Voluntary Stewardship Program
Technical Panel Meeting

Friday, February 23, 2018
8:00 am – 11:00 am

Facilitator – Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator, WSCC

Attendees in Lacey:  Brian Cochrane, Lauren Driscoll, Kelly McLain, Matt Mueller, Terra Rentz, Alicia McClendon; Ron Shultz; John Stuhlmiller, Evan Sheffels, Mark Nielson, Barbara Adkins; Larry Boltz, John Kliem, John Bolender

Webinar:  Ben Floyd; Josh Jensen; John Small; Heather Wendt; Ron Wesen; Barbara Adkins; Scott Kuhta; Shaina Zollman

8:00 am:  Opening Comments, Introductions, Session Objective & Agenda

8:05 am:  VSP Program update (if any) – Bill Eller, Ron Shultz, WSCC

Bill Eller gave a brief update.  VSP quarterly report reminders will be in the VSP monthly newsletters.  Reviewed the meeting schedule Gant chart.  Upcoming plans to review (Mar 16 - Asotin, Cowlitz, Douglas; Mar 30 – Kittitas, Benton, Grays Harbor, Lincoln).

General discussed of VSP information coordination among state agencies related to “new” agriculture and how counties are applying VSP and their critical area ordinances.  Perhaps a new policy advisory (04-18) would need to be created to address how counties in VSP address adding a statement to their critical area ordinance once it is updated to state that they are VSP counties and that the VSP applies to all agricultural activities, as defined in VSP, but that all others laws, including development regulations such as the SMA, Endangered Species Act, county building codes, etc. are still in effect.  GMA differentiates between old agricultural and new agriculture.  VSP doesn’t have the differentiation.  There is no new versus old agriculture in VSP.  VSP applies to all unincorporated property in the county that opts into VSP.  RCW 36.70A.710 (5).  A statement in the CAO that states that the county is a VSP county and that VSP applies to all agricultural activities, as defined in the VSP statute, should be added to each county VSP who’ve opted into VSP.  For example, new structures would be covered in development regulations, not VSP.  VSP would deal with the effects of that agricultural practices (i.e. the installation of a structure) within the watershed as a whole.

8:45 am:  Next meetings – start times at 8 am -

- March 16 2018 – Cowlitz, Douglas, Asotin – 1st review
- March 30 2018 – Kittitas, Grays Harbor, Benton, Lincoln – 1st review
- April 13 2018 – Cowlitz, Douglas, Asotin – 2nd review & vote
- April 27 2018 – Kittitas, Grays Harbor, Benton, Lincoln – 2nd review & vote;
  Lewis, Adams, Garfield – 1st review
- May 11 2018 – Mason – 1st review
- May 25 2018 – Lewis, Adams, Garfield – 2nd review & vote
- June 22, 2018 – Mason – 2nd review & vote; Columbia, Okanogan – 1st review
- July 27, 2018 – Columbia, Okanogan – 2nd review & vote; Ferry, Pend Oreille – 1st review
- August 24, 2018 – Ferry, Pend Oreille – 2nd review & vote
- September 28, 2018 – Spokane – 1st review
- October 26, 2018 – Spokane – 2nd review & vote
9:00 am: **Informal review of Mason County work plan.**

Bill Eller introduced this topic. Reviewed procedure for informal review. We went over the format with the work group prior to today’s meeting. Work group representative will make a presentation of issues / concerns / problem areas in their work plan and in the VSP statute that they need assistance on. We do not have any materials to review as we’ve jettisoned that element of the informal review process. They have about 90 minutes or so. Q & A is up to them. They are looking for input from us. Mason County’s set to submit end of April for the first review on May 11, second on June 22. Deadline to submit is May 24.

Barbara Adkins begins this presentation, provides background and introduction.

The Technical Panel offered the following suggestions:

- Critical area maps versus agricultural activities maps – agricultural activities won’t show up on county critical area maps. There are other options for gathering mapping data – CD office, WSDA crop maps. All parts of the county should be mapped. This would increase the numbers of agricultural activities and crop lands. More than just commercial agricultural operations should be included. There are other nexus points – county fair, grange, etc., to collect data. Stevens County is a good example. They have addressed small scale, non-commercial agriculture. WSDA mapping shows all parcels, not just ag-designated lands.

