Voluntary Stewardship Program
Technological Panel Meeting
Wednesday, April 12, 2017
8:30am – 11:30pm

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); Commissioner Ron Wesen (SAC); Alicia McClendon, WSCC; Ron Shultz, WSCC; Evan Sheffels, WSFB; Maya Buhler; Jim Goche; Bruce Morgan; John McAninch, Jim Meyers, Neil Aaland, Charissa Waters, Bruce Morgan.

Webinar:  Barbara Adkins, Tess Brandon, Harold Crose, Gen Dial, Walt Edelen, Lisa Grueter, Jennifer Holderman, Greta Holmstrom, Marie Lotz, Brandon Roozen, Aaron Rosenblum, Kelly Rupp, Michael See, Ron Wesen, Evan Sheffels

VSP TECHNICAL PANEL MEETING

Session Objective:
Conduct an initial review of the Thurston County VSP Work Plan.

8:30am:  Opening Comments, Introductions, Session Objective & Agenda
Introductions were made.  Bill Eller explained that there are representatives from Thurston County (Charissa Waters and John McAninch) present to answer questions, and representatives from Chelan County (Neil Aaland and Lisa Grueter) present to answer questions.  This meeting today is an initial meeting on Chelan, and continued discussion on Thurston.  The full meeting on Thurston will be April 18, and on Chelan on April 20.  The Formstack forms for each work plan should be done 3 days before those meetings (April 15 for Thurston, April 17 for Chelan).  Lunch will be provided for Technical Panel members only on the 18th and 20th.

Neil Aland says that Mike Kaputa from Chelan County may only be available by phone next week – no one from Chelan County available in person.

8:35am  VSP Program update (if any) – Bill Eller, Ron Shultz, WSCC
No update presented.

8:40am  Review the VSP TP Ground Rules and Policy Statement decision-making framework and process – Bill Eller, WSCC
Bill Eller presented a review of the TP ground rules.  The TP Policy Statement document as the basis for the discussion today.  The room seating arrangement was suggested to be more of a round-table discussion for the TP members.  Alicia will be running the webinar and I will be capturing the comments and Practice Pointers.  Seven Practice Pointers were identified during the last meeting:

Practice Pointer: provide a cover sheet or a cross-walk table with the work plan that lists each element of RCW 36.70A.720(1) (a)-(l) and where to find it in the work plan.
Practice Pointer: A clearly identified section of the work plan should be identified and in it an explanation of how the July 22, 2011 baseline was established should be included.

Practice Pointer: Clearly explain monitoring, adaptive management, and reporting requirements in the work plan.

Practice Pointer: Clearly identify and explain adaptive management thresholds in the work plan.

Practice Pointer: Clearly identify active and inactive VPS participants (or direct and indirect – those participating in VSP and those not) in the work plan, expected numbers of each, and how those participants will interact with the work plan.

Practice Pointer: Datasets used for monitoring purposes should be repeatable for subsequent analysis.

Practice Pointer: Clearly set out how agricultural practices will protect critical area functions and how that compares to practices used at the baseline.

We intend to capture any practice pointers and make them available, likely through the VSP monthly newsletter.

8:45 am:  Chelan County VSP work plan – initial review of work plan

Bill Eller asked a number of initial questions of the TP members.
  • Who’s read the work plan? – most indicated they had not had time to fully read all the plan as they just received it on March 17.

Bill Eller suggested that the discussion begin with the members describing their concerns with the parts of the work plan the have read or positive feedback on the work plan on the parts they have read. We would then try to harvest "practice pointers" for work groups who will be submitting their plans subsequent to Thurston. We would be looking for "best practices” and what needs work – things that would either cause your work plan to fail outright or cumulatively.

Brian Cochrane says he hasn’t had time to read it yet.

Amy Windrope liked the way they mapped their ag areas. Repeatable, clear, good methodology. Thought that was helpful to understand the intersection of ag and cas. Appendix a and b and description on pg 32-33. Critical area layers. 7.1 figure.

Lauren Driscoll says pg 22 has baseline numbers.

Kelly McLain agrees.

Amy Windrope liked how they appropriated existing regulations and plans. Nice crosswalk. Pg 22-26 of the work plan – clear for the future.

Lauren Driscoll – really detailed you mapping. Liked the monitoring – aerial mapping – in the appendix for monitoring – Appendix I.

Appendix I – Adaptive Management in Appendix B-J. pg 121 of Appendix I on the on-line version.
Technical Panel reviews Appendix I.

