

**Yakima County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Meeting Notes - Workgroup Meeting #17
August 3, 2017 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
North Yakima Conservation District Office**

In attendance:

Eric Bartrand, WDFW
Justin Bezold
Betsy Bloomfield, CCC
Stuart Crane, Yakama Tribe
Laurie Crow, SYCD
Lynn Deitrich, Yakima County
Rodney Dietz, SYCD
Scott Downes, WDFW
Steve George

Byron Gumz, Yakima Co
Mark Herke, Yakima Co Farm Bureau
Frank Hendrix, Ag Industries
Heather Kosaka, Ecology
Evan Sheffels, WSFB (phone)
Arden Thomas, WWT
Gail Thornton, YCCA
Mike Tobin, NYCD
Kerry Turley, Yakima Audubon

Project Staff: Neil Aaland, Lisa Grueter, Sarah Sandstrom

Other: Joan Mendoza

Welcome and introductions:

Facilitator Neil Aaland opened the meeting at 1:00 pm and asked attendees to introduce themselves. Evan Sheffels wanted the group to know that new legislation gives the Technical Panel (TP) 90 days, instead of 45 days, to decide on a work plan once it is submitted for formal review.

Public Comment: Joan Mendoza, Friends of Toppenish Creek, asked the work group to consider addressing leaching of composting operations in the work plan.

Technical Panel Feedback

The Yakima Plan was presented for informal review on Friday, July 28. Present in Lacey were Lisa Grueter, Frank Hendrix, and Mike Tobin. Several workgroup members participated in the webinar (although it was noted the technology was not cooperating). Neil asked for general impressions from the people who were there in person.

Frank Hendrix thought the feedback from the TP was helpful. Points he captured in his notes:

- There were some questions about whether the right people were participating in the work group
- They were interested in numbers – acreage, number of people contact
- For imagery, they were okay with the plan, but wanted to see what we'll use in the future
- Questions about agriculture on Yakama Nation Reservation
- They want to see a narrative describing how this would work with the Yakama Nation

- They wondered why the Wenas watershed was chosen as a priority
- We're the only plan aiming for submission in September

Frank said he thinks we need to submit as soon as possible, the bar keeps getting raised. They were also interested in understanding the methods to administer the work plan, from a financial standpoint.

Mike Tobin went next. He also noted the TP was interested in workgroup membership. We need to keep in mind the long view, when they ask for more info we need to be able to describe matters for future readers. More explanation of the monitoring approach is needed. Mike wonders if we really understand the details of monitoring related to functions. The TP wants to know how we're engaging monitoring professionals, more narrative. Where there is the opportunity to state numbers, we should do that.

Betsy suggested that we think about the best indicators for functions; for example, indicator for shrub steppe habitat is the composition of cover.

Mike thinks we need more narrative for participation levels, come up with an acceptable percentage. For example, out of the percentage of those doing the survey, note the percentage coming back and doing more. We could answer this question for each watershed.

He generally thinks the TP is coaching us in how to be successful.

Evan agreed with Mike that if the TP requests something, we should provide it – will make the plan more defensible.

Gale wanted to let the group know that he is not against using fencing as a metric; that may have been an impression at previous meetings.

Lisa then gave her powerpoint and discussed the TP comments in greater detail. The comments were generally divided into the topics of benchmarks, participation, watershed priorities, imagery, and then some miscellaneous edits.

For benchmarks, they wanted more specifics. She suggested adding a column to the adaptive management matrix that describes how information would inform other monitoring methods that could be used. This would include numbers, where possible. In addition, some scenarios could be included that would-be examples of what the workgroup would do with certain information or trends. The workgroup agreed with that. Lisa asked if 10% was the right threshold for looking further; after discussion, people thought a lower threshold of 2.5% would be good since it's just a trigger to look further.

Steve George mentioned shrub-steppe and fire, it still seems to lack specificity. Sarah noted there is currently no baseline information for public agencies, the workgroup should get that information over the next five years. Steve thought that was good, others agreed. Arden wants to look at the benchmark for maintaining connectivity within the fire category. We decided to identify this as an issue to continue working on. Steve wants

the workgroup to put together some thoughts on how to keep this discussion going. Members agreed.

Gale asked what happens when an agency buys 5,000 acres of shrub steppe; is that taken out of agriculture? Lisa said it likely would be, and the next mapping exercise would take it out of agriculture. She also noted that it might go into the “enhancement” bucket, depending on the agency’s plans. This can be added as one of the explanatory scenarios.

She asked what we want monitoring to accomplish. Justin wonders what the base image is that is acceptable. Lisa said we have some broad parameters, and want to start with what is easily obtainable. Gale noted that some areas have rocky soil, some have better soils, that’s part of the understanding of the habitat.

Betsy mentioned that the composition and cover issue relates to figuring out invasive species and the fire issue; these can serve as indicators. Gale noted the difference between habitat on the north slope versus the south slope of a hill.

We then moved to discussing how monitoring can help with understanding the status of specific critical areas. Sarah captured this conversation on flip-charts; these will be attached. The data for wetlands is quite old, from the 1970s and 1980s. Ecology is currently working on a change analysis for wetlands; that will be reviewed by the workgroup when available for possible use. There may also be some information available from Yakima County on a coarse scale.

For floodplains, the issue is dis-connected floodplains. Primary information available is FEMA mapping. The workgroup decided to include statements that we will also use available information such LIDAR imagery.

As a general statement, the work plan should include a statement that they will consider using new monitoring technology if it becomes available.

For critical aquifer recharge areas (CARA), Sarah summarized what the plan says. Steve asked about the term “conservation practices”; the workgroup thinks “BMPs” (best management practices) is better. Lisa noted the TP wanted more connection to federal and efforts, including the GWMA (ground water management area) effort.

Lisa then discussed geologically hazardous areas. The plan discusses conservation practices implemented to prevent erosion. It may be good to narrow down the focus of this section. We need to better explain what we’ll use for monitoring this critical area.

Participation was then discussed. It might be acreage, not other numbers. Lisa talked with the Ecology TP member, and it seems Ecology would be satisfied with a map showing where participation is occurring. Lisa can talk with Mike Tobin and Laurie Crowe about what is happening in their areas. Arden suggested describing what factors

are used in targeting participants. Betsy noted that for our recent public workshop, 1,000 notices were sent and we had 6 people attend.

Lisa asked about priority watersheds, aside from Wenas – how to we explain that? Gale noted that Wenas will take in many of the critical areas. The discussion ended up noting that although the county listed Wenas as a starting priority, the intention is to work elsewhere in the county as appropriate. The perspective is not to focus all available funding and work only in the Wenas watershed, but just look there as an initial starting place. This will need to be better explained in the work plan.

That concluded the substantive discussion. Neil mentioned that the work group now has \$220,000 for the current biennium from the state Conservation Commission. Lynn Deitrick said the new contract is going before the Board of County Commissioners on August 16. After that is accepted, if the workgroup wants the RC&D to serve as the funding administrator, a follow-up agreement will be worked out between the county and the RC&D. The workgroup decided to have Lynn extend the contract for the consulting team to take it through submittal to the TP and any response needed at that point.

The workgroup will meet again on August 17 to review the next iteration of the work plan, based on today's discussion. It may be that, after that meeting, the plan can be submitted to the TP for formal review.

The meeting ended at 4:00 p.m.

Next meeting:

- Thursday, August 17 from 1:00 to 4:00, North Yakima Conservation District meeting room