

**Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Workgroup Meeting #30 Summary
February 22, 2017
Washington State Farm Bureau offices**

In attendance:

Robin Buckingham, TCD
Jim Goche, Friendly Grove Farms
Eric Johnson, Farmer
Erin Ewald, Taylor Shellfish
Patrick Dunn, CNLM
Jon McAninch, WWA, Cedarville Farms, TCFB
Brian Merryman, TCFB
Bruce Morgan, TCFB/UPPL
Jim Myers, Nisqually
Theresa Nation, WDFW
Rick Nelson, TCFB/Grange
Karen Parkhurst, TRPC
Evan Sheffels, WSFB
John Stuhlmiller, WSFB
Kathleen Whalen, TCD

Staff: Maya Buhler, Charissa Waters, Neil Aaland, Brad Murphy

Welcome and Introductions: Facilitator Neil Aaland opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. He suggested that two additional items be included: a de-brief of the work session with the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and the issue of governance. Members agreed.

Public Comment: No comment was offered by members of the public.

Work Session with BOCC

Neil asked attendees how they thought the briefing was received. Jim Myers thought it went well. He complimented Charissa on her work. Eric Johnson noted that Commissioner Blake thought it was important, and addressed road blocks. Jim Myers noted that Commissioner Blake said we need this program.

Governance

This topic has been previously discussed. The issue is how the work group will structure itself without having a facilitator. Neil noted that he had previously suggested the group consider appointing a chair, who would be responsible for future meeting facilitation.

Jon McAninch moved to nominate Jim Myers as chair; Bruce Morgan seconded. Discussion noted that Jim does not represent a specific organization, which is an advantage. Using the work group's ground rules for consensus, the work group unanimously appointed Jim Myers as Chair. Neil suggested that Jim take over as of next meeting on March 3; Jim agreed.

The work group also agreed that we should tentatively hold March 8 for a meeting from 3-6 pm, in case it is needed to meet the deadline for submitting a recommended work plan.

The discussion turned to appointing a vice-chair, to serve when Jim has a time constraint. Bruce Morgan moved that Jon McAninch serve as vice-chair; Jim Myers seconded. It was noted that Jon has attended almost every meeting since joining the group early on; he also represents Washington Waterfowl Association. Bruce mentioned Jon was not one of the original invited members. The group suspended the motion to allow for discussion on the issue of membership.

Jim Goche said part of this is an issue of “who the workgroup belongs to” – the state or the county. Brad Murphy explained that the original perspective of the Prosecuting Attorney’s office was that they were part of the state agency if not completely independent. On Friday, the PA’s office said it’s not a county agency, and perhaps is an independent entity. Jim Goche said the county opted in and accepted funding, so it’s hard to see the work group is not a creature of the county. It’s incumbent on the workgroup to take charge. His perspective is the county needs to own the work group.

Jim Myers said this questions was left open-ended; when will it be resolved? Karen asked for the intent of this question, and asked the workgroup what it wants to be?

Brad Murphy noted that the work plan will have to go through a code adoption process. Neil noted that is a different perspective than what others think the legislation intended.

Neil asked John Stuhlmiller, as one of the bill’s drafters, what was intended about the work group’s status. He said this was left vague, intentionally. The logical thing to him is have the BOCC recognize the workgroup as the VSP planning group.

There was some discussion about the list of members, and who constituted a voting member. Neil reviewed the list handed out at the meeting – those who have been attending and had not missed meetings. Because Thurston CD has been chosen as the technical service provider, for transparency purposes they does not want to be a voting member. Karen Parkhurst expressed some reservations about her potential status as a voting member, but John thinks she has been representing her own perspectives rather than TRPC and should be allowed to vote. She can be included as a voting member, and decide on her own if she wants to exercise that vote. Other voting members include Bruce Morgan, Jim Goche, Jim Myers, Patrick Dunn, Rick Nelson, Evan Sheffels, Brian Merryman, Jon McAninch, Erin Ewald, and Eric Johnson.

Bruce Morgan moved to approve that list as the list of voting members; Rick Nelson seconded. By consensus, this list was approved.

Bruce renewed his previous motion to appoint Jon as the vice-chair. This was approved by consensus.

Review of work plan

The group agreed to use the work plan provided by Charissa, which was the version shared by the “digital subcommittee” with technical subcommittee comments noted. This was based on a partial review by the technical subcommittee, given the time constraints for them to do a full review. Neil noted he e-mailed a copy to the work group about two hours prior to today’s meeting.

Charissa started by reviewing chapter 3. There was discussion about the benchmarks focused on ag participation and on critical areas. After discussion, Charissa and Evan will work on tweaking the language in paragraph 1. At the bottom of that page, there are references to “banked enhancements”.

The technical subcommittee had concerns about that, primarily related to whether this is about creating some kind of banking program. That might include having to address credits and debits. Evan agreed that the term “bank” could be problematic, and he and Charissa will work on that offline. Patrick Dunn agreed that the work plan should avoid terms related to “banking”. Erin thought Brian Cochrane on the Technical Panel had noted that monitoring is the key here; need to be sure the right question is being asked.

Pat had a concern that previous iterations of the draft work plan had not gone this far regarding functions and values. He thinks the changes imply that it doesn't matter what happens to these values. John Stuhlmler explained his thinking that counties are preparing two different “books”. The prime audience for the first book is the county and participants. The second book is aimed at the technical panel, and this one is more detailed.

Theresa Nation had comments on banking and is concerned. She said that credits or debits are very difficult to manage. She expressed concern that some things are moved around, especially with benchmarks now in an appendix. She thinks the core “meat and potatoes” of the plan are now appendices. John thinks this is okay because appendices have equal weight; he does not think it means they are less important than the body.

Jon McAninch said when previously employed with the USFS in the Engineering Dept., the technical information is what mattered most to him. Now, the work plan is the meat and potatoes that will be most important to the targeted audience for the VSP; the technical data doesn't need to be actually in the body of the plan, just readily accessible to the technical administrators/reviewers in the appendices. Added note - As John stated “Book one & Book two”.

The group noted that there was still a lot to review, and they were running out of time. They discussed what process to use to get to completion. Jim Myers thinks formatting is one issue, and the other issue is getting a document completed. Jon thinks that although the workgroup is the decision maker, they still want the staff to be comfortable with it.

For further review, it was suggested that the version produced by the digital subcommittee be the base document, with all those changes accepted. The technical subcommittee will then complete its review by February 27th in “track changes” format. Then, a small group will look at that version and come back on March 3 with a document that includes the changes they all agree on, and a list of the changes they could not agree on and the entire work group would review those. This is intended to shorten the discussion by the whole group. The voting members agreed with that approach. The small group to conduct the final review is Charissa, Evan, Robin/Kathleen, Patrick, and either Theresa Nation or Derek Rockett.

Neil asked if we could start at 2:00 on March 3; the group agreed to that.

The meeting adjourned at 6 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 3, from 2 to 6 pm. March 8 has been reserved as a meeting date if needed.