

**Yakima County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Meeting Notes - Workgroup Meeting #10
December 22, 2016 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
North Yakima Conservation District Office**

In attendance:

Eric Bartrand	Frank Hendrix
Betsy Bloomfield	Frank Lyall
Donna Broers	John Marvin
David Child	Zach Meyer
Stuart Crane	Eric Olson
Bill Eller	Gale Thornton
Steve George	Michael Tobin
Justin Harder	Kerry Turley

Project Staff: Neil Aaland, Sarah Sandstrom, Lisa Grueter

No members of the public were in attendance.

Welcome and introductions:

Facilitator Neil Aaland opened the meeting at 1:00 pm and asked attendees in the room to introduce themselves.

Neil introduced the topic of outreach. There are two types of outreach to consider – the first phase is outreach to let people know about the VSP workplan and what is proposed. The second phase is seeking comments on the workplan; this phase will come later in the process. He asked for initial thoughts from the workgroup. Comments included:

- One key audience might be the Yakima Basin Implementation Committee
- Need to reach new people, through newspapers and other methods
- Look at the cherry institute
- Yakima county has a system of public meetings; see about using that system
- Yakima Valley GWMA meetings might be a venue, they meet every other month starting in February
- Can write up information and provide to state farm bureau, local farm bureau, others
- County has web pages, such as those for their comprehensive plan update

This will be on the agenda at a future meeting for further discussion.

Lisa provided a verbal update on several topics. She noted that regarding the agricultural economy, an economic analysis on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan will be issued soon. She then reviewed some proposed language about pollinators. Eric Olson likes this draft language. Other comments included:

- Consider promoting a program for compensation for protecting bee habitat
- Support might come from technical workgroups such as EQUIP

- Should say that a program needs to be set up with certain criteria; frame the concept in the plan that includes a rent payment
- Not opposed, but I wonder if we're being asked to do things on my land that benefit beekeepers
 - Might be the case but this would benefit all, to help pollinators

Review Sections of Draft Workplan

We turned to sections of the draft workplan that have been prepared but not fully reviewed. We started with the county profile. Comments included:

- Neil noted that Arden provided comments by e-mail, one of which related to the profile. She commented on information about the functions and values of fish and wildlife priority species and wetlands, and suggested discussing what is unique or of particular consideration when looking at these critical areas within Yakima County
 - Betsy agreed and thinks it would be useful to pick out some of the unique attributes
- Be sure to check the numbers for land area; don't seem to add up
- WDFW has some specific concerns about the Moxee area; fires have caused loss of special habitat
- Lisa noted that all watersheds were nominated for inclusion in the VSP workplan, but the Wenas watershed was identified as a priority
- We need to think about prioritizing other basins; should discuss at the end of this planning process
- David Child had some specific changes to exhibit 4
- John noted that we also need to refer to definitions in the county CAO
 - Lisa will look at that and pull in county definitions

Next up was baseline conditions. Lisa noted that the 2015 data is most recent, so that is being compared to 2011 to determine the baseline. Mike Tobin wonders what the group thinks about the 100' riparian area being used as the "study area"; he doesn't want that to become a buffer. Steve George agreed and suggested being very clear why that has been chosen. Gale said clarify this; VSP is not a regulatory approach. Bill Eller noted the disclaimer and suggested being sure it's prominent; he also suggested highlighting the use of 2015 data for the Technical Panel. Lisa said we can further highlight those.

Other comments included:

- Elk and Rocky Mountain Elk are the same; Sarah will re-check that reference
- David Child noted that large conservation efforts are resulting in savings of 50-60 cubic feet per second for irrigation; check with Wendy Christensen at the Bureau of Reclamation
- Justin noted that farm improvements have been outstripping work being done by irrigation districts

Next document was on technical assistance; Lisa summarized this. The lead technical service providers are proposed to be the two Conservation Districts, each within their service area.

The next document was Goals, Benchmarks, and Monitoring. Several comments were noted:

- Betsy commented on the fire issue, and suggested adding “other agencies” to the Yakima Training Center reference; she also suggested beefing up the goal to “control cheat grass”
- Eric wonders about the fire protection infrastructure to address fires in the future
- Steve noted firefighters are typically only protecting structures, not crops
- Eric wonders if the Wenas standards will apply elsewhere (Yes)
- Frank Lyall noted that the pollinator habitat suggestion should not become a regulatory requirement

Next steps:

Everyone is to review documents and provide additional written feedback by close of business on Friday, January 6.

The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 26 from 1:00 to 3:00 at the North Yakima Conservation District.