



Kittitas County Conservation District

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Voluntary Stewardship Program

Watershed Group Meeting

Hal Holmes Community Center, 209 N Ruby St, Ellensburg
10:00 AM Friday, December 14, 2018

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Anna Lael, Terry Clark, Mark Charlton, Brian Cortese, Jack Clerf, Lila Hanson, Karen Poulsen, Bambi Miller, Dale Rusho, Arden Thomas, Kevin Eslinger, Kat Satnik, Elizabeth Torrey, Karen Hodges, Lindsey Ozbolt, Sherry Swanson, Mark Crowley, Rose Shriner, Wendy Mee, Bridger Cohen, 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 February 15, 2018 meeting minutes will be completed at the end of meeting. The minutes will be linked to the Watershed Plan's comment matrix that was reviewed at the February meeting.
- c. Anna reviewed VSP funding. There is close to \$70,000 remaining in the biennium which ends June 30, 2019. That includes \$22,000 which is 10% of the Conservation Commission grant held back for use by the County if needed. Anna will work with the County on an amendment for those funds into the KCCD agreement with the County. Anna reported that there is a request into the Legislature for \$250,000 for each County for the next Biennium.
 - i. Karen Poulsen asked what happens if the next Biennium funding isn't approved. Anna thought that VSP would then go into a holding pattern until additional funding is authorized. She will research further and bring this back to the next meeting.

II. Watershed Group's Role

- a. Anna will circle back on the Watershed Group meeting schedule at the end of the meeting.
- b. The Watershed Group also needs to establish a succession plan for members.
- c. Anna reviewed the reporting requirements for VSP which the Watershed Group will be involved in reviewing. August 2019 the first report is due for the 2 year evaluation and then every 5 years, a report is submitted to the Commission and

the County on whether the Plan's benchmark and enhancement goals are being met. The first 5 year report is due November 2020.

- i. Bambi asked what was involved in the reporting. Anna discussed reporting on outreach, best management practice implementation, monitoring critical area functions and that a format for the reports will be provided.

III. Statewide VSP Meeting

- a. Anna attended the Statewide VSP meeting on December 11, 2018 and provided an update to the Group.
 - i. VSP funds can be used for equipment purchases for monitoring but must be pre-approved by the Conservation Commission and by the Watershed Group.
 - ii. VSP funds may also be used for cost share for implementation of practices. In order to do so, a cost share policy must be established and approved by the Watershed Group. One example, discussed by the group is 100% cost share on practices that don't have a financial benefit to the producer, i.e. riparian plantings and 75% cost share if the practice has a financial benefit to the producer such as a sprinkler or pipeline. This is the cost share policy of the KCCD, which may be adopted by the Watershed Group if those choose. The Watershed Group must also establish a conflict of interest policy to address the eligibility of Watershed Group members to receive cost share. The Conservation Commission may be providing example policies.
 - iii. There has been a discussion around new vs. existing agriculture and whether or not new agricultural is covered by VSP. There was some language suggested for possible consideration by the Legislature to define new and existing agricultural and suggesting that new agriculture is not covered by VSP, but by the County's CAO.
 - iv. A "free pass" was suggested for the first 5-year report since the implementation period is abbreviated. The suggestion is to formalize this "free pass" in the WAC.
 - v. Monitoring was also discussed at the State meeting and was referred to as a weak link. There was an emphasis on designing monitoring activities to be defensible. Jack asked if the Plan benchmarks were set by the Watershed Group or someone else. Anna replied that they are driven by the Watershed Group.

