Voluntary Stewardship Program
Technical Panel Meeting

Tuesday, April 18, 2017
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

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, Thurston County; Jim Goche; Bruce Morgan; John McAninch, Jim Meyers; Linda Lyshall, Jennifer Thomas, Charissa Waters, John Stuhlhammer, Brad Murphy, Neil Aaland


VSP TECHNICAL PANEL MEETING

Session Objective:
Conduct a final formal review of the Thurston County VSP work plan and continued review of the Chelan County VSP work plan.

9:00 am:  Opening Comments, Introductions, Session Objective & Agenda
Introductions were made. Neil Aland says that he is planning to show up at 2:30 pm (he is at another meeting this morning at the Natural Resources Bldg in Olympia). Neither Lisa Grueter, nor Mike Kaputa is available today, he believes.

9:05 am  VSP Program update (if any) – Bill Eller, Ron Shultz, WSCC

9:10 am  Review of Technical Panel Policy Statement re: voting on work plans – 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.

Practice Pointer – For ease of reference, please provide sequential page numbers for the work plan and all appendices.

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

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

9:20 am: Continued review of the Thurston County VSP work plan

Bill Eller summarized the activity on Thurston’s plan so far. Late yesterday Thurston provided another set of responses to questions that came up during the April 12th meeting. The questions asked at the April 12th meeting were not reduced to a separate set of written questions for Thurston since they had representatives available during that meeting to orally provide answers. Nevertheless, Thurston provided additional answers in written form on April 17th. Those have been provided to you this morning.

In addition, the agency comments made on Thurston’s work plan have been rolled up and provided as in a spreadsheet to you. That same document has been posted on the Commission’s web page.

We propose that we proceed by going through each element (RCW 36.70A.720(1)(a)-(l)) during today’s meeting. Those elements that were ranked “meets” or “exceeds” we will mentioned for the record, but otherwise we will focus on those ranked as “deficient” or “meets” / “deficient”.

There are 15 elements in RCW 36.70A.720(1)(a)-(l) (some elements have sub-parts). For Thurston, the Technical Panel ranked 11 of the 15 as “deficient” or “meets” / “deficient.” Those were a, c, d, e(i), e(ii), g, i(i), i(ii), i(iii), j and k.

We have 240 minutes allocated today to come to a decision (including time for voting, excluding breaks and lunch). That gives us approximately 22 minutes to spend on each of the 11 areas that were labeled by you as “deficient” or “meets” / “deficient.” Obviously, analysis on some will go faster than others, but we will have to be efficient with our time.
Kelly McLain wants to start with pg 4, CA M-h – has a question about that – is it random analysis or just a spot check?

John McAninch says yes, it is a spot check.

Amy Windrope asks if it applies throughout the watershed.

Charissa Waters says yes.

Amy Windrope says that is a useful change. She asks about the ISP (individual stewardship plans) and if they are annual reporting.

Charissa Waters says yes, the conservation district will do annual checks.

Amy Windrope says annual is too much – too costly.

Kelly McLain says that a check can be done annually, but not a full review.

Charissa Waters says it is not necessarily a full on-the-ground check.

John McAninch says its dependent on funding.

Lauren Driscoll says CA M-n – it is hard to do that assessment annually.

Charissa Waters says that is a typo – it should say annual monitoring, not annual site visits. Charissa also says that all "may's" in the work plan should be changed to "will be's."

Amy Windrope asks how often the CA M-f will be done.

Charissa Waters says it will be an annual spot check.

Amy Windrope thinks at 5 year intervals would be right for on the ground monitoring.

Charissa Waters agrees.

Amy Windrope asks if in the Appendix C table – the metrics – that if it said that annual checks followed by 5 year site visits.

Kelly McLain says ag viability indicators would also be good to add to Appendix C’s table.

Amy Windrope says on pg 3 – OCA M-a – aerial photos – one of the monitoring methods. How will this be done? What will be used?

