

**Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Project
Workgroup Meeting #18 Draft Summary
June 23, 2015 4:00-6:00pm
Farm Bureau
975 NE Carpenter Rd, Lacey, WA 98516**

In Attendance: Jim Goche, Jeff Swotek, Theresa Nation, Bruce Morgan, Jon McAninch, John Stuhlmiller, Evan Sheffels, James Myers, Neil Aaland, Charissa Waters, Ron Shultz, Derek Rockett, Patrick Dunn, Karen Parkhurst, Cindy Wilson, Christina Sanders

Discussion Summary:

John Stuhlmiller provided a legislative update. VSP is still included in the most recent version of the budget, all are hoping for the budget to be passed by the 29th.

The group discussed the creation of a State Technical Panel and what a connection between that group and the VSP Working Group might look like. John Stuhlmiller stated that he would like to see a State Technical Panel in place and active soon to be able to assist by providing feedback on the direction of plan. Ron Shultz suggested that Mark at the CC should be made aware of this and said that he is hoping to see the panel get started in early July. Ron also mentioned that legislative funding does include some support for panel participation.

Ron also suggested that the group make certain that the plan as developed addresses the five critical areas. The group also discussed how to be confident that progress is being made with regard to the benchmarks if the information contained in individual plans is kept confidential. Karen Parkhurst inquired about the possibility of the CD being able to certify that particular plans meet the benchmarks without disclosing the details. Jeff Swotek said he is able to share aggregated data, it just cannot be shared at the farm/parcel level. Led by Ron the group also discussed the difference between confidential and disclosable. Plans are not confidential but the information contained within the plan is non-disclosable. Some communication and trust building could be done with landowners so that they might be willing to share some of their plan information. In the work plan it will be made clear that the information and data reported will be at the watershed level and the plan will be developed so that success can be measured at that watershed level.

Ron discussed the Statewide Advisory Committee with the group. Ron has been meeting with the group often and has been keeping them informed on progress in Thurston County, as has John Stuhlmiller. Ron also explained that when a work plan goes to the technical panel and there is a 2/2 split on whether the plan should be approved, the plan will then come back to the VSP Work Group and the group will work with the Statewide Advisory Committee to get it approved. So, that group will be available to help, if needed. John Stuhlmiller suggested that it would be beneficial for the Work Group members to get to know the members of the Statewide Advisory Committee and establish a working relationship with them as soon as possible. Ron volunteered to start the process of setting up an initial meeting, which would likely be a joint meeting to include Chelan County. Ron also said that it will be important to demonstrate that the group has made this process available for participation by a diverse group.

In discussion regarding the drafting subcommittee workgroup, John Stuhlmiller and Evan Sheffels indicated that they would like to be a part of this subcommittee in hopes that some additional

assistance would help move the plan forward quickly. Charissa said she would add them both to the email list serve for the subcommittee.

Charissa distributed an updated version of the Voluntary Stewardship Plan Checklist Draft, an updated Flow Chart summarizing the tactical goals, strategic objectives, and benchmarks, and an updated Monitoring Plan Draft. Karen Parkhurst suggested that in the recommendations section of the plan we could include that implementation of the VSP will help to get a better sense of what other tools are available for data collection related to ag activities. The group also discussed the likelihood that some benchmarks will have to start when the plan starts as there is no data in existence from 2011 for some of the activities that will be measured. Evan encouraged everyone to read the Puget Sound Partnership's definition for ag viability and information on farmland conversion and impacts on water quality.

Patrick led the group in a discussion about how we get innovative in developing tools and practices moving forward and if we are successful in doing this, how we go about conveying success to those who are interested and paying attention to the VSP process, but may not be familiar with the tools and practices included in the Work Plan and Stewardship Plans. Ron reminded the group that there are two kinds of benchmarks in the statute – 1. Programmatic - e.g. working group meetings, outreach, etc. and, 2. Resource – i.e. are you making progress on the benchmarks.

Because of the uncertainty of the state budget, the next meeting will be set via a Doodle Poll.