Voluntary Stewardship Program
Joint Statewide Advisory Committee & Technical Panel Meeting
Friday, March 10, 2017
9:00am – 12:30pm

Facilitator – Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator, WSCC

Attendees in Lacey: Brian Cochrane, WSCC (TP); Lauren Driscoll, ECY (TP); Kelly McLain, WSDA (TP); Amy Windrope, WDFW (TP); John Stuhlmiller (SAC); Brandon Roozen (SAC); Commissioner Ron Wesen (SAC); Matt Muller, WDFW; Alicia McClendon, WSCC; Ron Shultz, WSCC; John Kliem, Grays Harbor/Lewis County; Evan Sheffels, WSFB; Cindy Wilson.

Attendees in Colfax: Commissioner Wes McCart (SAC); Adams Cares, Stevens County

Webinar: Barbara Adkins, John Bolender, Gen Dial, Andy Dunau, Renee Hadley, Aaron Rosenblum, Kelly Rupp, Megan Stewart, Jennifer Thomas, Ryan Walters

JOINT STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND TECHNICAL PANEL MEETING

9:00 am: Opening Comments, Introductions, Session Objective & Agenda

9:05 am VSP Program Status – Bill Eller / Ron Shultz
  • SAC membership update

Bill Eller introduced Commissioner Wesen as the newest SAC member. Ron Shultz detailed his efforts to secure participation from the environmental community. No response yet.

  • VSP budget

Ron Shultz explained the Commission’s VSP budget ask and the Governor’s VSP budget of $7.62 million. The current fund source is the public works assistance account. That may change.

Commissioner Wesen says that fund source is important to the counties.

Commissioner McCart explained that he had a discussion with Eric Johnson about that.

Ron Shultz explained that he recently presented to the Senate AG committee and brought up the VSP budget to the senators. He pointed out to them that the source of the funds was an issue. He also said he had a meeting with Senator Warnick. The legislature seemed receptive, but they need to hear from counties.

Commissioner McCart says he will try to get it on the agenda of the Association of Washington Counties.
Ron Shultz says that the WSCC is over-allocated for VSP and that we will be looking to pull back some funds from the 12-14 or so counties that are behind in their VSP spending for this current FY. He thinks $20,000 from each county will be held back. Those counties can’t spend all of their allocation by the end of the FY. Agency work is where the hole in the budget is. Two counties have not invoiced at all yet (Grays Harbor is one).

Amy Windrope asks Ron what his crystal ball says.

Ron Shultz says that he thinks funds will be found to support VSP, but he is unsure out of what account. He understands that the current source isn’t the best, but the general fund is tight and capital is for schools.

Evan Sheffels says a joint letter of support should come from the TP and SAC.

Ron Shultz agrees that could be a good path forward, but WSCC and the conservation districts’ budgets are separate from the VSP budget. The Governor’s budget has cut the WSCC’s budget by 7% already. Budget discussions are on-going.

John Stuhlmiller says that the joint letter might be the way to go.

Ron Shultz agrees. Agencies might need to double-check.

Amy Windrope says if it’s in the Governor’s budget, WDFW can support it.

[After some general discussion, a letter from just the SAC might be best.]

Ron Shultz says that on March 16th the revenue forecast comes out and a few days after that the Senate should have their budget out. We expect revenues up by $300 million.

- Other issues
Ron Shultz brings up an issue that was recently raised about rule making versus setting VSP policy by the WSCC. Says that the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) would prefer a rule, but that would take too long. This would apply when a work plan comes to the WSCC. The AAG is risk-adverse and is thinking about a basis for appeal. The AAG also says that there should be public comment on the work plans. The policy statement that is on the agenda today is a guidance document.

Commissioner McCart says that only Thurston County residents should be able to comment on the Thurston County VSP work plan.

Amy Windrope asks about the nature of the response on the public comment, and who will make the response – staff or the TP?

John Stuhlmiller asks if a response is required?

Ron Shultz says a response to public comment is not required.