Brian Cochrane says that matching photo types would be helpful. Accuracy of interpretation of photos needs to be consistent. Steps to using the imagery to monitor as well.

Charissa Waters says the county does its own aerial photos and we will use those. Geo data for CA’s as well. NOAA C-CAP data.

Amy Windrope asks where in the Appendix are photos mentioned?

Charissa Waters says Appendix O, Section 2.2, bottom pg 7.
Kelly McLain says it would be helpful to add the photos for the appendix. Also a 10% Q&A done at the same time.

Amy Windrope says the OCA M-a – she has questions about how this will be done – metrics – M-c,d, f.

Kelly McLain says they didn’t go into widgets, just conservation practices.

Amy Windrope says it doesn’t have to be either/or - # of acres might not be as important to how those acres are used.

Kelly McLain says they need to identify which practices are more pertinent and those need to be documented.

Amy Windrope asks if the ISP’s drive this.

Kelly McLain says conservation practices drive this. The technical service provider is good at evaluating the appropriate metric.

Amy Windrope asks if there two separate components to M-a data gathering – at the county scale and at the parcel scale.

Charissa Waters says yes.

Amy Windrope says that M-a should be clarified to say that.

Charissa Waters says that it includes for those not participating in VSP as well.

Amy Windrope says a sub-bullet about mapping should be added.

Charissa Waters says the critical area metrics – thorough the ISP at the parcel scale, then rolled up at the watershed scale.

Kelly McLain says that for frequently flooded areas, for example, if the water stays too long. May be helpful – flood plan restoration projects – add a comment to that process – does it affect VSP ag viability?

Lauren Driscoll asks about M-n – the wetlands rating – wondering what “significant change” means?

Charissa Waters says only on-site would significant change come into play. OCA M-n controls all.

Amy Windrope asks if a parcel doesn’t have an ISP, then the watershed scale monitoring would capture that?

Kelly McLain says that a parcel doesn’t have to participate.

Amy Windrope says a note to the table on Appendix C should be added to say what the gathered data would be used for. An action threshold box should also be there. It needs clarification.

Charissa Waters agrees.

Amy Windrope asks about the 11 ISP’s a year.
Charissa Waters says that if we fall below the 11 ISP’s a year, we will adaptively manage. 11 is the trigger.

Amy Windrope says that participation tab on Appendix C is where that is.

[General discussion on the 11 ISP’s as triggers]

Lauren Driscoll not sure how to get outreach and education event numbers. Appendix C.

Charissa Waters says plans should say events. That is a typo. The baseline is 30 events.

Amy Windrope says that M-h and M-a really change her perception of the plan. Helps with my perception of the plan. What monitoring is going occur at the watershed scale where ag and ca’s overlap and when?

Charissa Waters says aerial photos and mapping will by done by the conservation district at the watershed scale. At the parcel scale, ISP’s will be gathered and that data gathered by the conservation district. At the watershed level, it will be aerial photos and mapping.

Brian Cochrane specifically for CARA’s and geological hazard mapping – important for those since they are not easily mapped.

Kelly McLain says you can do every other year windshield assessments of CARA’s and geological hazards.

Brian Cochrane not seeing anything for non-participating parcels. At a watershed scale, no collection of that data for those two ca’s. No idea of what is happening in the non-participating parts of the watershed.

Lauren Driscoll says water quality data might help.

Kelly McLain says groundwater data might have a time lag.

Kelly McLain says geological hazard areas is harder than CARA’s.

Brian Cochrane says ag and CA intersection needs to be looked at a watershed level.

Kelly McLain agrees. County or service provider needs to do that assessment in the field. Need to set up a standard sop.

Amy Windrope says you could use regulatory component of the CAO to regulate those two areas – like Chelan did. The challenge is that, at this hour, how to do it isn’t in the plan. Adding the regulatory approach would be easier to write into the work plan at this time than a monitoring of these two CA’s.