Amy Windrope looks at first page, row 1. It wasn’t clear from Thurston what was going to be monitored or what the trigger was – Chelan’s is very clear. The triggers are clear.

Kelly McLain and Lauren Driscoll agrees.

Amy Windrope likes the “types” and Lauren Driscoll likes that these (the key) is listed on each page.

Amy Windrope likes that each person who will do the work is identified.

Amy Windrope asks about a budget. Last page of Appendix I has the budget. Says that the budget makes it real – they thought it all the way through to implementation. Kelly McLain and Lauren Driscoll agree with Amy Windrope.

Kelly McLain says that budget and level of detail in the matrix is fantastic so that they can prioritize what to do based on limited funds – cost and time factors as well.

Amy Windrope – 1.2 numbers look affordable – looks like monitoring will be affordable for them to do.

Likes in #1 the matrix ecological and economical pieces, and the reporting periods in the table – so we can identify the timeframes involved.

Lauren Driscoll likes the preferred monitoring approach and the backups being listed.

Amy Windrope likes that wildfire is included in the piece on monitoring – affects both ag and ca’s. looked at whole suite of what is affecting ag.

Kelly McLain was impressed by agricultural viability goals are set out – how to evaluate if they are meeting those goals – natural causes versus regulatory causes. On pg 9 of adaptive management matrix - #11. That is a big hitter for the ag community. Is it out of your control or can you influence it? I have talked with many work groups throughout the state on that. Happy to see that – gives strength to the agricultural viability goals.

Amy Windrope says the nexus between what is happening to ag and ca’s and what can be affected is where we should be focused on.

Asks Kelly McLain about agricultural viability.

Kelly McLain says happy with agricultural viability section - #12, #14. Things like preventing wildlife and pest damage. Including those helps the ag community buy into the work plan.

Amy Windrope thought that #14 was interesting – farm damage due to flooding.

Kelly McLain says tractors don’t run well underwater.

Amy Windrope says #16 – is great. It is real.

Kelly McLain says the baseline for maintaining agricultural viability is important for producers – identifying that is really important. May not tie close to the ca’s, but important.
Amy Windrope likes the tracking of producers numbers in the monitoring.

Brian Cochrane says change is hard for producers – there is a tension in new things.

Kelly McLain says Chelan identified strategic tools for ag monitoring. Will tell other work groups to look to Chelan’s matrix as a good example. Outreach to producers and the details there – outreach at events.

Amy Windrope says #16 – the idea of a roundtable – does that reflect a good approach to determine who is participating?

Kelly McLain says yes, a roundtable with producers would show whether relevant programs are being supplied to the ag community. Some technical service providers are not active right now, and that might be something that would come out.

Amy Windrope says restoration and critical side – Chelan County has some unique advantages – Power Administration, etc – the County has lots of resources to think about their natural resources.

Kelly McLain says Chelan has high value crops which helps.

Brian Cochrane says likes the thresholds on monitoring, but the issue of measuring acres of BMP's - #1 – the monitoring method. Part of why we are revamping our system is double-counting or one area of the property being counted as the whole property – not just a portion. A fence sometimes protects the whole property, sometimes not. Tricky to use area protected by BMP as a measure.

Amy Windrope says uncertainty is in all of the methods. The methods should be looked at together to see if that is a check.

Brian Cochrane says it still depends on how they are counting – BMP’s as a measure of acres is good, but tricky.

Lauren Driscoll says to look at Appendix D. Page 1 of Appendix D sets out how the matrix overlaps a cross-checks itself.

Kelly McLain hopes that there are solid sop’s on how they are using the measure – be it a BMP or whatnot. Should be set out in the work plan.

Amy Windrope says, going back to N2 – protection and enhancement going to marry up to each other.

Kelly McLain that helps with counting those who participate but might not participate in a regular BMP program.

Amy Windrope says the technical service provider might capture, on a watershed scale, those who are not actively participating.

Amy Windrope says the tracking tool checklist is great. Stewardship Checklist. Appendix H.

Kelly McLain says global gap and other programs want to see ca protection. Good to track all those programs.

Kelly McLain loves seeing the pictures of the different conservation practices – examples of the different practices that are done in the local community. Actual pictures from the community. Helps
with showing the uniqueness of the practices and the community. Locally relevant information. Appendix H – on the Checklist.

Lauren Driscoll asks about CARA’s – pesticide regulations are what Chelan is going to rely on – which is the main ground contaminate. No conservation practices listed to protect the CARA.

