

Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Program

Workgroup Meeting #59

October 28, 2021, 4:00-6:00 pm

Online via Zoom

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

In Attendance:

John Stuhlmiller, WFB
Eric Johnson, Johnson Jersey Dairy
Bruce Morgan, TCFB/UPPL
Benjamin Tindall, WFB
Sarah Moorehead, TCD
Christina Chaput, TC
Marguerite Abplanalp, TCD
Paul Thomsen, Blacksmith Farms
Richard Mankamyer, TC Ag Committee
Karen Parkhurst, TRPC
Raul De Leon, TCFB
Phyllis Farrell, Sierra Club
Aslan Meade – Thurston EDC

Excused Absences:

Jon McAninch, WWA, Cedarville Farms, TCFB
Brian Merryman, TCFB

Current Voting Members (as of end of 8/26 meeting):

Jon McAninch, WWA, Cedarville Farms, TCFB
Karen Parkhurst, TRPC
Brian Merryman, TCFB
Raul De Leon, TCFB
John Stuhlmiller, WFB
Bruce Morgan, TCFB/UPPL
Eric Johnson, Johnson Farms
Richard Mankamyer, TC Ag Committee
Phyllis Farrell, Sierra Club
Benjamin Tindall, WFB
Paul Thomsen, Blacksmith Farms

NOTE: Language in RED indicates action items that need to be completed by the next VSP meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Raul De Leon convened the meeting at 4:07 PM.

Approval of Agenda and Meeting Notes.

Agenda and previous meeting notes approved.

Public Comment

No public comments.

TCD Update

Sarah Moorehead shared the VSP update. This included the information that there is now a total of 84 VSP participants with 2,669.76 acres enrolled. She elaborated on a few VSP projects specifically. Marguerite Abplanalp shared some additional information on the selected projects and the involved participants.

Question and answer followed.

Thurston County Update – SCC Grant

Christina Chaput let the group know that Thurston County has had some shifts in personnel. She shared that they are in the middle of the comment period for the Environmental Impact Statement document. They are in a good place regarding the development of that document and it is planned to be issued in the first quarter of 2022 and completed in the second quarter of 2022.

Christina shared about the SMP update and how it related to the VSP.

The Community Driven Ag Project has been undertaken with the results now being processed. There are proposed changes that the county is looking at based off of the findings from that survey project.

It was mentioned that any help that this VSP group could provide to get the word out about the programs and to serve as an educational component and get the word out on these various moving parts would be greatly appreciated.

Question and answer followed.

Presentation from the Thurston Economic Development Commission

Aslan Meade of the Thurston EDC presented to the group regarding Regional Agriculture Development (RAD). He shared about the various activities that the RAD has a hand in and the numerous partnerships that they have cultivated throughout the region. The focus of the presentation laid mainly on the development and building of the SW WA Agriculture Business & Innovation Park Center and its work. He explained the overall focus and vision for the center. They are currently in the architectural phase and are preparing to entertain bids early next year. The plan at this point is to see the first building constructed in the Spring of 2022 and the park to open in the Fall of 2022.

There was a comment about the need to have the Thurston VSP and the Washington Farm Bureau invited to take part in the conversations regarding this partnership. **Aslan said that he will extend the information to both of these entities with the invitation to reach out and be a part of this process. Christina asked that Aslan send the information through her.**

There was a quick mention of other projects that the RAD is working on such as: the Southwest Washington Food Hub, Southwest Washington Grain Project, and the SPSCC Craft Brewing and Distilling Program.

Agricultural Viability Monitoring

John Stuhlmiller shared that all of the plans have completed their half-way mark and finished their 5 year plans. There was recognition that the definitions of “ag viability” is subjective and open for interpretation. That reflects work to still be done and that the work group gets to make those determinations. The need over the next 5 years is to develop the definitions.

Other Business

Eric Johnson mentioned the need to incorporate dairy representation on the VSP. This drove a further conversation regarding the need to share the benefits of VSP to a larger agricultural community. **It was requested that we incorporate a discussion on the VSP promotion and best marketing practices onto the agenda for our next VSP meeting.**

Christina will make a focused presentation at the next VSP meeting regarding the integration of the Shoreline and the VSP.

Next Steps:

Next Workgroup Meeting is January 27th from 4:00PM-6:00PM with Bill Eller of the WSCC conducting the necessary public meeting training. The meeting following that will be April 28th, 2022 at 4:00PM-6:00PM.

Adjourned at 5:31 PM.