

Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Workgroup Meeting #47
November 29, 2018, 4:00-6:00 pm
Thurston Regional Planning Council
2424 Heritage Court SW, Suite A
Olympia, WA 98502

Chair Jon McAninch called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm

In Attendance:

Jon McAninch, WWA, Cedarville Farms, TCFB
Raul De Leon, TCFB
Bruce Morgan, TCFB/Violet Prairie Plantation
John Stuhlmiller, WFB
Rick Nelson, TCFB/Grange
Jim Goche
Brian Merryman, TCFB
Richard Mankamyer, Board of TCD Supervisor, TC Ag Committee
Sarah Moorehead, TCD
Eric Johnson, Johnson Farms
James Meyers, Nisqually Farmer
Charissa Waters, TC
Karen Parkhurst, TRPC
Mike Nordin, GHCD
Anthony Waldrop, GHCD
Tom Davis, WFB

Excused Absences:

Brad Murphy, TC
Patrick Dunn, CNLM
Phyllis Farrell, Sierra Club

Current Voting Members:

Jon McAninch, WWA, Cedarville Farms, TCFB
Patrick Dunn, CNLM
Rick Nelson, TCFB/Grange
Karen Parkhurst, TRPC
Brian Merryman, TCFB
Raul De Leon, TCFB
John Stuhlmiller, WSFB
James Myers, Nisqually farmer
Bruce Morgan, TCFB/UPPL
Eric Johnson, Johnson Farms
Tom Davis, WFB

Richard Mankamyer, Board of TCD Supervisor, TC Ag Committee

Welcome and Introductions: Everyone introduced themselves.

Public Comment: No comment.

Approval of Agenda. Approved by consensus.

Approval of previous meeting minutes. Approved by consensus with minor amendment.

Update from TCD: Thurston County Board of County Commissioners approved the rates and charges funding mechanism, which will provide stable funding to increase staff and capacity for more support for VSP. The duration (1 or 5 years) has not been set yet (to decide on 12/11). The board included that TCD is to create a program to support VSP with some of the funding from the rates and charges. SCC came to the decision that the district is in compliance now with elements that had suspended funding and it has now been reinstated in part. The VSP workshop was a success with 14 people attending on 11/3. 11 were eligible for VSP and 7 completed the checklist. Two ISPs are complete now with 12 more ready to go. An additional 6 more participants were referred through regulatory agencies for compliance issues. TCD is working with Ecology and other regulatory agencies to spread the word about VSP as an alternative to county critical area regulations. TCD is planning on holding a second VSP workshop in February (date TBD). TCD anticipates having more than the minimum 11 ISPs completed by June. They will be starting outreach and success stories the first quarter of 2019.

Discussion of ISPs:

GHCD is looking forward to helping the VSP be a success here in Thurston County. Anthony is working as the technical service provider for GHCD. Mike oversees Pacific CD as well and they are further on in implementation. Megan with PCD has been working on VSP, helped write the plan and guide the process, and has assisted GHCD in the development of their program. ISPs at GHCD are like our checklist. GHCD believes that the deliverable are reasonable and achievable by June 2019. GHCD has two other technical providers and is hiring another solely for VSP. They have a team to ensure the deliverable for Thurston get completed.

Discussion on finances:

Question on details of finances and costs of developing ISPs. Sarah shared some numbers on financing and the costs of standard conservation plans with NRCS versus their farms plans and the expected costs of stewardship plans. They don't charge per plan, so the rate will vary depending on how long it takes to complete for each individual agricultural operation. Some will be short and some will be longer and more costly depending on the type, complexity and extent of the agricultural operation and number of people involved. They estimate approximately \$2-3 thousand per ISP. Question about operators with a current conservation plan. The cost to convert or add an ISP to a current plan would potentially be less, but Sarah will need to look into it more. The cost depends on how much time the technical provider puts into the plan. GHCD assured the work group that they will do all that they can to reduce costs,

including holding workshops to complete more than one ISP checklist at a time. The finances are based on the original budget in the MOU and the cost of an ISP equals the staff wages multiplied by the total hours to complete (\$/hr).

Discussion on Thurston and Grays Harbor ISPs:

Clarification that Thurston's ISP form is not a full farm plan. It is similar to GHCD, the "checklist" and "action plan" constitute a complete ISP, so the cost to complete could be much less than NRCS. It is up to the landowner what is in an ISP and how much they put into it. It could be just the checklist with a site visit to verify, or it could be that they want to implement a whole host of conservation practices that would take more time to complete the action plan part of the ISP. It is TCDs responsibility to let the public know that there is a range of potential stewardship actions and the options that they can take.

The workgroup requested a sample of an ISP from GHCD and a copy of their Google doc ISP. The workgroup is interested in reviewing their tracking methods and potentially adopting them and adapting the ISP to an online format to be more user friendly and easier to track. Having a link that takes landowners to an online checklist saves time and money, however it is often the case that people have questions and want to complete it with a technical service provider. Having the ISP in a Google form helps to aggregate and track the data, which is critical for reporting.

Until the workgroup makes an adaptive management decision TCD must follow what is in the work plan for implementation and monitoring. The workgroup requested ideas from GHCD and TCD on how the ISP could be adapted to facilitate implementation. The checklist is the entire ISP once all 4 steps are completed and verified. What is in Appendix N of the work plan was an effort to describe the details of conservation planning and what's included on the "back end" for tracking implementation and stewardship actions. The work group may need to reword the language in Appendix N. The workgroup voted and approved by consensus to have Charissa email the excerpt from Appendix N related to ISP development along with the ISP checklist and monitoring guide to the voting members and GHCD for feedback and comment to facilitate implementation actions.

Question of confidentiality. GHCD refers to ISPs as "pre-farm plans" for reasons of confidentiality. They have worked with the State Conservation Commission, who are of the opinion that an ISP is protected as a farm plan. GHCD's online ISP allows people to skip questions that do not pertain to them based on agricultural type. The workgroup would like Megan with Pacific CD to come do a presentation on their ISPs and tracking methods. TCD can start adapting Thurston's ISP to an online form with the help of GHCD. They expect to be able to convert it to an online form by mid-December so that the workgroup can review it by the next meeting.

Question on outreach. TCD primarily did targeted mailings for the last workshop with electronic outreach and flyers. The workgroup requested TCD to send any outreach materials to the group

electronically and members will be responsible for distributing to their lists. Sarah also requested that the workgroup send her ideas and suggestions of contacts for outreach.

New workgroup voting members reinstated by consensus:

Eric Johnson, Johnson Farms

Tom Davis, WFB

Richard Mankamyer, Board of TCD Supervisor, TC Ag Committee

Next Steps:

The workgroup will look at the work plan Appendix N language for potential revision and adapting GHCDs online ISP form and tracking methods for use in Thurston. Megan with PCD will be contacted about attending the next meeting to present on their online ISP forms and tracking methods.

Next Workgroup Meeting: January 3rd 4-6pm.

Adjourned at 6:00PM.