Neil Aaland says this is one area where the CAO was adopted and specifically addresses the CARA and the work group wanted to keep that – didn’t want to do more than that here.

Amy Windrope says that makes sense.

Kelly McLain says the CAO has already been vetted and gone through the process. Finding the nexis where those practices are happening is good – fertilizer testing when purchasing seed.

Lauren Driscoll says if they are doing things, they should get credit for it.

Kelly McLain says there is good ground water testing in Chelan County.

Amy Windrope says that isn’t described in the work plan.

Kelly McLain says she didn’t see it in the work plan.

Amy Windrope says #8 in the matrix – Appendix I – liked that they were included and had targets and suggestions for what to do.

Lauren Driscoll liked that they identified the priorities in case they don’t get full funding. Asks if there was baseline participation number like Thurston – Thurston had the baseline for participation – 11 farms per year.

Amy Windrope says pg 35 or 39 of the main plan (table 9) – baseline conditions addresses some of that.

Kelly McLain says that pg 35 or 36 is baseline conditions for ag.


Kelly McLain says this show they show how much participation has occurred since 2011. Didn’t want to set minimum or maximum on the number of participants – different than Thurston – which wanted to get 11 farm plans done. Ok to do either. Chelan used percentages. Can use either.

Amy Windrope asks if Appendix I answers the Technical Panel’s questions?

Kelly McLain says Appendix I answers most of the question – it is extremely detailed and well-thought out. All the information in the work plan is fantastic.

Amy Windrope likes figure 7 of the main plan – adaptive management matrix diagram – a good shorthand – who does what is set out there. Do they have adequate technical assistance – they divided it between the county, CD, and others to get that work done. I know they’ve got the CD on board to do that work.

Lauren Driscoll agrees, so does Kelly McLain.
Lauren Driscoll says Appendix I has most everything. The main work plan also says that is in there. Is all the stuff in the main work plan the same as what is in Appendix I?

Neil Aaland says yes, they should be.

Kelly McLain says Appendix F – protective measures – section 7 describes the measures that are already in place in law to protect CARA. It is here.

Lauren Driscoll says that she is surprised there wasn’t anything about storage.

Amy Windrope says pg 54 of main plan – adaptive management – three tools developed – Figure 6 - mapping and aeral photos isn't described there, but it is described in Appendix I. Amy is looking at the adaptive management plan on pg 58 of the main plan. Section 8.0 of the main plan. Why not more detail in the mapping that will be done.

Neil Aaland says that wasn’t listed because the assumption is that the same level of mapping that would be required for the whole plan would address this. It is there, but just not in this section of the plan.

Amy Windrope says that it is described on the next page. “The County will conduct mapping... as needed.”

Kelly McLain says that will allow them to answer questions as needed. Will allow them to adaptively manage and being together the work group at a later time.

Lisa Grueter – Appendix B is where sources and methods are. Putting it other places would be a repeat we thought.

Lauren Driscoll says that Appendix B has all the GIS data they used. It doesn't have anything on the aerial monitoring they would be doing. No one saw that in there.

Kelly McLain asks Lisa Grueter if the WDFW T&E Species mapping tool was used?

Lisa Grueter – that tool doesn't sound familiar. We reference the high level mapping from WDFW as a pilot program.

Lauren Driscoll thought that Appendix D – conservation practices and their benefits – that was good. Amy Windrope agrees. The table was a little confusing for Lauren Driscoll – all the activities that have been done and the acres – in Appendix D. That is great having a list of the things there.

Amy Windrope asks about the dates of the signups – what does that show. Why do we have historical information back that far?

Lauren Driscoll says relevant dates are shaded – not included, but we have historical data.

Kelly McLain says there could be a time-lag. EQIP in 2008 – starts in 2011. General discussion on that and how practices are counted.

Amy Windrope asks if this is the same problem as with aerial pictures – how to properly calculate what practice is protecting what.

Brian Cochrane says multiple practices protecting the property – counting the property multiple times.

Kelly McLain says using multiple sources is really important.
Amy Windrope says that some measures answer some questions, not all.

Kelly McLain says there could be others that measure other things. Must collect data and answer those specific questions.

Amy Windrope – Appendix I – good questions – would like to see how that works over time.

Kelly McLain would like to see what the results are over time.

Amy Windrope - Don’t see a lot of red flags in this plan. There are multiple places to get at information that the Technical Panel needs. Thinks can make a vote on this on April 20.

Kelly McLain says no glaring issues to do the required Technical Panel evaluation.

