

**Yakima County Voluntary Stewardship Program  
Meeting Notes - Workgroup Meeting #14  
April 27, 2017 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
North Yakima Conservation District Office**

In attendance:

Eric Bartrand, WDFW  
Betsy Bloomfield, CCC  
Donna Broers, TU  
Steve George, Dairy Federation  
Byron Gumz, Yakima Co  
Frank Hendrix, Ag Industries

Frank Lyall, YCFB  
Eric Olson, Honey Bees  
Brent Renfrow, WDFW  
Gale Thornton, YCCA  
Kerry Turley, Yakima Audubon

Project Staff: Neil Aaland, Lisa Grueter, Sarah Sandstrom

Welcome and introductions:

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

Public Comment: No members of the public were present to offer any public comment.

Administrative items

Neil said he and Lisa met earlier this morning with some agricultural members of the workgroup, and wanted to summarize that discussion for transparency. He had been contacted by Frank Lyall about some concerns. Frank said those concerns were about the presentation of the remote sensing proposal, and the presentation of the shrub steppe prioritization proposal. The remote sensing document was not on the agenda, which he found troubling. Neil asked all members of the workgroup to send him any information they want to present one week prior to a meeting; this will allow materials to be sent out to the entire group.

Neil raised the topic of which entity should serve as the fiscal agent for future monies received by the workgroup. The county served as the fiscal agent for this first biennium. Lynn Dietrich said the county does not have a preference. Gale suggested using the RC&D; Frank Hendrix had raised this as an idea at the last meeting. They are well structured to serve this role. Betsy thought it was either the RC&D or the Conservation District. Others thought the CD might be recipients of funding, so might not want to serve as fiscal agent. In general, workgroup members seemed comfortable with the RC&D serving in the fiscal agent role.

Neil then reminded the workgroup about the discussion last meeting about when to submit the workplan for final approval by the Conservation Commission. Initially, several people including Mike Tobin wanted to submit for approval by the end of June. Mike contacted Neil earlier this week to state he now thinks it might be better to wait and submit later. After discussion, the workgroup agreed this probably makes more sense. We'll work on getting the workplan as complete as possible by then, since the contract

between the BERK consulting team and the county will end on June 30. Gale and Steve think it might make sense to have a small contract with the consulting team using future money, to help wrap up the work. Frank Lyall suggested it was still too early to indicate direction, and next steps on future work should come back to the Work Group.

#### SWOT Analysis:

Lisa explained this is a way of helping to identify different aspects related to the agricultural economy. The discussion is a brainstorming on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This will help develop goals and benchmarks related to the ag economy. Lisa explained that the state Conservation Commission recommended this regarding the agricultural economy. She then led a brainstorming around each of the four topics. The comments from the workgroup were captured on flipcharts and typed up; these are appended to this meeting summary.

#### Review of full workplan:

Lisa began this topic by pointing to the attachment “work plan comments – April 2017”. She noted that the section on “value and extent of agriculture” will incorporate the SWOT discussion from today. She also explained that, for the Chelan work plan, a budget was developed for implementing the plan. The Technical Panel responded well to that budget, so we will work on one for Yakima.

The discussion on the workplan started with section 7-1. Sarah explained that the protection standards are now separated from the enhancement standards. Work group members thought that made sense. Other comments were that the language should refer to maintaining flows, not improving; Gale noted that flows are based primarily on climate. Steve noted that county and state road strips are a source of invasive species/noxious weeds. Eric Olson pointed out that maintaining road strips has an impact on bees. It’s a complex issue, and we’re attempting to capture that in agricultural viability.

The discussion moved on to 7-2. Sarah suggested looking at the fourth column, performance matrix. For the item on “managing riparian vegetation”, several comments:

- Gale wonders who determines what is “natural”
- Eric Bartrand reminded that the baseline is 2011
- Sarah reminded that previously, the language said native vegetation, and there were some concerns
- Betsy suggested the language read “area of ~~natural~~ riparian vegetation”, deleting the word natural; the work group agreed

#### Section 7-3:

- Remove “turbidity”
- Is water quality part of VSP?
- Frank said the plan should not fail based on turbidity
- The work group wants Mike Tobin to weigh in on this; Sarah will follow up with him

#### Section 7-4:

- Measuring functions and values: Sarah noted that it is challenging and potentially expensive to assess functions and values of wetlands over a wide area
- Lisa mentioned that in Chelan County, not many wetlands so that was a lower priority
- Arden wants to build in evaluation on how wetland protection and enhancement efforts are working down the road
- Gale wondered that for “high quality shrub steppe”, who determines whether it is high quality?