Kelly McLain asks what the work group has discussed related to CARA’s and geological hazard areas?

Charissa Waters says that she will point to the new document from 4.17.17 already started an adaptive management process. We did incorporate some regulations for insurance for frequently flooded areas. We are trying to stay practical with what is already being monitored. We might need to include more regulations for CARA’s and what would need to be included in that plan.
Kelly McLain says if Thurston adds a statement that say "we are working to identify what the best metric is," would that be Ok?

Brian Cochrane says, can we say the work plan protects the critical area?

Amy Windrope says what if Thurston has a series of questions to help them with the process of protecting these two ca’s?

Brian Cochrane says that would work.

Kelly McLain says if Thurston adds something like "If we cannot identify and easy assessment prior to 6 months from now, our adaptive management will move to a regulatory approach" - would that be acceptable to the Technical Panel?

All agree that it would.

Amy Windrope says Thurston contends that it has replaced "may's" with "will's" in the work plan. Appendix N, pg 11 – "site visits may contain some components."

Amy Windrope says a notation referencing Pg 11, Appendix N, CM-f – data will include information.

Charissa Waters says a notation can be made.

Amy Windrope says Appendix N, pg 9 – bottom – says these bullets are OCA-a – of the new document.

General discussion about changing all "may's" in the work plan to the "will".

Amy Windrope asks if she can incorporate the changes discussed so far, and Kelly McLain asks that CARA and geo hazards be included?

Charissa Waters says it can be done by Thursday, June 20, 2017.

Consistency between the table in Appendix C and the doc received yesterday (4-17-17). Include a sentence that the revisions in the work plan will be adopted by June or so.

**Break**

Bill Eller focuses the Panel’s attention on the agency comment document spreadsheet that was compiled yesterday. The Panel goes through each section.

Amy Windrope .720(1)(a) – monitoring – can change to meets – not what I would have chosen, but meets the statutory requirement. Would change to meets. Am looking for the methodology – not sure if it is repeatable.

Kelly McLain thinks it is a new method, so can’t judge if repeatable. Would change to meets.

Lauren Driscoll says when she looked at the questions, based on watershed monitoring versus watershed plans. I agree the baseline.

Brian Cochrane says he found references to previous plans.

Element B ok

Element C – Kelly McLain says the 4.17.17 document satisfies that for her. Willing to change that.
Amy Windrope – Appendix C, page 9 – how does that table measure up with the performance metrics? Is this the baseline?

Charissa Waters says no. NRCS is tracking already. Appendix C, page 9 is an example of how it will be tracked.

Amy Windrope says the acreage isn’t the baseline acreage?

Charissa Waters says no.

Kelly McLain says the 2011 baseline has a certain number of acres in a NRCS program – it would say that.

Amy Windrope says isn’t that what the baseline is?

Charissa Waters talks about the 2011 baseline to narrow it down with the 2011 baseline – Appendix C, page 9.

Amy Windrope understands that this is an example.

Lauren Driscoll says the EQIP ones list 20 practices – is that information more detailed somewhere? Is that being collected by conservation practice?

Charissa Waters says we would want to do that more in the future – at the watershed scale. Would work with them to get more detail as we move forward.

Amy Windrope says can change to meets – 11 plans per year.

Kelly McLain – changed to meets based on morning conversation. Would encourage the work group to use the work group members to identify key spots to engage with producers.

Element E(i) change Kelly McLain’s to meets – based on the change discussed this morning.

Lauren Driscoll actually monitoring the wetlands at a watershed scale – was helpful to get the 4.17.17 document – can change to meets now.

Amy Windrope says she is more comfortable now with 4.17.17 document and discussion – please with M-f, M-h of the 4.17.17 document and answers and how the watershed scale will be used at the watershed scale to ground truth the parcel scale. Would like more detail, but they are closer to measurable benchmarks than farther.

