

**Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Workgroup Meeting #20 Summary
April 7, 2016 4:00 – 6:00 PM
Washington State Farm Bureau offices**

In attendance: Jim Goche, Brighida De Vargas, Evan Sheffels, John Stuhlmiller, Laurie Pyne, Theresa Nation, James Myers, Rick Nelson, Bruce Morgan, Brian Merryman, Karen Parkhurst, Derek Rockett, J. Treacy Kreger, Mike LaPlant, Nick Cockrell, Maya Buhler, Patrick Dunn, Charissa Waters, Brad Murphy.

Welcome:

Facilitator Neil Aaland reviewed the agenda. He noted that Aslan Meade, originally scheduled to discuss the scope of work for the Port/EDC agriculture work, was ill and could not be in attendance today. Neil also noted that he was not going to record meetings; there is some question whether the recordings would constitute a record under the Public Records Act. Finally, he asked the group if they would prefer more streamlined notes, without identifying specific speakers, or the current type of notes. He was advised to produce a more streamlined version of notes in the future without identifying specific speakers.

South Sound Friends of Food and Farming

Brighida De Vargas spoke on behalf of this group. They have been meeting as an informal group with the aim of increasing food resiliency in Thurston County, and have been discussing how to define the agriculture economy. They are concerned about old data being relied upon, and believe a full agriculture impact study should be done. This is important in establishing benchmarks as required by VSP. They hope the Port will serve as a focus point.

Questions and observations from the work group:

- Need to know what the breadth and size of agricultural producers in Thurston County
- Regulatory reform and tax reform go hand in hand
- The definition of agriculture for VSP is found in the Shoreline Management Act
- We might need a subcommittee on agricultural economic viability

Can we rely on existing data regarding the agricultural viability goal in Thurston County, or is there a need to collect additional data?

The previous discussion led into this agenda topic. Charissa reviewed the table she handed out on agricultural viability. A primary question is whether we need new data or can use existing data.

Questions and observations from the work group:

- There may be a number of studies need as part of the VSP work plan, but we have to keep to the timelines for the work plan
 - We can identify more data and study needs as we proceed to complete the work plan
- The ability to track what small producers do is difficult
- It would be good to look at the USDA toolkit (e-mailed out for this meeting)
- The Friends group is willing to be a resource for the VSP Work Group; they don't believe there is enough data but the work group does not have to stop other work
- Data is important but we do not want to hold off on the plan; the plan can be amended over time as needed

The work group agreed that another presentation on data is needed (a presentation was done early in this process), and that we should keep moving forward on developing the work plan. It was also agreed that a subcommittee to discuss agricultural viability is needed. Volunteers for this are Evan Sheffels, Karen Parkhurst, Jim Goche, Jim Myers, and Laurie Pyne.

Thurston VSP Work Plan Draft with Ag Caucus Edits (particular focus on Section 2 for goals, objectives, and measurable benchmarks)

The purpose of this topic is to review the draft document issued by the Ag Caucus (informal group that met during the hiatus). This discussion serves as an introduction to section 2 changes, and work group members are encouraged to **send Charissa written comments by the end of next week (Friday, April 15).**

Charissa began reviewing the changes and edits. Questions and observations included:

- The plan is intended to be adaptable
- Is VSP an alternative to Critical Areas Ordinances?
 - John Stuhlmiller noted that VSP does not require anybody to do anything except to protect Critical Areas (as they existed in as of the baseline date of July 2011; then move into protecting by reach)
- VSP has a very long timeline
- Can we look at carrying forward regulatory standards that would apply?
 - That is allowed by the statute - RCW 36.70A.720 (1) (h): "Incorporate into the work plan any existing development regulations relied upon to achieve the goals and benchmarks for protection..."
- The list of monitoring parameters needs to be narrowed down
- We need to know what is being measured now (it's pretty infrequent) and maybe pick a small number, 5 or so, that we can afford to measure
- What is the frequency of updates for county geodata?
 - Every 2-3 years for aerial photography
- Baseline for critical areas – what is used to establish?
 - Airphotos are used, along with any relevant information from resource agencies such as WDFW; this information is usually office-based and then ground trothed as needed

Neil summarized next steps

1. A new subcommittee on agricultural economic viability has been created (see notes for members)
2. Work Group participants should review the Ag Caucus version of section 2 that we discussed today and get Charissa any comments by Friday, April 15.

The meeting adjourned approximately 5:45 pm.