Neil noted that there is limited time yet to get to a complete draft by end of June (even if not submitting). The Work Group indicated general agreement that the meeting time could be lengthened. The option of a pre-meeting at lunchtime was discussed where questions and answers could be discussed versus a longer full Work Group meeting. Frank Lyall was concerned about a lunchtime meeting, but if there is a pre-meeting of some kind it should not involve policy decisions. Neil indicated that was consistent with how it would work. Eric Olson indicated a preference for lengthening the full Work Group Meeting to allow more time to work through the goals and benchmarks and to hear all perspectives.

At this point, we reached the end of time for this discussion.

The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.

**Next meeting: Thursday, May 25 from 1:00 to 3:00 at the North Yakima Conservation District.**

# Yakima County Agriculture SWOT Analysis – April 2017

*A “SWOT” analysis is an exercise considering strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges/threats regarding Yakima County’s Agricultural Economy and how to protect Agricultural Viability over the long term?*

<b>Strengths</b> What are the positive attributes of Yakima County’s agricultural economy?	<b>Opportunities</b> What can be done to address its weaknesses?
<p>Enhance environment</p> <p>Improved practices</p> <p>Improved ecological understanding</p> <p>Funding for research</p> <p>New technology</p> <p>Certainty of energy costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inexpensive energy costs</li> </ul> <p>High margin commodities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specialty crops</li> </ul> <p>Education (both sides)</p> <p>More H2O storage, more efficient use</p> <p>Eat &amp; wear American, local &amp; small</p>	<p>Diversity - #/variety of products. Helps with price volatility</p> <p>Diversity of producers. Ethnic, female, male</p> <p>Having Ag keeps land for both Ag &amp; wildlife</p> <p>Peak/unique area to produce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Climate, soil, water</li> <li>- Marketing</li> </ul> <p>Natural Resources capital</p> <p>Ag \$ supports local businesses</p> <p>Ag Infrastructure – distribution &amp; production/process</p> <p>Access to International markets</p> <p>Education: WSU, CDs, Community College</p> <p>Availability of labor – medium density</p>
<b>Weaknesses</b> What local issues or characteristics limit opportunities?	<b>Challenges/Threats</b> What challenges and trends must be overcome in the future to promote Yakima County’s agricultural viability?
<p>Availability of water. Watershed limited compared to other parts of Columbia</p> <p>Variability of price for commodities. E.g. apples – can be others</p> <p>Lack of vertical integration. Producers getting into processing</p> <p>Decline of co-ops</p> <p>Decline of middle class – due to vertical integration, social dysfunction</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of Ag. Ag is energy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumer more remote &amp; more critical</li> </ul> <p>Globalization/Global Gap threat to small farmer/US farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cap on \$\$\$</li> <li>- Reasonable oversight – food safety; local &amp; imported food</li> </ul>	<p>Vilification of Ag</p> <p>Vertical Integration (threat to the small producers)</p> <p>Decline of coops</p> <p>Loss of private ag land to public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Over leases only large producers can afford</li> </ul> <p>Regulations &amp; Global Gap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Endangered Species</li> <li>- Transfer of liability to farmer</li> <li>- Reduced Autonomy</li> <li>- Additional burden to small producers</li> </ul> <p>Introducing wolves, grizzly bears</p> <p>Concentration of wealth</p> <p>Inequality in global markets</p> <p>Global economy</p> <p>Citizenship of local labor force</p>

**Paradox**

- Don't regulate food safety
- Investment in Ag infrastructure (irrigation)

**Charge what it costs**

**Overregulation**

**Domestic market is flat**

**Rule of laws not distributed equally in other countries**

**Speed of research awhile to catch up**

- 6 to 7 years to prove YouTube video is wrong

**Transportation E.G. hay strikes**

**Nebulous citizenship**