



GRANT COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

VSP Workgroup Meeting Minutes

February 27, 2017 – 2:00-4:00 PM

Washington State Potato Commission, 108 S Interlake Road, Moses Lake, WA 98837

Attendance:

Sam Krautscheid (Producer Quincy/Consultant), John Preston (Producer Warden), Dave Stadelman (Producer Quincy), Matt Harris (Washington State Potato Commission), Damien Hooper (Grant County Planning), Eric Pentico (Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife), Mike Schlueter (Columbia Basin Walleye), Glenn Burkholder (Producer Warden), Craig Simpson (East Columbia Basin Irrigation), Harold Crose (Grant County Conservation District-Coordinator), Marie Lotz (Grant County Conservation District-Recorder), Ben Floyd (Anchor QEA-Consultant)

Attendance per Webex:

Dan Dormaier (Hartline Producer), Denver Dorsing, Vivian Erickson (Anchor QEA-Consultant), Nora Schlenker (Anchor QEA-Consultant), Greta Holmstrom, John Small (Anchor QEA-Consultant)

Review Comments Received to Date:

Harold called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. Introductions were made around the room and via telephone. The minutes were presented for the January 23, 2017 Work Group Meeting. There was consensus to approve the minutes as presented.

Walk Through Comments Received - Ben stated we will be going through the comments received on the draft work plan, spend time talking about goals and benchmarks, talk about implementation and conclude with plan framework and work schedule for the draft work plan including agencies. Goal is to have to the Technical Panel in June for the 45 day review. Matt asked if other counties are getting ready to submit their plans. Ben stated that Chelan and Thurston, the pilot projects, should be submitting soon and Pacific and Grant will be submitting soon. Ben stated that Grant County is more detailed with due to the staff they are working with that has more details but the strategies and overall plan will be the same as the other counties that Anchor QEA is working with. Harold asked the Work Group their thoughts of either submitting the plan by this biennium or wait until the plan is due by next biennium. He said there is advantage to being first by developing a plan we want for Grant County and not have to develop a plan that has been approved by other counties, which is our strategy, and to use the second phase of funding for implementation. If the plan is not complete by the date the Department of Commerce will take over and develop the strategy for the county which is not what we want to happen. Ben stated if we do not develop a work plan that is approved by the state then it will go back to the County to develop a regulatory approach by amending their code to address ag lands with buffers and restrictions rather than a voluntary approach, a one-size-fits all. Eric stated that he understands that we will have the Work Plan and a second volume, when will we get it for review to be able to make comments and submit by the June deadline. Ben stated this is a huge undertaking for the next couple of months to review the second part, the appendices, and to be able to provide comments. If this process does not get complete by June then we will wait for the proper timeline suitable for the Work Group. Harold stated the Appendices is the back-up to the Work Plan and the changes should not change the process laid out in the Plan. Ben stated the baseline and goals have been reviewed by the Work Group and now they are working on getting it written for the plan. Damien asked if the Grant County Commissioners have been approached about the timeline. Marie stated staff is meeting with them next Tuesday to go over the plan and timeline. Damien stated the approach of being first, especially about GMA, may be sensitive to the Commissioners since they have been first under GMA and set the standard for the state. Harold stated by having the community meetings has been supportive once they found out what the VSP process is. Damien stated that is all positive of those that will be using VSP but there is an approval panel that make a decision by a hearing board by being the first. Harold stated this is why we presented our approach to them to see if this approach will be



1107 S Juniper Drive

Moses Lake, WA 98837

(509) 765-9618

marie-lotz@conservewa.net * columbiabasincds.org



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acceptable. Ben stated we may want to change the schedule till September but other counties are waiting to see the final Work Plan.

