



Kittitas County Conservation District

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Voluntary Stewardship Program

Watershed Group Meeting

Armory Room A at Kittitas County Event Center, 901 E 7th Ave, Ellensburg
10:00 AM October 12, 2016

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Anna Lael, Jim Huckabay, Mark Moore, Anna Nelson, Justin Bezold, Mitch Long, Jill Scheffer, Terry Clark, Zach Meyer, Jennifer Nelson, Karen Hodges, Kat Satnik, Jack Clerf, Dale Rusho, John Marvin, Jim Miller, Lila Hanson, Tip Hudson, Sherry Swanson, Bambi Miller, Mark Crowley, Arden Thomas, Rose Shriner

- I. **Welcome** – Jim Huckabay, VSP Facilitator, welcomed the attendees to the fourth meeting of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Watershed Group.
 - a. Jim reviewed the agenda
 - b. Introductions were completed
- II. **Membership, Participation Agreements and Roles**
 - a. VSP Membership
 - i. There was a question if orchardist interests were being represented by the current membership, especially in the Alkali-Squillchuck watershed. The group questioned the extent of Critical Areas along the Columbia River where Auvil Fruit is located.
 - b. Review of Past Meeting Minutes
 - i. John Marvin asked that the minutes from the July 20, 2016 meeting be corrected: IV. b. i. remove the word not. To read: *VSP does apply to Shorelines*. The change was made and minutes approved.
 - c. VSP Operating Procedures
 - i. No changes.
 - d. Outreach Update
 - i. The website has been updated. Anna attended and presented information to the Kittitas County Cattlemen’s Association Annual Meeting on Saturday October 8, 2016. Anna also spoke with a reporter with the Northern Kittitas County Tribune. There will be an article coming out soon.

- ii. Anna is working on a two page Fact Sheet.

III. Update on the Status of Watershed Plans and Planning efforts across the State

- a. Jim talked about the importance of staying connected to what other groups are doing with their VSP process. Anna stated that the State Technical Committee has had other groups present draft plans to them. Bill Eller – the State website is being updated regularly and is a good source of up to date information. The State Technical Committee is working on determining exactly what their responsibilities are and what the final project should look like.

Break

IV. Review Available Data/Maps

- a. A hard copy of a map was handed out. The maps currently on the website were put up on the big screen and reviewed, including shorelines, Wetlands, and Frequently Flooded Area and Priority Habitat Areas. The Priority Habitat areas are designated by WDFW. Jen Nelson stated that critical areas include all fish not just endangered /or threatened fish.
The Frequently Flooded Areas are based on FEMA mapping and the maps are being updated as per Karen Hodges.
- b. Some counties have broken their priority watersheds down into sub watersheds. Anna suggested if a separation is done it might be a good idea to do it by land use, e.g. irrigated and non-irrigated areas. Jack Clerf asked if the bench marks are County wide or by basin/area. The benchmarks are for the watershed.
- c. The group was asked if breaking down meetings to different specific topics would be a good idea to gather more detailed information so educated decisions can be made as the plan is written. The following topics were suggested:
 - i. Riparian grazing, fish and sage grouse, data from the Naneum/Wilson/Cherry assessment
 - ii. Local economics from producers and organizations
 - iii. What is measurable?
 - iv. What are the ag practices?
 - v. What is at risk to critical areas from each practice?
 - vi. Yakima Basin grants presentation

The group directed Anna to set up this series of meetings.

V. Ag Viability

Anna provided two handouts (Determining Agricultural viability within the Voluntary Stewardship Program and Sustainable agriculture definition, USDA Sustainable Agriculture, Research, and Education Program) regarding Ag

Viability. These two documents are being combined and the new document should be out soon. Tip Hudson also provide material: Defining and Implementing Sustainable Agriculture. Jim discussed a white paper from Washington Family Farms developed in 2005-06 called Building a Healthy Future for Washington Farms.

Mitch Long brought up the tensions between the environmental community and agricultural production community and stated the need to work towards mutual benefit and understanding.

Jack Clerf asked if benchmarks are required for Ag Viability or only for the Critical Areas? He suggested the group look at Ag Viability along the way and not at the end after determining what Critical Areas will look like.

Jill Scheffer stated that agriculture easement groups are often changing how viable ag is determined: soil, water, market access.

Jack Clerf suggested the group use the broadest definition of ag viability possible. Lila Hanson asked if Ag Viability is determined only on economics or if quality of life can be included. She also suggested that the Group think about asset retention.

Lunch Break

VI. Agricultural Practices

Anna presented a draft matrix that she has been working on for the group to consider and provide feedback. The Potential Impacts column should consider positive, negative &/or opportunities. Jen Nelson suggested including stream diversions and if they are screened, unscreened or require instream maintenance. Kat Satnik asked how far does each section need to be broken down. Tip Hudson asked what is the reason for starting with ag practices. Lila Hanson asked if the group should consider irrigation effects on the aquifer recharge. To go along with that Anna asked about the effects of installing irrigation sprinkler systems on groundwater. Arden Thomas suggested that ground water interactions with irrigation would be a good topic for the informational meeting series.

Tip suggested that the matrix should start with Critical Areas instead of Ag Practices. The matrix should provide information where Critical Areas and Ag Practices overlap, not consideration of all practices. Tip suggested that more progress might be made if tough subjects were addressed right up front.

Jen Nelson stated that sprinkler irrigation systems are good but also bad because if the system crosses the creek on bridges which don't allow the creek to move. She suggested a list of possible unintended consequences should be included too.

Jack Clerf suggested that a list of positive actions currently happening be completed as well.

VII. Outline of Work Plan

- a. Anna handed out a page with a proposed list of sections (Outline) for the Kittitas County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Plan for review.
- b. The group discussed a partial list of potential subjects for a series of informational meetings: Riparian Grazing (Tip Hudson), Wilson/Naneum/Cherry Assessment (Consultants for Kittitas County), Yakama Nation &/or WDFW presentation on fish/wildlife, groundwater interactions (Urban Eberhart, Dave Nazy w/ DOE), Ag Viability (Evan Sheffels, a local grower).

The goal would be to finish with the series of meetings by the end of December. Anna will try to schedule the meetings on Wednesdays from 1:00-3:00 here are the Armory. Anna will send out notifications as soon as the meetings can be set up. Justin Bezold asked if missing these meetings would count against members of the Group. ***The consensus of the group was as long as a participant attended as many as possible and reviewed the materials of the other meetings, it is acceptable not to attend every meeting as these are essentially study sessions with no decisions expected.***

VIII. Participants Forum

Tip Hudson asked for a definition of Critical Areas, particularly related to wetlands and streams in irrigated lands. The Critical Areas are defined in state law. Zach stated that Ecology has a two-page information fact sheet on irrigation induced wetlands that helps to clarify the position on wetlands related to irrigation. Anna will find that document and put a link on the website. Lila Hanson asked to be provided with the best information available on the wildlife habitat. Anna and KCCD staff will help Lila to find the specific information on priority habitats and how they were determined. The information is available on the WDFW website.

IX. Action Register

The group will receive information on the next meeting, tentatively set for October 26, once a speaker has been confirmed. The remaining series of informational meetings will be organized.

X. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.