Element (e)(ii) – Amy Windrope asks for key changes in 4.17.17 document that address this.

Charissa Waters – enhancement monitoring is clarified in the 4.17.17 document. It will be aggregated and rolled up to the watershed level by the technical service provider.

Amy Windrope – indirect participation or people outside of the program – any way to track that?

Charissa Waters – we are looking at indirect participation metrics. Appendix C - Enhancements are listed there in a separate tab in Participation. IP M-b. it will be collected in a variety of ways – could be by phone, mail, or surveys.
Amy Windrope wonders if what could be added is “enhancements” undertaken by those you are contacting – without an ISP.

Charissa Waters says both the protection and enhancement is listed there.

Amy Windrope says that isn’t clear in Appendix C.

Element G – Amy Windrope had deficient. Appendix N, Appendix K. The checklist is just step 1, it is vague and high-level. Step 2 is the site visit – no detail around that. Knowing what step 2 looks like would be helpful – there is too much uncertainty in it.

Charissa Waters says that Appendix N has process for the tech provider. Appendix K says the NRCS standards will be used. The tech provider already uses NRCS standards. Appendix N has more detail about how the NRCS methods will apply under VSP.

Amy Windrope asks Kelly McLain about the process.

Kelly McLain says it is good to get clarification on the process from Charissa Waters, but the level of involvement of the work group will continue to provide input to ensure the ISP’s will continue to meet the goals of the work plan. The ISP is a good starting point. Are the tools in place to go further – yes.

Amy Windrope says the tech provider will provide expertise to know what needs to be in the ISP.

Brian Cochrane says the standard NRCS resource concerns address the CA’s in their planning process. So, the tech provider would cover that if they do NRCS 9 step planning.

Amy Windrope understands that now and will change her assessment to “meets.”

Ron Shultz brings up Element H and the Commission’s response – changed since - no regulatory backstop adopted, just referenced in Appendix I (and H). Work plan, page 7 – second paragraph, in the middle – “will work with” and “county can also adopt”, “county may adopt new regulations through the adaptive management process”. The 4.17.17 document change the “may’s” to “wills.” Appendix I – pg 9 – talks about the various ordinances – applies to all 5 CA’s – all of the references are permissive. This is important – in 10 years, will the work plan accomplish the goals if the existing regulations are permissive. The process for those who do not participate in VSP would be to go through the CAO, but the CAO is permissive. VSP is voluntary – engage with landowners voluntarily – rely on existing regulations. What are the regulations and what is the scope and extent the work plan is relying on existing regulations.

Amy Windrope says that as written, I liked how it is an adaptive management component. It makes sense in the level of detail of the Thurston County plan. The plan is troubled with the lack of clarity. The intent is positive.

Ron Shultz says if the work group is comfortable with that, that is fine. Just concerned about relying too much on a regulatory approach for a voluntary program. VSP is an alternative to the regulatory approach. But, if you bring in all the regulatory approach, what is the point?

Amy Windrope says this is where implementation is a black box.

Ron Shultz not sure if thumbs down on final vote, but concerned about the reliance on the regulatory approach versus the voluntary nature of VSP.

Kelly McLain says we need more specificity on how the regulatory piece works with VSP in each work plan.
Ron Shultz says the producer needs to know that relationship is between the regulations and the VSP plan applies.

Charissa Waters says that there are a lot of regulatory backstop already mentioned in the plan (federal, state). The work group realizes that CARA might need more detail so we can monitor. 2019 is the first 5 year reporting period due for Thurston. If the CARA and geological hazards can't be maintained, the work group would use the adaptive management process to look in depth at the regulations to see what can be done. The regulations would or could get incorporated then.

Ron Shultz says with CARA’s, for example, you could say for those, you could use the existing CAO for those. Thurston’s plan doesn’t say that – that is a concern. The work group should be aware of that – adaptive management shouldn't just jump to the regulatory approach. Would recommend that there be a conversation with the county and work group of how a regulatory approach would be incorporated into the adaptive management portion of VSP.