Marie received comments from several people and put all of them into the document under Track Changes to review with the Work Group. First comment was if “prepared for” should be either just Grant County or for both Grant County and Grant County Conservation District. It was suggested to have both. A “critical areas RCW” box may be better moved to where it talks about critical areas rather than the beginning. It was agreed it is a good starting point to let them know what the critical areas are. Under FAQ it was suggested under “what are ag producers responsibilities” should there be a statement about what may happen if nobody participates the potential to fail will force a regulatory authority to decide what will be done to protect critical areas on ag land. Damien stated the statement needs to be reworked also. Ben will update and clarify the question. A comment was made to clarify what it is meant by “baseline condition”. Harold stated later in the plan we can go over what baseline condition is. A suggestion in FAQ may be “Will the Baseline ever change in the future?”. Ben stated this will be a good addition. Table 3-1 explains that HCA of mule deer and other gaming species were excluded however they feel that this should not be left out of the VSP plan for Grant County. Ben asked how WDFW makes comments to the county addressing mule deer habitat, how can it be changed to protect their feeding habitats. Damien stated if you put in a new area where there is mule deer habitat should it be addressed. Ben stated it would be covered under the shrub-steppe habitat per the county codes. Ben stated the mule deer habitat was excluded but other species habitat was included. Ben stated that mule deer habitat and critical areas usually is not impacted and if new development it would fall to the county code. Sam stated that most farmland is better feeding for the mule deer than the shrub-steppe, there may be a balancing act between critical areas and ag land providing habitat. Eric stated if you eliminate the habitat for mule deer someone may take notice and should be addressed under VSP as the other species. Ben stated that other counties are using this approach but it will need to be revisited and for WDFW to discuss this internally and come back with feedback. Table 3-2 indicates there are 2,419 miles of streams within ag lands that are designated “unknown” that may of the “unknown” are drainages that have dace and/or minnow species. It is suggested to document the species in the VSP plan for an accurate account in critical areas and baseline habitat function. Harold stated this is a “blue line draw” that to a planner this is an indicator to review on the ground looking for concentration flow to mitigate in the upland the erosion occurring and is considered in the planning process. Ben stated the blue lines may be a drywash or lateral. Eric stated the comment is for the potential fish use. Craig asked that we do not include federal facilities in the unknown streams. Ben stated they tried to clean the map from laterals and irrigation features but they will share the file with the irrigation districts to see if something was included that may be exempt. It was suggested not to use so many acronyms. Ben stated they will work on reducing them. Under “erosion hazard areas on ag lands” it was suggested to add irrigation induced erosion. It will be added to the plan. Under “frequently flooded areas” if FEMA was to update the map will it affect the baseline? Damien stated the last update was 2008-2009 with very little updates, there should not be areas added but may be areas taken out. Ben stated there will be an amendment to the plan if this happens. Under ‘Quincy Community’ WDFW only stock birds at the Quincy Wildlife Area not the whole community area. This will be updated. Under Figure 3-8 it was suggested to add under “ag viability” the sale price of commodities. Under Table 4-3 Ag Landcover Change Analysis from 2011-2015 the question was asked what happens if ag land converts for home development or other designation other than ag land. Damien stated it would be good to add earlier in the VSP plan a part about what is protected and what is not. Structures and other activities fall under the County codes. Under 5.1 Goals the question was asked if 4 of the 5 goals are met what will happen? Ben stated the goal is based on protecting critical areas and if conversion and farming practices change you may fail. John S. stated that it is most likely there will not be a fail since the overall protection is being met but by using farming practices in one area that may change the goal of protecting the critical areas may still be met. Ben stated one area may have a negative affect but overall it is at a positive. Vivian stated there is an opportunity to address it in the Adaptive Management process. The word “recidivism” will be changed to “discontinuation of practices” and the rate will be set by each practice under Benchmark. The rate could be permanent easement=0; direct-seed, irrigation practices=1-2%; other easy to move practices=3-5% and add additional incentive for permanent habitat. There will be a follow-up on VSP plans in 5 years to see what