- Make sure the goals, benchmarks, and strategies correctly identify each. The benchmarks identified seem to rather be objectives. Benchmarks should have numeric targets or measures. We need to know if you are meeting the mark or need to adaptively manage. Stevens County also has good examples of goals and benchmarks to do in the first 2 years until you get more data. Change your benchmarks to goals, and change the goals to benchmarks. Benchmarks need to be measured. A percent of change or something else that is quantifiable. There are lots of data points from eastern Washington – number of participants in NRCS or other programs. Can use that or something else easily quantifiable. Stevens County’s plan has some for participants. It needs to be meaningful. Most concern versus most critical area nexus should drive your outreach. Also, why those numbers are the right numbers.

- Monitoring needs to be measureable. In the monitoring table, include how often these should be done. During implementation, the work group or technical assistance provider will need direction on what they need to do and what data they need to gather.

- Adaptive management trigger thresholds should be identified as clearly as possible. How much change you are seeing versus how much is meaningful and informative. What does the change mean in the context of critical areas. For imagery thresholds, try to pick a number rather than an “increase” or “decrease.” You need to know if the change is significant. The actual measurement is helpful for tracking. Meaningful change versus detectable change. Numbers will help with that. Work a basic performance evaluation into your monitoring and adaptive management tables.

10:30 am: **Continue formal review of Franklin County work plan, take vote.**

Bill Eller introduced this topic. Reviewed where we are. Submitted 12-1-17. Have until March 1, 2018 to finish the Technical Panel review. This is the third review meeting we’ve been able to have. Had at least one complete round of back-and-forth on comments, amendments, resubmittal and further review. At the last meeting February 9th, we reviewed the changes the work group made to the work plan and couldn’t get through them all. We were able to get to Element E of RCW 36.70A.720 (1). Each element of RCW 36.70A.720 (1) (a-l) that needed further discussion was discussed. Each element reviewed based on the changes the work group made to the work plan and supporting documents. Edits made to agency comments document.
Lauren Driscoll asks about the checklist.

Mark Nielson goes through the critical area protocol diagram and critical area map. The checklist is not a self-certifying document. The checklist is part of an outreach plan. It will help establish next steps.

Lauren Driscoll asks about Element (I) (i) and outreach for participation and how that is tied together with Element (A) and (B).

Brian Cochrane clarified concern about Element (I) (iii) and says that if the sample size is small, more data is needed. Need to first determine if enough samples were taken to come to a conclusion and not incorrectly assume no change in the critical area has occurred.

Mark Nielson says that for some practices, there will be 100 percent of the sample size covered. There are other indicators besides water quality. Not a lot of good data. No one evaluated that data, some we are lacking.

Brian Cochrane says that you can get data from other sources. We need to see what the data looks like.

Kelly McLain do we want a statement in the work plan that says as we go forward we will evaluate that data to make sure it is enough?

Ben Floyd says that this isn’t a new topic. We will do GIS analysis and verification. We acknowledge that the data is limited. We are happy to expand monitoring as data becomes available. Not a lot of certainty.

John Small says we are lacking a firm data set for 2011 baseline condition. Trying to understand trends. Resources for monitoring are uncertain.

Kelly McLain says that she feels good about what is in here. Should add a sentence to explain indicators.

Mark Nielson says water quality weakest point.

Ben Floyd says surface water not bad. South Columbia Basin Irrigation District has data on the Columbia Basin Project.

Mark Nielson says we need more monitoring funds.

[general discussion on monitoring funding]

Ben Floyd says that edits to tables 5.3 and 5.4 could be made to address that – data limits and adaptive management.

Element J was addressed with the comments previously made.

Technical Panel vote taken; unanimous approval of the Franklin County VSP work plan by the Technical Panel members present (all), provided the documented changes to the work plan are made in the final submittal.
11:00 am:  Adjourn