

**Yakima County Voluntary Stewardship Program  
Meeting Notes - Workgroup Meeting #16  
June 22, 2017 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
North Yakima Conservation District Office**

In attendance:

Eric Bartrand, WDFW  
Betsy Bloomfield, CCC  
David Child  
Stuart Crane, Yakama Tribe  
Lynn Dietrich, Yakima County  
Scott Downes, WDFW  
Byron Gumz, Yakima Co  
Frank Hendrix, Ag Industries

Frank Lyall, YCFB  
Eric Olson, Honey Bees  
Arden Thomas, WWT  
Gail Thornton, YCCA  
Mike Tobin, NYCD  
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. He reminded that everyone agreed to meet until 4:00 pm. Following that, at 5:30 the public forum will begin. At around 6 pm, a presentation will be made, then time for informal discussion. The forum is expected to conclude by 7 pm.

Neil provided an update on informal review of the Yakima work plan by the Statewide Technical Panel. It is scheduled for July 28. Lisa will be attending and presenting a summary of the work plan. Frank Hendrix will also attend; other work group members are welcome to attend or call in via webinar. We will send out the webinar link when available.

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

Remote sensing proposal

A conference call was held on June 7 to discuss remote sensing. This came out of the discussion at the May work group meeting. After the call, a written proposal was prepared and was provided for this meeting. The guiding principles in the proposal were reviewed. Frank Lyall said the closer the focus on individual properties, the less privacy we have. He also noted that Grant County submitted a plan without monitoring. Sarah explained that the Grant County work plan got feedback from the technical panel that they needed to provide some type of monitoring. After discussion, the work group agreed to the proposal. Neil noted that the ground rules provide that members can submit a minority report.

Shrub-Steppe Proposal

A special meeting was held last week, on June 15, for any interested work group members to review ideas for addressing shrub-steppe habitat. A number of members attended. Out of that meeting, a proposal was developed to bring back to this meeting

(and was included in the download link for meeting materials). Lisa reviewed the proposal, and the ideas on page 9 (labeled “ideas to address shrub-steppe in the work plan”).

Mike Tobin provided his perspective on some of the ideas. He thinks the “managed grazing” idea is about having grazing occur at the right time. He noted that shrub steppe has a big component of publicly owned land, and thus there is a good outlook for a private/public grazing proposal to be effective. He also noted that firefighting strategies need to be worked on with appropriate agencies.

Additional comments and questions from the work group:

- Eric Bartrand suggested, regarding pinch points, that the workgroup consider a contingency if we have conversion of land in those areas
- Betsy thinks we need incentive programs to maintain those areas
- Frank Hendrix thinks it will be good for us to discuss in the future; it will be important to come up with enhancement funds
- Neil pointed out the last bullet on page 10 that recognizes VSP participation is voluntary, and there can be conversions of shrub-steppe or other habitat
- Arden noted that the firefighting strategy on page 10 is also included as an ag viability element

Workgroup members were comfortable with the ideas included in this proposal.

#### Adaptive Management Matrix

The discussion from the last meeting was continued. We began at Row 9 of the matrix (benchmark of protecting pollinators).

- Row 9 comments: Scott Downes noted this benefits for agriculture and habitat
  - The number of 10% will be used for the action threshold
- Row 10 (geologic hazard areas): Provide more specificity on what it means to manage these
- Row 11 (hydrologically related critical areas): This row starts the voluntary enhancement section
- Row 12: no comment
- Row 13: How do you monitor function?
  - Sarah explained the purpose of the benchmark is to focus on those things that might affect a critical area function
  - Lisa noted that some monitoring methods include watershed assessments by experts
  - Frank Lyall thinks the plan needs to be as flexible as possible; one of his issues is “noxious and other non-native” vegetation, he’s not comfortable with saying non-native because there can be some value with those; he suggests just saying noxious weeds and invasive species. Scott Downes agreed.
- Betsy suggested the benchmark should refer first to acres, as an indicator, and then move on to functions
  - Lisa will make a global change to the document along those lines

- Row 14: Mike reminded workgroup that we need to have ag take credit for these good things
- Row 15: minimal changes
- Row 16: no comments
- Row 17: be sure this section on enhancement of shrub-steppe is consistent with our earlier shrub-steppe discussion; and include “forbs”
- Row 18: No comments
- Row 19: lot of discussion on fire issues. Frank Lyall mentioned with difficulty with federal agencies. Scott noted that the Training Center must re-do its management plan, and there is new staff.
  - We will add some language about “firebreaks”.
- Row 20: no changes
- Row 21: Small changes on the last row of enhancement
- Row 22: we’re now in the “participation goals” section
  - Mike had some concerns about the last bullet in implementation performance metric (“first biennium goal is participation acreage”); that was deleted
- Row 23: Justin asked if we can take credit for “indirect” participation; the answer is yes. Arden noted other certification programs are included under the conservation checklist
- Table 4 is ag viability. Row 29 includes a reference to the county fire marshal as a point person for some of the fire issues; Lynn does not think the fire marshal can serve that role, they are responsible for building safety issues (he will verify)
- From Row 30 on, Lisa explained that these came from the SWOT analysis several meetings ago.

Workgroup members wondered what it meant that the county established the Wenas watershed as the priority. Lynn was concerned about the rest of the county. Lisa mentioned all of the county is included in VSP, but the Wenas is the primary emphasis. This does not mean other portions of the county cannot also participate as staff time from the technical service providers and funding warrants. The consultant team will add a discussion of how we are addressing the prioritization issue.

David Child had a couple of map corrections, noted by Lisa.

Eric had some corrections to page 1 of the matrix.

That concluded the matrix discussion.

#### Implementation/Monitoring Responsibilities

Lisa reviewed Table 8.1, which talks about monitoring and adaptive management. There are some assignments in this section. She explained who is doing which mapping. Lynn is okay with the county doing some of the mapping work for the workgroup. The county would be working for the work group, would prepare reports and information for the work group. We need to discuss this with Laurie Crowe to be sure she is okay with the role of South Yakima Conservation District.

Neil explained the process for approval. After the informal technical review panel meeting on July 28, the work group will need to convene and discuss any feedback received. At that point, it is likely the work plan would be recommended for forward to the Conservation Commission for their approval. A work group meeting was tentatively set for August 3 (backup date of August 17 if more time is needed for the consultant team to prepare a response to comments).

The meeting ended at 4:00 p.m.

**Next meetings:**

- **Friday, July 28 meeting of the Statewide Technical Panel in Lacey, WA (informal review of the work plan)**
- **Thursday, August 3 – Workgroup meeting in Yakima to review TP recommendations and consider revisions to work plan (if needed)**
- *Thursday, August 17 – backup date for workgroup meeting if August 3 does not work*