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has changed, not working, working, etc. to make sure they are still protecting critical areas. Craig asked if there was be an additional incentive in VSP for conservation easements? Ben stated this would be good to capture it but not sure how an additional incentive would work under VSP. Harold stated under "Goals" and "Benchmarks" Table 5-1 the meanings need to be revisited since the legislation meaning is different than what is known such as benchmarks is qualitative, a known fixed of time that is not going to change, and goal is quantitative, to establish or maintain the benchmark. Ben stated the the legislation definition is different and have struggled with it. Ben stated there are protection and enhancement goals and participation goals but have rolled it into goals and benchmarks. The measurable benchmark to measure is participation labeled into quantitative such as the practices and the goals is qualitative what we hope to accomplish but not value is associated with it. Ben stated they will review the RCW again to make sure this is correct. Harold wanted everyone to understand the meaning of these as the plan is being completed and stated so in the document. Under the same table to replace "filter strips" with "filter strip/riparian enhancements". The group agreed to add this. Under 5.3 Indicators that we are on the same page of what we are capable of monitoring of seeing what is on the landscape itself and not temperature and other things that other agencies are currently doing. Ben asked what if the state has the data. Harold went back and looked at the monitoring sites, 7 along Sandhollow, as of 2013 they are not monitoring and had changed very little over the time when they did monitor it. Ben stated like PHS and other items that may need to be looked at and come into play for implementation. Harold stated if they bring this to our attention then we can take the changes they make into consideration of where we need to focus more VSP plans and implementation. Ben stated that Gina Hoff with Bureau of Reclamation has a monitoring program in their delivery system and share it for the VSP plan. Ben stated that existing sources that make sense to use will be used and inform us how VSP is doing. Under 5.3 Fish and Wildlife Habitat a statement was made that PHS are not monitoring tools and cannot answer monitoring questions and not updated enough to be used as a tool. Ben stated to use "indicators" and not "benchmarks" and factor into baseline condition and if in the future aerial photography or other means are used to use when available. Under 5.4 Adaptive Management if the goal was not met or need to make changes to meet the goal how many chances do we get before it fails? Ben stated if we meet protection goals we are good but don't meet enhancement goals then have to adjust enhancement goals, you can not fail out on enhancement goals with a 5 year review to see how the plan is protecting critical areas forever. Craig asked what dictates what your enhancement goal and to make sure future funding. Ben stated the Work Group decides that and the goals are set to make sure they are achievable and there are future contracts based on the numbers. Harold stated the private sector will all be enhancement since there is no data on what they are doing. It was suggested under Table 6-3 to add WSU Research as a resource and to add a column that is "Research and Education". The group agreed to add both. The remaining comments was in general about the plan in which it is well organized and a separate shortened document to target producers while the current plan is for the Technical Panel.

Work Group Feedback – Ben asked how everyone liked the layout of the plan. Harold stated the plan and layout is well done. Sam asked where the pictures came from? Ben stated most was provided by GCCD and other agencies and stock photos from NRCS. Sam wants to make sure that Grant County photos are used only.

Goals and Benchmarks:

Ben stated we do not have the resources or to have someone come and check on the streams and other critical areas impacted in Grant County so conservation practices are being used for goals and benchmarks. Goals are also based on critical areas functions to protect the ecosystem and on voluntary enhancements. It accounts for practices implemented and the maintenance. The benefits on conservation practices have a direct and indirect affects on critical areas. Each practice has a rating from -5 to +5, zero is maintaining, negative has a negative affect and a positive is an enhancement and this rating is being used and each practice shows if it benefits a critical area function. Sam said there are many doing practices on their own or through a consultant how will this be handled? Harold stated that many of the private sector has agreed to work with us in documenting their practices and the private sector if meeting a standard will be documented and the plan may also let them know of areas they could work on if they would like. Harold also stated that many of the private sector farming practices are a higher standard than NRCS.





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Implementation:

Harold stated the goal of developing the plan is set for the implementation phase. The strategy is a combination of reaching out to the community through the local conferences in the ag community, tracking practices, tracking government programs, direct government programs to high resource areas, working with private sector, working with the ag consultants all by doing a resource plan. Dave asked if we have to met a specific goal. Harold stated we set the goals and approved by the State Technical Panel. Ben stated the goals are set to be obtainable and trackable. John P. stated that technology will change also that will need to be added. Harold stated that if there is new technology we need to make sure they address a critical area. Ben stated we are only protecting to the 2011 baseline so new technology will not need to be changed as a new goal.

Plan Framework Discussion – Volume One and Two:

Ben stated they are working on these volumes with a user-friendly layout with summary level information and self-assessment checklist in Volume One. Volume Two is the technical appendices for implementers and the Technical Panel and government agencies. The technical appendices are as follows: 2011 Existing Conditions Summary; Goals, Benchmarks, and Measurements; Community Planning Area Profiles; Outreach and Implementation Plan; and Existing Plans and Regulations.

Next Steps:

The next Work Group meeting may be held on March 27, 2017, 4:00-5:00 PM based on all the documents getting complete. If the March meeting does not work then the next meeting will be April 17, 2017 at night to go over the appendices and the next steps to submit the plan. The meeting adjourned at 4:02 PM.



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