Charissa Waters says that it can be incorporated into the adaptive management process for each ca. Can provide a statement that clarifies the adaptive management process for Thursday’s meeting.

Ron Shultz says that the work group needs to understand how the county understands the interplay between the regulatory approach and the voluntary approach.

John says the work group is very aware of that process.

Element I(i) – Amy Windrope
Element I(iii) – Brian now meets.

Element J – Amy Windrope says adaptive management actions – wondering how everyone else got to meets?

Brian Cochrane says it was there, but not outlined.

Kelly McLain says the work plan says they will do adaptive management.

Amy Windrope says there needs to be more specificity to what they will do to adaptively manage. Saying your will do something doesn’t says what you will do.

Ron Shultz says that is the real question - where is the certainty that change will come?

Charissa Waters – Section C of the work plan, also Appendix C, and the 4-17-17 document has the graphic. There will be more clarity in the document as well that will be coming on Thursday.

Amy Windrope says she will wait and see on this one. There is the greatest certainty regarding how they will move to regulation, but what about increased action for other actions – where is the conversation about what happens when you drop below that?

Charissa Waters says that is in the 4.17.17 document. OCA M-b – pg 3. They are listed as actions.

Kelly McLain says OCA M-a is the overarching watershed protection standard.

Amy Windrope says that she is still concerned that this is another way that this says “we will do something”
Lauren Driscoll says OCA-M-a – third bullet – M-a action. Would that help?

General discussion about adaptive management

Amy Windrope says another bullet in OCA M-a is needed to say WHAT will be done. “Restoration activities will be pursued” or something like that.

Kelly McLain would like it to say action will be taken. Asks Charissa Waters.

Charissa Waters says it is in there, but we could clarify that.

Amy Windrope says the nexus is between the conservation practices and their extent and type. The challenge is if the practices decline below the 2011 levels, then what do you do? Must do enhancement.

General discussion on agricultural practices and how that relates to decline below 2011 baseline.

Amy Windrope says you need to identify what you’ll do - more stuff or do stuff with those who are already doing stuff.

Kelly McLain - to clarify, would want Thurston to add another bullet or another sentence under OCA M-a to say what they will do for adaptive management.

John says they are working on it now that will be included.

Amy Windrope says to hold her deficient on Element J – pending April 20 document from Thurston Element K – Amy Windrope is only one who gave deficient. Tech panel looking for documentation.

Charissa Waters says to look at the Work plan section 3 – monitoring and reporting.

Changes made.

1:30 pm: Chelan County VSP work plan - continue review

Technical Panel decided to go through the a – l of .720(1)

Lauren Driscoll - Appendix I – pg 5, #7, Adaptive Management matrix – minimum annual outreach events.

Neil Aaland - no set number listed – not sure how many events could be done. In outreach chapter there is a description of the kinds of outreach activities that will be done.

Kelly McLain says there are lots of grower outreach events in Chelan County in the winter months – no lack of opportunity.

Neil Aaland says county staff has talked about going to conferences and would talk about VSP when you are there.

Lauren Driscoll – it is hard on the same one to figure out what 5% reduction in participation means (Appendix I, pg 5).

Neil Aaland – the number of people who fill out the checklist – is there a reduction in that number or not.
Lauren Driscoll – I see what you mean – a 5% reduction of people.

Element A – good summary – consensus from Technical Panel.

Element B – Kelly McLain says good outreach to stakeholders – didn’t meet them for all workgroup meetings, but otherwise good. Consensus from Technical Panel. Amy Windrope says staff felt like they engaged agency staff.

