

Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Project
Workgroup Meeting #2 Summary
June 11, 2014 5-7pm
Farm Bureau
975 NE Carpenter Rd, Lacey, WA 98516

In attendance: Alex Calender, Christina Sanders, Teresa Nation, Glen Connelly, Karen Parkhurst, Donovan Gray, Kathleen Whalen, Patrick Dunn, James Myers, Cynthia Wilson, Lisa Turner, Rick Nelson, Evan Sheffels, John Stuhlmiller, Jim Goche, Michael Gaffney

Summary

The second meeting of the newly-formed Thurston Voluntary Stewardship Watershed Workgroup was held at the Washington Farm Bureau Building, from 5:00 to 7:30pm on Wednesday, June 11th.

The Workgroup then took up the topics of Mission Statement, Membership, Scheduling and Ground Rules. Significant discussion was had on mission and membership, and the meeting ended with a discussion of scheduling and location.

Draft Purpose Statement

- There was discussion and wordsmithing of the initial draft mission/purpose statement. The working group will provide feedback via email on the updated version that incorporates wording from the VSP legislation as set out below.
- Discussion confirmed that the areas that fall under this VSP project include those areas within Thurston County that are critical areas where agricultural activities are taking place. The question was raised about whether this would include areas that would likely be used for agriculture in the future.
- Discussion addressed the level of planning and whether the group will be developing more than one plan or developing one plan that can be customized to fit specific needs at the more local watershed and reach level.

"The goal of the Thurston County watershed working group is to collaboratively develop a unifying plan at the county level which provides a framework, strategies and benchmarks that will support planning at the watershed and reach levels, which protects and enhances critical areas where agricultural activities are being conducted while maintaining and improving the long term viability of agriculture and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses."

Scope/Role of Thurston County VSP

- A logical next step would be to identify critical areas at the time of the legislation – July 2011 and to research what work might already be taking place in these areas.
- The point was made that because this is a voluntary program we will need to make sure that the plan(s) developed are implementable.

Stakeholder Outreach, Records and Public Awareness

- Meeting summaries moving forward will be shared with the working group for feedback then posted to the VSP website.
- Lisa Turner (PIO with the county) will work on doing some public outreach to inform the general public as we move forward and will make meeting summaries and other relevant documents available on the website. Lisa will forward the website link to the group and all were encouraged to include the link on their organization's website as a point of reference when they are approached with questions about the project.

Membership

Participation needs to balance inclusion and a manageable size. Attention must be paid to necessary representation, continuity of participation, and coverage of interests. The workgroup began to develop a list of interests which should be invited to participate as the process moves forward (below). The workgroup also discussed a multi-level process which would include: Direct Participants, Stakeholders who don't (usually) participate directly, but are informed and may provide input, General Stakeholders, and the Public.

- All were encouraged to send suggestions on who else should be a part of the working group to Christina (cmsanders@wsu.edu), keeping in mind that we want to be inclusive of interests and have a group that is not so large that the ability to make decisions is lost.
- Christina will develop a contact list to be shared internally that includes member names, agency, position title, and contact information so that group members can easily contact each other and have a better understanding of member roles outside of the group.

Ground Rules

- Discussion about how decision-making will be made included a couple of options. The option most favored thus far was consensus when possible, followed by a vote and including a minority opinion. Mike Gaffney will draft a document addressing how decisions will be made, which will be distributed for feedback.
- Because the meeting ran longer than anticipated (by some), crafting ground rules will be done mostly via email and will be initiated by Mike Gaffney.

Data

VSP Act requires robust metric and evaluation plan

- Cindy Wilson will send out links to critical areas documents and links to maps.
- Others are encouraged to identify and share data and documents as well.

Scheduling

Meeting times/Frequency and locations

- Rotating between times and days to support broad participation
- Meetings are initially biweekly, then evaluate for frequency as process matures
- Consider switching locations to provide variety, access to resources and support participation

Other

- Patrick Dunn informed the group that there are members of the group who will likely be pursuing funding opportunities through NRCS, independently of the working group, but that the funding could potentially benefit work and planning under the VSP project. The working group will likely be presented an opportunity to consider and sign a statement of support for the grant proposal at the next working group meeting. (July 2 from 1-3pm at the Farm Bureau Bldg, Harvest Room)