

Minutes
Work Group
Spokane County Voluntary Stewardship Program
July 8, 2020
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m

Work Group Members Present: Dave Boleneus, Casey Flanagan, Ty Meyer, Crystal Oliver, Kevin Paulson, Chad Atkins

Staff: Doug Phelps

Facilitator: Andy Dunau

Guests: Levi Keesecker

Welcome and Administration: The meeting convened via WebEx video and phone conference technology.

Members, staff and guests introduced themselves.

Casey made a motion to approve the May minutes. David seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Andy noted that member terms for David, Amanda, Kevin, Casey and Crystal were coming up in September. They will need to indicate their interest in continuing with VSP. Openings will need to go through a selection process. There were questions regarding if Andy had the proper list of term dates. He will check and let people know.

Project Development and Technical Assistance

Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) Grant: Doug confirmed that the grant was submitted and expects USDA to decide in September. In addition to supporting the South Spokane Farm Corridor, the grant would support addition of a second farm corridor.

Livestock Projects: A contract for the Terry Husseman grant from WA Department of Ecology was approved. This will support fencing, a heavy use area, roof run-off structure, a grass buffer and riparian planting.

A second livestock cost-share project consisting of a roof runoff structure and site re-grading for improved drainage around a barn was recently completed by SCD. The owners are also in the process of adding a heavy use area component.

319/Centennial Grants: SCD is being awarded \$1.75 million from Ecology. \$1.5 million is part of a direct seed loan program and incentives/cost share for riparian restoration, livestock and land program, data collection, and outreach projects. \$250,000 is for a Hangman Creek bank

stabilization project. SCD is currently negotiating the contract and will provide more detail at the next meeting.

Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): Doug is continuing to work with partners to identify a project to receive RCPP funding. Ducks Unlimited, which has the capacity to hold and monitor an easement, is identifying landowners they work with that may be interested.

Technical Assistance: A farmer with South Spokane Farm Corridor project asked for and received technical assistance to address nutrient loading that is causing duck weed in Heron Pond. Doug is also following up on a request from Deer Park regarding increasing habitat on some land while continuing to lease the fields to a nearby small grains farmer.

Other: Riverkeeper is completing a riparian fencing project on Cottonwood Creek, and Trout Unlimited is completing a riparian fencing and off-creek livestock watering project on California Creek.

Monitoring

To prepare for the VSP 5-Year Report, a major focus of staff activity into November will be updating monitoring activities. These activities are the foundation for whether benchmarks, goals and objectives called for in the VSP work plan are being met. The components being worked on include:

Conservation Project and Development List: This list is regularly updated. New projects being added include bio-farming, RCPP and 319 awards. Completed projects are removed from the list and added to the Conservation Project Data Base.

Conservation Project Data Base: All projects completed for calendar year 2019 will be added. Doug will also reach out to the county to determine if projects like Saltese Flats wetland restoration are complete. “Table 8” from the work plan will be updated to determine if conservation goals are being met.

GIS Mapping: Doug and Lindsay will be contacting agencies to determine if there were any updates to GIS maps showing agricultural intersections with critical areas. To the extent there are updates, gains and losses will be calculated and reported.

Aerial Imagery: The contractor is currently determining gains and losses from 2011 (baseline year) to 2017 (first two-year report). The five-year report period does not align with these monitoring increments. Staff suggested adding a 2019 analysis that will also serve the purpose of aligning current and future 5-year reports. The work group reached consensus for Doug to ask the contractor about additional cost and feasibility. Doug will also discuss the matter further with Levi.

Edge of Field Monitoring: A draft report is expected for review and discussion at the next VSP meeting. This work will help ground truth assumptions being made regarding reduced nutrient run-off in fields using direct seed practices.

Other: Staff will also be contacting agencies to determine any regulatory shifts and permit compliance that could impact VSP implementation. This includes whether the county has engaged in further Community Assistance Visits, a critical area flood plains program.

Levi reported he is working with other VSP projects on diverse monitoring activities, e.g. hydrology modeling.

Outreach:

Conservation Map Enhancements: Enhancements to the Conservation Map web site are complete. Doug is currently adding mostly South Farm Corridor projects.

Stewardship Plan: Doug is continuing to complete and archive stewardship plans. Reporting on these plans is also part of the 5-year report.

Other: Ecology reported that they are working with the Lands Council to add education signs at bridge crossings in Hangman Creek Watershed, e.g.— Cove Creek: Hangman Creek Watershed.

Action Items and Closing:

Administration:

- Review member terms and determine possible work group openings.

Project Development:

- Follow-up on Deer Park and other technical assistance requests
- Continue ACEP outreach.
- Continue updating Project Development List
- Continue to identify new project opportunities

Outreach:

- Continue to add projects to Conservation Map
- Continue development of articles and seek opportunities for presentations

Monitoring:

- Conduct updates as discussed in meeting (Project Development List, Data Base, GIS Mapping).
- Continue aerial imagery work.
- Continue inputting stewardship plans

Next Meeting

The next VSP meeting will be September 9th. Whether it is held in person or via WebEx video conference will be based on status of phased reopening.