

**Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Project
Workgroup Meeting #10 Summary
November 13, 2014 4:00-6:00pm
Farm Bureau
975 NE Carpenter Rd, Lacey, WA 98516**

In attendance: Alex Callender, Theresa Nation, James Weatherford, Eric Johnson, Jeff Swotek, Amy Hendershot, Karen Parkhurst, Patrick Dunn, Charissa Waters, Cindy Wilson, Erin Ewald, James Myers, Jon McAninch, Evan Sheffels, John Stuhlmiller, Ben Rau, Dustin Bilhimer, Ron Shultz, Bruce Morgan, Laurie Pyne, Jan Pigman, Glen Connelly, Kathleen Whalen, Jim Goche, Scott Kuhta (by phone)

Communicated inability to attend: Rick Nelson

Summary

Introductions of new people: Amy Hendershot, Charissa Waters, and Dustin Bilhimer

Thurston Conservation District discussed conservation plans to give the group an idea of what a conservation plan is to them. Clarified that a stewardship plan will not be as detailed or take as long to write (10-20 hours max). 2 handouts

Ben Rau and Dustin Bilhimer from the Department of Ecology did a Power point presentation on the Chehalis TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load). The following link contains information and links to additional information on this topic. <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/ChehalisRvrTMDLSummary.html>

Water temperature data is available dating back to the 1970's and because of improved technology over time is fairly accurate dating back to approximately 1999. This data could be used for establishing a baseline for areas where it was recorded that are relevant to the voluntary stewardship program. The PowerPoint presented by Dustin and Ben will be sent out to the working group email list serve.

Jim Goche presented a beginning draft of a Work Plan, which generated conversation about what information is needed, where it might be located, how to organize, and what next steps might be appropriate to keep the planning process moving. Jim agreed to continue working on the participation and landowner outreach elements of the plan and will collaborate with other members of the working group and representatives of the CD as appropriate.

- Clarifications :
 - Lead agency is already established as Thurston County. WSU is contracted with Thurston County
 - Conservation district is technical provider not lead agency
 - All watersheds were picked as priority for consideration, not an in-depth analysis. Most counties responded that they wanted all their watersheds

Ron Shultz refocused the group on the bigger picture of developing the work plan (1 handout): Ron discussed how the conversation about stewardship plans is a little bit out of order in the process of thinking this through. He thinks that it would be better to approach the development of a work plan from the standpoint of looking at the broader work plan and the critical area issues within that broader work plan. It would be more helpful for the group to approach this from a work plan standpoint, what goes in the work plan, what are we tracking, what are our benchmarks? Then from there go down to an individual stewardship plan level and what's in a stewardship plan.

Question about the current process to develop a stewardship plan and if that's sufficient for the landowner if he participates to qualify for the VSP.

Ron replied and discussed differences between current farm plan process and stewardship plans: There's a distinction between what's current and what's under VSP. What's current is the farm plan and the farm planning process that the CD is using, that's actually a little more detailed than what was envisioned in the creation of the VSP. Under VSP you're only worried about the 5 critical areas under GMA, so it's an assessment of that particular landscape for those 5 critical areas.

Alex Callender: Focusing in on what exactly the baseline is, and how we're going to determine that.

Ron on baselines and monitoring progress: The other key component here (and in several cases in courts around growth management and critical areas), is that counties have to show that they are being protective of the critical areas. That's where you have to get the baseline so the county can show they are making progress. And then the VSP work group can say, here is the baseline and we are making progress on the protection of our critical areas.

Question about baselines and showing progress: So if there is a way to monitor what we have for water quality and it's not getting any worse, then basically it's at baseline and anything we can do to show that it's getting better shows that our program is working?

Ron answered and clarified: Right, except for the use of water quality. Water quality is not a critical area. If you are protecting and or enhancing the 5 critical areas identified in the statute then the program is working, and you have to be able to show that. But you are not required to enhance unless funds are available.

Ron Shultz presented a document to the group to aid in understanding how the elements of RCW 36.70A.720 – The Work Plan – can be organized into an outline for drafting of the plan. The outline includes each item of the lettered list (a-l) under three main headings: Existing Information and Resource Condition (a, h, e) – **Critical areas and concerns and issues in those areas**; Participation and Landowner Outreach (b, d, f, g, c) – **Plan for working with farmers in those areas to address those issues** and Monitoring and Reporting (l, j, k, l) – **Plan for monitoring change in those areas over time**. Ron suggested that the number of parcel/farm plans developed be used as one of the benchmarks for the VSP plan. Document attached.

Ron discussed the elements of a work plan and products (see VSP work plan elements handout): What Ron did is extracted directly out of the statute what is in a work plan and reorganized them and it became an outline for a work plan. Ron emphasized that Thurston County has the opportunity to create a new VSP process that benefits

agriculture and protects Critical areas. Providing some work plan products will help demonstrate to the legislature the progress that we've made and encourage additional funding.

Ron further discussed starting points and focus of work: The starting point is to review and incorporate applicable data and plans. Specifically, what kinds of plans exist for the Chehalis? The conservation commission is going to get parcel data for Thurston and Chelan counties. Ron described what the group will get from them as a map that shows the parcels, what the land use designation is overlaid with the department of agriculture's crop mapping info. Another starting point is to incorporate into the work plan existing development regulations. Another main starting point is to create measurable benchmarks that in 10 years protect critical area functions and enhance critical area functions and values through voluntary incentive based measures. And finally there are a set of monitoring and reports that need to be done. Ron suggested step-wise working through this outline.

Cindy Wilson volunteered county for first section of work plan: : Existing Information and Resource Condition (a, h, e) – *Critical areas and concerns and issues in those areas* gathering existing **information**: The county can take some of that information and be a point person. They will gather this information and the data in Thurston County, try and provide a little more information. As well as put together the critical area information and functions. If we are going to focus on the Chehalis maybe do a little bit more in-depth information there along with the critical areas that are listed in the RCW and then talk about the background info in order to come out with the framework, overall view of it.

Ron suggested tasks for 'sub-committees': The approach would be to have a group of folks working on that first section of pulling information together. The second group can be off developing the participation and landowner outreach portion of it. Two efforts to speed up the process.

Mike summarized the tasks: Jim volunteered to recruit some allies and keep working on what Ron put down as participation and landowner outreach, the second of three broad programmatic goals. Cindy volunteered the county to work on the first one, existing information and resource condition. Reports on each of those activities will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, December 8th from 4-6 pm at the Thurston Farm Bureau** (address included at the top of this summary).

Agenda items to include for next meeting:

Report back from County : First section of work plan: : Existing Information and Resource Condition (a, h, e) – *Critical areas and concerns and issues in those areas* and *gathering existing information*:

Report back from Jim Goche: Second section of work plan: Participation and Landowner Outreach (b, d, f, g, c)
Presentation on coffee cup by John Stuhlmiller