John Stuhlmiller suggests “thank you, we will review these comments.”
Amy asks if everyone will get to see the comments received.

Bill Eller explains that once the public comment period has passed, he can process the comments and post them on the Commission’s web page.

Ron Shultz explains that he had a conversation with the AAG about Thurston’s memo to the Commission. Two questions were presented – whether a work group is a product of the county, state, or independent; and whether individual VSP stewardship plans a protected from disclosure. We are working with the AAG on a response. Farm plans are disclosable, unless they are prepared by conservation districts and contain certain information. In federal law, under the Farm Bill, Section 1619 is more restrictive – not disclosable. We are getting clarification.

Commissioner McCart asks if the WSCC is soliciting public comment on this.

Ron Shultz says no public comment on the two questions – just on the submitted work plan from Thurston.

Commissioner McCart asks about a conversation with the AAG on what is appealable under VSP.

Ron Shultz says that is part of the conversation – an appeal of the WSCC’s director’s decision to sign or not. Whether or not a county should have opted into VSP is too late to be appealed. Growth Management Hearing Board versus the APA in Thurston County Superior Court. Where VSP gets appealed isn’t clear in statute.

Evan Sheffels says the confusion over VSP is in the bill.

Ron Shultz says VSP is an alternative to GMA.

9:15 am: Finalize agency VSP monitoring document – Amy Windrope, WDFW
Amy Windrope says that she has a current version of the monitoring spreadsheet which is available and ready for release. The core document is ready for release. The spreadsheet will need to be updated as we move along.

Kelly McLain says WSDA has more to add.

Amy Windrope says there is not a lot of off-the-shelf monitoring available to work groups. It is a list that is intended to be helpful and not prescriptive. “Final” isn’t the right term to use with the spreadsheet. “Current” is better. It is ready for release. We want it to be relevant and useful. We are asking for feedback – could it be more clear? We have shared some of it with counties already.

John Stuhlmiller says it should be for illustration purposes only.

Amy Windrope agrees it is for reference only.
Evan Sheffels says some counties are using the WDFW Gant chart. Scope and scale of monitoring in VSP.

Brian Cochrane says monitoring is an art.

Amy Windrope says that Kelly McLain will add WSDA maps.

Kelly McLain will get those to WDFW.

9:45 am: Finalize TP & SAC Policy Statement: Decision-making Framework document – Bill Eller, WSCC

Bill Eller presents where we are at with the TP & SAC Policy Statement. A general discussion ensues about the TP & SAC Policy statement. Highlights include:

1. RCW 36.70A.720(2), (4), and (5) establish that a work group can send to the TP their work plan for formal review multiple times, so long as the two years, nine months has not elapsed. However, each time the work plan is resent to the TP, the TP looks again at the whole plan, not just the updated parts.

2. A representative of the work group submitting the work plan will be invited to the formal review meeting of the TP on the work plan, but only to answer questions from the TP.

3. The public can comment on a submitted work plan during the 14 day initial submittal time period. No public comment will be taken during a formal TP work plan review meeting.

4. TP formal review meetings are open to the public to listen to the TP members conversation about the work plan, but no public comment will be taken at that time. Public comment gathered during the 14 day public comment period (if any) will be presented to the TP before the meeting.

5. Public comment will be collected and made available in spreadsheet form on the WSCC VSP web page.

6. The TP will use an on-line system to capture member comments. Once complete, those comments will be made available in spreadsheet form on the WSCC VSP web page.

12:15 pm: April 18, 2017 TP Formal meeting on Thurston County and Chelan County Work Plans; Informal Review of work plans – San Juan County (April/May), Benton County (May/June); Future meeting topics & future actions; next meeting

Bill Eller presented this topic. A discussion was had about the number of possible work plan meetings – both formal and informal. It was decided that the last Friday of each month (April – December 2017) would be set aside for possible formal or informal review of work plans. If no work plans come in during that timeframe, the meeting would be cancelled.
If work plans are received during that timeframe, they would be set on the agenda for the meeting. Notice would be provided on the WSCC VSP web page.

12:30 pm: Adjourn