Element C – Amy Windrope liked “promote volunteerism.” Commercial and non-commercial capturing all ag activities. Kelly McLain says 80% of the county is in federal or state hands. Amy Windrope ways the engagement performance matrix was good. First biennium goal was good. Kelly McLain P 17 was a good metric. Good for other work groups – tie it to what things you will do and how often you will do them. Amy Windrope says the nexus between what they want and how to get there is well developed in the work plan. Passive and active – benchmark J – she liked that.

Element D – well detailed – almost excessive detail – general agreement that it is good.

Element E(i) – Kelly McLain says plan did good job of laying out measurable benchmarks – what to measure, why and results. Lauren Driscoll agrees. Amy Windrope asks about methodology – Appendix B - likes the limitation and data gaps identified. Lauren Driscoll discusses mapping and photos. WDFW aerial photo system will be used. Types of data for each metric – on Appendix I’s table – the metrics. Kelly McLain says it would be helpful if the metrics in Appendix I would be included in the methodology in Appendix B. To show the other tools that could be used. Amy Windrope likes the detailed budget included – shows the chosen method is feasible. Other members liked that.

Element E(ii) – Lauren Driscoll liked the prioritized enhancement in the plan. So did the other Technical Panel members. Wished Thurston had done that. Liked the mention of the pollinators in the plan. Neil Aaland says that came from Benton County and their work group. Kelly McLain says pollinators are important. Amy Windrope liked the levee setbacks and the floodplain work happening in Chelan County.

Element F - Ok

Element G – stewardship plan nicely described – checklist. Well laid out – it is a roll-up tool – can use this for adaptive management. Amy Windrope asks how the ISP’s are used to collect data. Neil Aaland says the conservation district would meet with those who fill out the ISP – it is an introductory tool to be used. Tech provider will also do on-the-ground assessments. Kelly McLain says the survey is something that can be done annually, but then the conservation district can go out every 3-4 years for the ground truthing. Not regulatory, but spot checking. Amy Windrope asks about “Type E” – metrics in Appendix I. Neil Aaland clarifies what the different types are in Appendix I. General discussion about the types and who will do what. Dividing up the duties – regulatory v. non-regulatory. County v. conservation district. Lauren Driscoll says that she likes the cross-walking between the metrics and the goals.

Element H – two existing development regulations – CARA and frequently flooded areas – are included in the plan. Kelly McLain says it was well described. Amy Windrope asks does Chelan have an adaptive management piece like Thurston – if it goes wrong, it goes to regulation. Amy Windrope says it would begin on pg 25 of the plan. Neil Aaland can’t recall. The intent is that adaptive management will be addressed at the 2 year and 5 year review. Kelly McLain says it is helpful to clearly state what happens if voluntary fails (goes to regulatory) – Thurston did this. Not sure if Chelan did that. Would be helpful to include a statement about that.
Element I(i) – Lauren Driscoll says Chelan says their baseline for participation is undeveloped. Kelly McLain says folio A might have the data on existing program. Technical Panel members not sure where this is really addressed in the work plan. No good baseline identified. Kelly McLain says Appendix D has data on conservation practices, but it isn't really used to establish the baseline. Their adaptive management should address this based on the structure they have now. Discussion about how stewardship plans are different than participation activities. Appendix D lists all the conservation practices in the county. Exhibit 2, Appendix D, pg 8. Good nexus between functions and values and what the elements are.

Element I(ii) – Stewardship activities – baseline monitoring. Ok with this one.

Element I(iii) – Good monitoring program. No comments. Lauren Driscoll says Appendix I has who will do what. Amy Windrope says this is the kind of language that Thurston should put into their plan. Adaptive management is good. Good thresholds.

Element J – Amy Windrope same comments as above. Great.

Element K – Amy Windrope says Chelan is helping WDFW. Fine.

Element L – Good.

3:55 pm: **Discussion – meeting schedule**
April 20, 2017, from 9am – 4pm – Chelan / Thurston
May 23 – informal review – Benton, Yakima
June 20 – informal review – San Juan

4:00 pm: **Adjourn – Chelan and Thurston on April 20**