

Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Project
Workgroup Meeting #8 Summary
October 1, 2014 4:00-6:00pm
Farm Bureau
975 NE Carpenter Rd, Lacey, WA 98516

In attendance: Rick Nelson, Dean Pigman, Jim Goche, James Myers, Alex Callender, Jeremy Davis, Rick Noble, Jeff Swotek, Theresa Nation, Erin Ewald, Kathleen Whalen, James Weatherford, Ben Rau, Bruce Morgan, Mike Gaffney, Christina Sanders, Laurie Pyne (by phone).

Communicated inability to attend: Glen Connelly – Chehalis Tribe, Cindy Wilson-Thurston County, Karen Parkhurst - TRPC

Summary

During this meeting Kathleen Whalen and James Weatherford (Thurston CD) began to walk us through how they propose we use the 9 Steps of Planning (NRCS) for development of a Thurston County VSP. The group spent some time discussing the fact that VSP focuses on agricultural activities in critical areas and whether that applies only to activities that are current, or also to potential activities. James explained that there may not be one answer to this question that fits the entire region. For new agricultural activities that pop up, the idea is that people would want to plan those so that they fit with VSP, the thinking being that voluntary cooperation with the plan would be more appealing to folks than falling under the CAO. James emphasized again that the plan will need to be a flexible and living document that will not be able to address every specific situation in every area, especially in the beginnings of the program.

The group also discussed the fact that although the County opted in at the County level, including all four watersheds, the plan can start with one watershed then can be customized as each of the other watersheds is included. There was some discussion and agreement that one way to define what we are striving for is a county level plan that fits with requirements at the state level, and that accommodates the unique character of the four watersheds while providing incentive for participation at the parcel level. The group discussed starting this four-level approach in a single watershed and building from that to a county plan.

Rick Noble from NCRS commented that he believes the multi-step process will modify well for the VSP plan development and added that although they traditionally focus on parcel level uses they are interested to see how this process develops and how they might be able to be supportive.

Mike Gaffney will follow up on having a WSU student do some background research on what VSP type of activities/programs might already be taking place in other areas – i.e. Are there any examples that we could review to inform our plan development?

After considerable discussion on how to get started on developing a plan, the group decided to begin with the Chehalis Watershed. Several members volunteered to coordinate presentations for the next meeting(s). Assignments are as follows:

Jeremy and Alex both committed to bring data about the Chehalis Watershed.

Ben will arrange for someone from the Chehalis watershed TMDL effort to present.

Bruce Morgan has spoken to a couple of contacts at the health department who would be willing to come and speak to our group – Christina will follow up.

James Weatherford will present information on agricultural issues facing the Chehalis watershed.

Christina and Theresa Nation will work together regarding a presentation by WDFW.

Subcommittees

The group as a whole discussed the need for subcommittees to meet and accomplish tasks between the full group meetings so that we are able to meet the goal of having a plan drafted before the end of the year. The first subcommittee was named at this meeting: Jim Goche will chair the Plan Drafting subcommittee.

Other

All working group members were asked to spend some time preparing for the next meeting by reviewing information about the Chehalis watershed. Below is one link to get everyone started. Please share additional useful websites you are aware of or come across in your research.

Below is the link for the wetland change:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wetlands/StatusAndTrends.html>

Next Meetings

Our next meeting is scheduled for **October 21st from 4-6 pm at the Thurston Farm Bureau.**

Christina will get a Doodle poll sent out to select dates for our next couple of meetings, since November 11th is a holiday for most of our members.