IV. VSP Implementation to Date

- a. Stewardship Practice Implementation. Anna reviewed the implementation to date outlined on the 2018 Conservation Practices Report handout. Funding sources included:
 - i. RCPP EQIP
 - ii. Regular NRCS EQIPP
 - iii. WA State Conservation Commission
 1. Natural Resources Investments
 2. Implementation funds
 - iv. Yakima Basin Integrated Plan
 - v. Bonneville funded Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program
 - vi. Salmon Recovery Funding Board
 - vii. Fish Barrier Removal Board
- b. The Group discussed cost share options with VSP funds again. Jack asked how much would be remaining after administration costs and if there was a need to use the funds as cost share not covered by other funding. Anna estimated there would be maybe as much \$40,000 in the next biennium available and there is a need for more flexible riparian planting funding. Brian asked if the funding goes away if it isn't used and Anna confirmed that it would go away if not used. Anna stated that she would draft a cost share resolution and conflict of interest policy, as well as a description of priorities for using VSP funds for cost share for the next Watershed Group meeting.
- c. Outreach Activities and Materials.
 - i. Anna reviewed the draft, "What is VSP" handout and noted the privacy note at the bottom of the page. She also discussed that with VSP reporting, projects would be rolled up together, not specifying individual farms or projects.
 - ii. Anna also reviewed the draft, "Self-Assessment Checklist" and said that this checklist will be best to review one on one with producers and landowners, but also as an outreach tool so landowners can get an idea of what practices are important for VSP. Elizabeth asked when comments are due for the handouts. Anna would like them by the end of the year so that the handouts can be published and made available after the first of the year.
 - iii. Anna also reviewed the VSP online story map and asked for the Group to review and provide any comments as well. Options for online reporting and critical area mapping were also discussed using the Snohomish and Palouse Conservation District (Whitman County) examples were discussed. Anna has been in contact with a company who creates and hosts the online reporting website; initial set up cost is about \$30,000.

KCCD has also been looking into some sort of landowner portal to share forestry/firewise information and has a current DNR grant with that task in it. Anna thinks it might be possible to split the costs of creating the website for our County if we address VSP and forest/Firewise together. The Group discussed the importance of critical area mapping accuracy and privacy. Anna said that she would look into more information about the website reporting and report back.

d. Monitoring Activities

- i. KCCD data collection activities to date have included practices implemented or contracted and updating crop data in the county.
- ii. WDFW has been updating their list of fish barriers in the county the last two years. That data is available on-line.
- iii. Ecology will be conducting water quality monitoring in 2019 as a “report card” for the Suspended Sediment TMDL.
- iv. Anna discussed efforts by KR D and WDFW to monitor fish activity in the in streams and the need for additional monitoring equipment (PIT tag antennas). Currently there are antennas in Manastash, Taneum and the Teanaway; proposed and funded antennas in Wilson Creek, and Swauk Creek; and funding needed for antennas in Little, Big and Tucker Creeks. Anna proposed to the Watershed Group using VSP funds to purchase equipment for Big Creek since it had more tie to ag lands than the other two creeks. Cost is about \$5,000 per site. The overall monitoring effort can be used by the Watershed Group, so funding the Big Creek antennas is a way to participate in the larger project. The Group discussed the pros and cons of using VSP funds for the antennas in Big Creek and decided more information was needed. Anna reported that Walt Larrick (KR D) will be working on a description of the plan and she will share that by email with the Watershed Group who agreed that approval could be completed by email.

V. Participants Forum

- a. Lindsey Ozbolt provided an update on the County’s Critical Area Ordinance update. The County will be hiring a new consultant for updating parts of the CAO Plan due by June 30, 2019. The Group discussed the updates and the inclusion of VSP. Anna offered to meet with the County Planning Commission to share information about VSP.
- b. The Watershed Group succession plan was discussed again with options such as membership term limits and/or members finding their replacement. The Watershed Group agreed that it was important to keep membership

continuity/consistency and that current membership should be continued as long as possible.

- c. The Group discussed a regular meeting schedule. Mark Moore was asked if it would be beneficial to meet in January and February with the company who would be creating the online reporting/critical area mapping website. Anna said that she would email out a proposed 2019 meeting schedule to the group.
 - d. There were no comments on the February meeting minutes.
- VI. Action Register
- a. Anna will email draft cost share and conflict of interest policy with a summary of potential projects to receive cost share before the next meeting.
 - b. The Watershed Group to provide comments on outreach materials by the end of the year.
 - c. Anna will look into more information about the online reporting/critical area mapping website.
 - d. Anna will email the description of the fish monitoring program and KRD's PIT Tag Antenna funding request.
 - e. Anna will email proposed 2019 meeting dates.

VII. Adjourn