Administration

Andy walked the group through edits to the VSP Work Group Charter. The Charter was originally formed to guide work group planning efforts. It has now been updated to address the needs of work group implementation efforts. The group will vote on the updated charter at the next meeting.
Action Items and Closing:

There will be no meeting in December. The next meeting was set for January 15, 2020. This is the 3rd Wednesday of the month rather than the 2nd Wednesday to avoid scheduling conflicts. In January, the group will decide schedule for next meetings.

Items agreed to in the meeting include:

- Staff will develop a list of VSP related projects either in implementation or development for a funding request.
- Ty will monitor development of the sustainable farm and field legislation.
- Doug will continue to work with County Assessor’s office on the possibility of partnering to acquire aerial imagery.
- Doug will follow-up with Alene to identify cattlemen interested in working with VSP.
- Doug will make rack card edits and print.
- Doug and Andy will make additional edits to VSP outreach article, then begin placement in publications.
- Doug will follow-up with Ty and Amanda on partnering on outreach meetings.
- Doug will initiate site visits to monitor past practices and initiate recruitment of new projects.
- Doug will add 3 to 5 VSP projects to conservation map per month.

Andy thanked everyone for coming. There were no further comments and the meeting adjourned.