



Kittitas County Conservation District

2211 W Dolarway Road, Suite 4 Ellensburg WA 98926 (509) 925-3352 www.kccd.net



Voluntary Stewardship Program

Watershed Group Meeting

Armory, Kittitas Valley Event Center, 901 E 7th Ave, Ellensburg
10:00 AM Friday, January 18, 2019

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: *Anna Lael, Terry Clark, Mark Charlton, Jack Clerf, Lila Hanson, Karen Poulsen, Bambi Miller, Urban Eberhart, Kevin Eslinger, Jennifer Nelson, Mitch Long, Melissa Speeg, Arden Thomas, Justin Bezold, Erin Eaton, John Marvin, Sherry Swanson, Mark Crowley, Wendy Mee, Mark Moore.*

Welcome – Anna welcomed the attendees to the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Watershed Group Meeting.

- a. Introductions and a review of the meeting agenda was completed.
- b. Review of the December 14, 2018 meeting was completed. Anna noted that at the last meeting, Karen Poulsen asked what happens if there is no funding for VSP in the next biennium. She thought that we could fail out of VSP, but Anna thought that VSP just went into a holding pattern, like it was when there was no funding for the program in the beginning. Anna contacted Bill Eller at the Conservation Commission to ask the question. His answer sent by email makes it look like it both Anna and Karen are right. In the RCW, there is a provision for the Conservation Commission to determine that there isn't adequate funding to implement the program. If the Commission takes that formal step then the county fails out. But if there is no funding (like before) and the Commission doesn't take that formal step to determine no adequate funding, then the VSP will likely just be on hold until funding is provided. Both of those scenarios would probably be on a state-wide basis, not county by county. Anna reviewed the remaining funding for this Biennium.
- c. Mark Charlton asked why there wasn't County staff representation at the meeting today. Anna stated that there was a scheduling conflict with today's meeting and that she met with Lindsey and Dan earlier in the week. There was discussion about the importance of County staff attendance at the VSP meetings.
- d. There were no other comments on the minutes.

- e. Anna reviewed the proposed meeting schedule for 2019; February 22, March 15, July 26 (in preparation for submitting the two year report to the Commission on August 31, 2019), October 25, and December 13.
 - f. At the last meeting the Group discussed a succession plan and the consensus was to “keep everyone as long as possible”. Anna discussed the 5 year progress report due to the Commission on November 17, 2020 and how it would be good to keep membership consistent through that 5 year reporting period.
- II. Stewardship Practice Implementation for Enhancement of Critical Areas**
- a. As follow-up on an action item from last meeting, Anna reviewed KCCD’s cost share policy as an example the Watershed Group could use for cost share on VSP projects.
 - i. Mitch Long suggested that other critical areas be added to the policy.
 - ii. Jack asked how much funding would be available and Anna said that she estimates \$20,000 to \$25,000 depending on the Legislature. Cost share would be focused on practices that is hard to find funding for such as riparian and upland plantings.
 - iii. The Group discussed having a conflict of interest exemption to allow Watershed Group Members eligible for cost share similar to the KCCD Board Member policy. Bambi asked if family of Watershed Group Members would be eligible. Anna said that family members would be eligible for cost share.
 - iv. The Group reviewed a list of practices that could eligible for cost share and decided to wait until July to see what the Legislature allocates for VSP funding to adopt any policies.
- III. Outreach Activities and Materials**
- a. Anna reported that the VSP Fact Sheet and Self-Assessment Checklist handouts reviewed at the last meeting are at the printers. Handouts will be made available to the public at various events and at the KCCD and County offices.
 - b. The VSP Story Map will be made available on KCCD and the County’s websites.
 - c. Anna will be attending various grower meetings to discuss VSP. The Kern Company meeting is on January 22nd and the Hay Growers meeting is February 12th.
 - d. At the last meeting, an online mapping and inventory tool was discussed. A solicitation for proposals will go out today for creating the online mapping tool. She hopes to be able to have the selected consultant at the next VSP meeting, February 22nd with the goal of the site being up and running by this fall. The Group reviewed the Whitman online mapping and discussed some of the important components of the online mapping for Kittitas County.

- i. Karen Poulsen stated that it will be important to have details specific to Kittitas County farming.
- ii. Jennifer said that it will good to make sure data and GIS layers get updated as new information comes out. Anna said that she will be able to add data updates into the contract with the mapping consultant.
- iii. Arden suggested, as way to keep reporting more general and not specific to individual farms, reporting could be grouped by geographic areas.

IV. Monitoring Activities

- a. The Group continued the discussion of monitoring equipment purchases and helping with the purchase PIT tag antennas that KRDC, WDFW and the Yakamas are looking to install on some of the creeks that KRDC is supplementing. A proposal from KRDC on the PIT tag equipment was made available to Group Members. After the discussion, the Group was in support of purchasing the equipment.

V. Agricultural Viability

- a. Anna reviewed a couple recent diversion removal and fish screening projects and a change in permit and permit fees required by the County. In the past, fish enhancement projects have been exempt from local permits and fees under RCW 77.55.181. That exemption would require WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) sponsorship. Jennifer said that there were some “bad” projects receiving sponsorship and so the agency has tightened up on what they will sponsor. Without the exemption, projects are required to pay the County the permit fees which is an added expense to projects. Anna is working with County staff on looking at reducing fees as it relates to VSP and ag viability. A resolution is in the works with Public Works on the Floodplain development permit. Anna has an initial meeting with Community Development Services (CDS) staff on the Shorelines permit and SEPA. CDS 2019 permit fees will be considered in February/March.
 - i. Group members agreed that this discussion again highlights the need for County staff to attend the VSP meetings.
 - ii. March Charlton asked about the WDFW’s process of making the recent changes to the permit sponsorship and Jennifer suggested that concerns with this sponsorship change be directed to Randi Thurston at WDFW in Olympia.
- b. Anna shared a couple equipment rental or mobile unit ideas that could be made available through KCCD to help support ag viability.
 - i. The South Yakima Conservation District has a No-till drill rental program. There has been interest in Kittitas County for this type of equipment.

- ii. The next idea presented to the group was a mobile slaughter unit. Producers have to travel great distances to slaughter livestock in USDA certified facilities. Pierce and San Juan Conservation Districts are involved with supporting mobile slaughter units.
- iii. The Carbonator 500 was the next piece of equipment Anna showed the group; it converts wood and vegetation into biochar. There is a demonstration project in Oregon where the Carbonator 500 is being used as part of an effort to remove juniper and the product is being applied to nearby dryland fields. Anna will be monitoring this effort to see how it works out both for the juniper removal and the dryland farmers. Locally, there has been some interest expressed in this type of equipment, but all the logistics of supply (enough, location, etc.) and then an economical use for the biochar would need to be figured out. There was a demonstration of the Carbonator 500 scheduled in Quincy this month, but it was cancelled due to issues obtaining permits from Ecology.

VI. Participants Forum

- a. Kevin asked if there needs to be a more organized effort in reaching out to the County Commissions about permit fees. Anna said that she would on setting a meeting with the Commissioners. Mitch said it would be helpful to have some talking points. Mark Charlton said he would talk to the Farm Bureau about contacting Randi Thurston at WDFW.

VII. Action Register

- a. Anna will work on setting up a meeting with the Commissioners regarding permit fees and put together talking points for Group members.
- b. Anna will keep the Group informed on the online mapping request for proposals.
- c. The next meeting is scheduled for February 22nd at the Armory. Anna will email the rest of the proposed 2019 meeting dates.

VIII. Adjourn