



GRANT COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

VSP Workgroup Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2016 – 4:00-6:00 PM

Grant County Fire Station #8, 1021 Arlington, Moses Lake, WA 98837

Attendance:

Damien Hooper (Grant County Planning Department), Matt Harris (Washington State Potato Commission), Evan Sheffels (Washington State Farm Bureau), Chris Edwards, Jerry Dormaier, Mike Schlueter (Columbia Basin Walleye Club), Andy McGuire (Adams/Grant County WSU Extension), Carmen Andonaegui (Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife), Sam Krautscheid, Dan Roseburg, Eric Pentico (Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife), Dale Pomeroy, Harold Crose (Grant County Conservation District-Faciliator), Marie Lotz (Grant County Conservation District-Recorder), Valerie Oster (Anchor QEA-Consultant), Ben Floyd (Anchor QEA)

Introductions and Opening Remarks:

The meeting started at 4:05 PM and self-introductions were made.

Sheffels handed out a packet and went over the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) background and discussed some of the responsibilities the VSP Workgroup must accomplish within 2 years and 9 months from the date the Grant County Commissioners accepted the funding (January 17, 2016). VSP was enacted by the Legislature to create a voluntary process which counties could “opt into” to achieve Growth Mangement Act (GMA) goals (RCW 36.70A.700). VSP goal is to protect and enhance critical areas on lands used for agricultural activities through voluntary actions by agricultural operators, and to maintain and enhance agricultural viability.

Within 60 days of funds being available, the county must designate an entity to administer the funds; Grant County Commissioners named the Grant County Conservation District (GCCD).

Within 60 days the county must designate a watershed group (for Grant County, also known as the VSP Workgroup) and watersheds. The following were sent notifications/invitations for the VSP Workgroup:

- Natural Resource Conservation Service,
- Washington State University Extension Office,
- dairy/feedlot/range industry, dryland agriculture, irrigated agriculture, vineyard/ orchard industry,
- Washington State Potato Commission,
- Washington State Department of Ecology,
- Department of Natural Resources,
- Washington State or Grant County Farm Bureau,
- Columbia Basin Irrigation Project,
- Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife,
- Confederated Tribes (Yakama, Colville, Spokane),
- Wanapum Tribe,
- Ducks Unlimited; Walleye Club and/or Pheasants 4Ever, Central Basin Audubon,
- Grant County Conservation District and
- Grant County.

The county named the following watersheds:

- Esquatzel Coulee,
- Lower Crab,
- Grand Coulee,
- Upper Crab-Wilson,



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- Moses Coulee and
- Lower lake Roosevelt.

Sheffels also mentioned that the meetings must follow the Open Public Meetings Act and members must watch the Open Public Meetings Act video. Lotz will send all present Workgroup members the link for the video.

Krautscheid asked about role of government agencies in the process. Floyd explained how the agencies will support the Workgroup and would serve in an ex officio capacity. Krautscheid, hearing a lot about funding (money) asked where it was coming from. Crose explained that once completed, the VSP Work Plan would be presented to the Local Work Group. It is possible to use program funds in a targeted approach to providing cost share assistance to producers who want to implement practices to protect and enhance critical areas.

VSP Overview:

Crose gave a PowerPoint presentation about VSP history, process, implementation and the importance of having producer input and support. The 10-year VSP Work Plan will be created by the Workgroup and the plan will be designed to protect and enhance critical areas while maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture. Crose noted that VSP is a voluntary program until nobody volunteers. If a plan is not completed and approved within the 2 years 9 months and goals and benchmarks are not met within 10 years, Grant County will go back to GMA process. The outreach for the VSP will focus on meetings and engagement within 8 specific community areas of Grant County (from North to south: Hartline, Ephrata, Quincy, Moses Lake, Black Sands, Warden, Royal City, Mattawa). While this is different than other VSP process that focus on watershed outreach and orientation, the VSP will still address watersheds in the Workplan to the extent required by the guidance. These areas are identified on a map within the PowerPoint presentation. Lotz will put the PowerPoint presentation on the GCCD website at columbiabasincds.org.

Roundtable Discussion:

Floyd opened the meeting up for question and discussions. In the RCW it states that VSP Workgroups will establish a 2011 baseline for agriculture and critical areas, and can therefore report accomplishments starting in 2011. Work will be done to get the information from various agencies to establish the 2011 baseline and identify enhancement actions completed between 2011 to 2016. Each VSP plan will be developed to address critical area protection and enhancement, identify agricultural activities, develop conservation practice alternatives that will be specific to identified farming activities and critical areas. It will be important to develop targeting strategies for directing conservation programs to resource needs identified in the implementation phase of the VSP. The implementation phase of the VSP plan will rely heavily on a tool box of conservation practices that can be used individually or as part of a system that when implemented will meet the objectives of the VSP plan. Some of these tools are already in use throughout the County and it will be important to capture where these tools are leading to successful conservation. The development of the VSP workplan will require identification of benchmarks that will be used to measure progress toward the goals of maintaining and enhancing agriculture and protecting and enhancing critical areas.

Establishing VSP Workgroup/By-Laws:

Floyd went over the handout in the packets "VSP Workgroup Ground Rules". The Workgroup guides the development of the VSP Workplan and ultimately will recommend the final Workplan for transmittal to the State Conservation Commission for final review and approval. Krautscheid questioned who are voting members on the Workgroup. All agencies are advisors for the meetings and will serve in an Ex officio capacity. Roseburg would like the quorum changed to majority plus 1, the group agreed. Krautscheid would like to add to 1. c. that all items are noted on the agenda at the start of the meeting and to ask the Chair of the meeting if an item can be added, the group agreed.





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Timelines and Work Plan Development:

Oster presented the timeline and plan development information. Anchor QEA has a lot of data on baseline conditions and they will work with Crose on ag practices and getting information from NRCS. The timeline for developing the Workplan is aggressive, targeting submittal of a draft to the State Conservation Commission in June 2017. The timeline is driven by the State budget biennium; if confirmation is provided that funds will be available throughout the full 2 year, 9 month process then adjustments to the schedule may be made.

Most of the community based meetings will begin in October due to farming in order to get participation. Dormaier mentioned to advertise in the News Standard for the north part of Grant County. Workgroup meetings will be held as needed and will start at 7:00 PM during the summer on the 4th Monday of June and September (no meeting in July and August). Meetings being held in October, November and December can be scheduled during the day. Teleconference can be used as a means to update the Workgroup.

Next Steps:

Lotz presented a PowerPoint on communication efforts to be made by the Workgroup. GCCD and Anchor QEA will report the efforts quarterly to the Workgroup, Grant County and Washington State Conservation Commission. Community groups are broken into 8 areas within Grant County to hold meetings for input by ag producers. Information and outreach will be defined by the Workgroup and to identify ag grower meetings to be added to the agenda to give information about VSP. All information for meetings and agendas and VSP will be posted to the GCCD website, with meeting materials provided one week in advance of each meeting. Harris offered the Washington State Potato Commission conference room to hold Workgroup meetings.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 6:03 PM.