Lauren Driscoll agrees with Kelly.

Lauren Driscoll asks about the regulatory backstop - RCW 98.48 (water quality) not listed.

Neil Aaland says that certainly should be included in the list – probably just an omission.

Lisa Grueter says she thought that was addressed in Appendix F.

Kelly McLain says that the CAO lists RCW 98.48 in it – in Appendix F.

The Technical Panel members search for the RCW 98.48 reference.

Kelly McLain says it is in the CAO regulations for the CARA, but not called out specifically. RCW Title 90 is there, but RCW Chapter 90.66, 90.58, but not 90.48.

Neil Aaland says we did have a discussion of the regulatory backstop. Asks if it isn’t mentioned, what affect would that have – it exists separate from the work plan.

Lauren Driscoll agrees no affect – just wondering why it wasn’t specifically called out.

Amy Windrope says if that is left out.

Lauren Driscoll asks wetland ca’s – small acres numbers – wetlands isn’t pulled out – were those included in the hydrological study areas – any outside of the 100 acres?

Neil Aaland says Lauren’s understanding is correct.
10:25 am: Thurston County VSP work plan - continue review

Bill Eller presents the crosswalk document and written questions answered from Thurston County back to the Technical Panel.

Lauren Driscoll liked the crosswalk document supplied – very helpful. One question – what would the monitoring include – just the participating producers? It was clarified that the CA’s would be monitored – not just the producers. On pg 7 it is talked about it – CA’s will be analyzed over the whole area, not just participating farms.

Amy Windrope says on pg 7 of the response document, not sure how their answer gets to their concerns – asks Lauren to explain.

Lauren Driscoll says the first sentence says the whole watershed will be monitored.

Kelly McLain says all CA’s as they intersect with AG will be monitored.

Lauren Driscoll says it is in the monitoring matrix as well.

Amy Windrope says there isn’t enough detail to know what that means in the work plan. The metric is the type and number of practices.

Kelly McLain says the performance method isn’t cross-walked with the monitoring method.

Top of pg 7 of the response to page 1 of Appendix C – the table portion of Appendix C.

Amy Windrope says CA M-h in Appendix C – don’t know which ones they are talking about, how they are measuring it. I feel like there is a high level of uncertainty.

Lauren Driscoll asks if they had a section for the baseline. Appendix H maybe? The data source for the CA stuff is in Appendix H, pg 23, but it isn’t really detailed.

Amy Windrope says we don’t know if the metric on pg 23, Appendix H goes to quality. We know the function. Cross walking that with the matrix and the response from the County #7.

Kelly McLain says on a map it would just be an area, so to do that they would need to have someone go out to each property.

Amy Windrope if they are saying we are looking at soils and PHS areas and then look again in 5 years, can’t ask that question with that information.

**Practice Pointer – Clearly relate monitoring goals and benchmarks to data collected during monitoring.**

MS on pg 7 – acres of impervious surface on land – valid approach to monitor that metric. But, how important is that? What is the nexus on ag lands and frequently flooded areas?

Kelly McLain says there are FEMA requirements and this is a good metric for that.

Brian Cochrane says he hasn’t hand enough time to review to see if his questions are answered.

Brian Cochrane asks about Question #5 – middle of page on county response document – shouldn’t the data be objective and not be subject to discussion?
Amy Windrope asks about the statement on the top of pg #6 – needs to identify the baseline so you know what to measure.

Amy Windrope asks about MF – is Thurston using HRCD? Charissa – it is a potential – it is not in all of the watersheds now.

Kelly McLain says we know the scale – watershed, but we don’t know more beyond that.

Amy Windrope asks what percentage of CA, Ag land or the intersection of the two will be measured? How does that compare to the CA’s that are not being measured. Could you add an element within the methods that would describe the amount of overlap that is being measured as part of the monitoring?

Kelly McLain says not sure they could do that – they don’t’ know participation.

Amy Windrope says they will and they will map the critical areas in the watershed. They will know which parcels have ca’s on them. They could say how many of those they could contact and who participated.

Kelly McLain would like to know what the monitoring method is – if that could be put in the work plan.

Lauren Driscoll says the metrics doesn’t talk about participation as whole. They need to add something in the baseline condition to explain how they will measure that – under each of the “b”s. They are all participation except for s.

Amy Windrope asks about agricultural viability – what questions are relevant to Thurston’s agricultural viability analysis? Pg 6 in Appendix C – does that have the questions?

Kelly McLain says the land indicators can be used, but would have appreciated something similar to Chelan – the nexus piece. It does describe. Data sources are fine. Water sources are all participation. Regulatory indicators are all participation.

Amy Windrope same challenge as not being on the ground?

Kelly McLain it has some of it – what is actually being monitored? Roads for instance – what roads will be monitored. Is there some plan to monitor that somewhere – Thurston doesn’t have to do that monitoring, but if someone else does it, is it being tracked. Same problem we have on the CA side – tells the Technical Panel what they want to get, but not how they will get there.

Kelly McLain thinks that the Thurston County work group evaluated the threats to agriculture. They may not have called them out, but they analyzed them.

Amy Windrope says that makes sense. Appendix H – good detail about strategies around agriculture. But, that didn’t show up in the benchmarks or monitoring.

Kelly McLain asks Charissa about agricultural viability subgroups work.

Charissa – Appendix M has lots of information about agricultural viability.

Kelly McLain says she dug through that. I am excited about the economic impact analysis that will be done. How is Appendix M connected back to what will actually be checked?
Lauren Driscoll says the last page of Appendix M lists viability indicators. It is the number of people. It says who is monitoring.

[Technical Panel reviews work plan]

Kelly McLain asks the Technical Panel members – no fail-out for benchmarks and goals. The 10 year requirement though must be met. I struggle with the connecting piece – same thing as last time. I understand farmer protection – irrigation efficiencies – but how does that line up with CA protection? Struggling with questions for the work group to answer that.

[We look at the Formstack form the Technical Panel will use to do their agency evaluation]

Amy Windrope asks if there are enhancement benchmarks?

Charissa says the monitoring matrix has them – there are three parts and it is there.

Amy Windrope asks where the stewardship plan checklist – Appendix D.

[Difficult for Commission staff to track where in the work plan the Technical Panel members are having their discussion]

Amy Windrope asks if the work plan checklist is specific enough? Is there enough information in it to get the data needed?

Kelly McLain says having it be more general is fine – its an evaluation of what is happening on the whole farm or a portion.

Amy Windrope says the challenge is to roll this up for the watershed level – there isn’t any notation on the form of what they are measuring. Doing the practice versus not doing the practices doesn’t tell us how much of the practice is being done. The checklist doesn’t have a space on the form to get the data they need.

Charissa Waters says Appendix N, section 2.1. This is used by the technical assistance provider – it sets out the role of the conservation district and some of the tasks they will do. On page 8. Steps the conservation district would go through (pg 11) as the technical assistance provider.

Lauren Driscoll asks about clarifying the monitoring methods? Can you ask Appendix C – monitoring method – scale is there, but not what they are monitoring.

Brian Cochrane says the template has implementation monitoring and effectiveness monitoring – don’t see effectiveness monitoring in the table (Appendix C template).

Charissa Waters says to look at the metrics – they should be able to determine what is implementation and what is effectiveness. It doesn’t necessarily spell out which is which. There is no monitoring “type” column in Appendix C. The metric itself will tell you which type it is (effectiveness versus implementation).

Kelly McLain says she thinks all the information the Technical Panel needs to do their evaluation is in the plan, but it will be difficult.

Amy Windrope says Appendix N is helpful. The kinds of information to be collected can be helpful. It doesn’t give us the method, really. Middle of pg 11. Look at photos, resources on site, will revisit periodically, and gather data that may include some of this stuff. If I knew how they were doing these things, or what these things meant, it would give me a higher level of certainty that we will find the information we need to do the evaluation. “May” versus “will” language.
Brian Cochrane says the absence of specificity is difficult.

Kelly McLain asks if there is anything else to request from the County before April 18?

Amy Windrope says that might not be a reasonable request.

[Discussion about the number of FTE’s needed to do some of the work.]

April 23, 2017 – deadline (45 days) for Thurston’s plan.

**11:15 am: Discussion – meeting schedule – conflicts on May 26 & June 30**
April 28th meeting was cancelled. The Technical Panel members agreed to the following additional meetings to review the Thurston (and Chelan) county work plans:
- April 18, 2017, from 9am – 4pm - both
- April 20, 2017, from 9am – 4pm – Chelan
Last Friday in May – May 26 – San Juan County informal review – Memorial Day weekend
Move May 26 to **May 23**. Benton, Yakima in morning, San Juan in PM
Move June 30 – to **June 20**.

**11:30 am: Adjourn – full meeting on Thurston County VSP work plan April 18; Chelan on April 20**