

Adams County VSP

Tuesday, November 8, 2016

11:00 a.m. to 1:00 pm

Attendees:

Work Group Members	Other Attendees
Jake Wollman Jr. – Landowner	Eric Pentico – WDFW
Lynn Olsen – Landowner	Bill Eller – Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC)
Rex Harder – Landowner	Loren Wiltse – Adams County
Dave Leatherman – Landowner	Kevin Lindsey – EA Engineering, Science, and Technology
Doyle Palmer – Port of Othello	Craig Simpson – East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID)
Cara Hulce – Adams Conservation District	Dick Coon – Landowner
	Ben Floyd – Anchor QEA
	John Small – Anchor QEA
	Nora Schlenker – Anchor QEA
	Josh Jensen – Anchor QEA

Welcome and Introductions

Ben Floyd introduced proposed new members of the Work Group, including Rex Harder and Dave Leatherman. The Work Group would still like to reach out to other additional new members to participate in the Work Group, including Matt Harris from the Potato Commission, Marie Lotz from the Grant County Conservation District, and a representative from the Wheat Growers Association. The Work Group was reminded to complete the Open Public Meetings Act Training before the next meeting. The training can be found at <http://www.atg.wa.gov/open-government-training%20>.

Ground Rules

As follow-up from the last meeting, the draft ground rules were reviewed. It was discussed that language regarding voting agency members needs clarification, in Section 1(f), to be more specific to state agency representatives. With the following revision, the Work Group approved the ground rules:

- ii. WDFW and other state government agency representatives are Ex Officio members, and as such will not be voting members.

VSP Requirements and Work Plan Outline

Key elements of the Work Plan were reviewed (see presentation). Attendees posed questions about how changes since 2011 will be determined. This will be discussed in a subsequent meeting; therefore, the discussion was tabled. The roles and responsibilities for the different parties included in this process were also discussed. The Work Group will act as the overseer of the entire VSP process, including

implementation and monitoring. However, it is likely the Conservation Districts (Adams and Grant) will act as the implementers. The VSP State Technical Panel will approve or reject the Work Plan.

It was proposed that the Adams County VSP Work Plan will have two volumes. The first being a user-friendly document, which includes summary-level information, that can be used for outreach to individual growers. This volume will include a VSP Checklist. The second volume will include the technical background for the information presented in Volume One, including detailed baseline conditions, critical areas functions and values, and detailed goals and benchmarks. This approach was approved by the Work Group as a starting point and will be revisited again later in the process.

It was also discussed that outreach will be an important part of ensuring the success of this program. An outreach strategy will be developed during VSP Work Plan formulation which may include utilizing Conservation Districts, Irrigation Districts, websites, mailings, annual meetings for various agricultural groups, and other measures. This topic will also be revisited in subsequent meetings.

Potential Analysis and Implementation Units

This discussion focused on how to analyze baseline conditions and how implementation will occur. It was decided that analysis of baseline conditions, grouped by watershed, would be logical due to differing conditions among watersheds. However, when helping producers implement conservation practices, it might be more logical to organize by agricultural land type (i.e., irrigated, range and dryland). It was also discussed that some operators periodically change irrigation systems, as well as rotate dryland and irrigated practices on the same agricultural land. This was an initial discussion. This topic will be revisited at a subsequent meeting, but it was suggested that watershed units could be appropriate for analysis and goal setting and agriculture-type could be appropriate for the implementation of conservation measures.

Baseline Conditions Review

Preliminary baseline critical areas and agricultural land intersection was presented by looking at the portion of agricultural lands that have critical areas. It was summarized that most critical areas in the County occur on agricultural lands; however, only a small portion of agricultural lands have critical areas on them. Additionally, there are general agricultural practices that occur outside of a physical intersect with critical areas that affect critical areas functions and values. These include practices such as reducing erosion and improving water quality. The following list includes some of the critical-area-specific comments:

- Wetlands:
 - The loss of wetlands through increased irrigation efficiency needs to be clearly defined as not being an impact to critical areas.
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas:
 - The primary stream with potential fish use in the County is Cow Creek.
 - Riparian areas are not well understood in the County.

- Invasive species need to be addressed (reed canary grass is prominent in some riparian areas):
 - Invasive species provide both benefits and impacts to critical areas.
 - Work Group would need to look at the baseline and how it has changed and then determine impacts to critical areas functions and values.
- Priority Habitat and Species – for some species/habitats, agricultural practices are compatible (mammals) and some are not (shrub-steppe, cliffs/bluffs).
- Migrating waterfowl – A lot of agricultural practices are compatible with habitat for waterfowl. Work Group would have to look at baseline conditions and show a benefit or impact to functions and values since 2011.
- Geological Hazards are more of an agricultural viability issue.
- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs):
 - CARAs are primarily of concern around the Othello area.
 - Nitrates are the main concern.
 - Irrigation management will be the main conservation practice for protection of CARAs.
- There is very little overlap with agriculture and Frequently Flooded Areas (FFA).

Roundtable Discussion

Work Group members asked Ben and John Small about their relevant experience and background. This information was shared with the Work Group.

Next Steps

The next meeting will be on December 13, 2016, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Individuals who would like to be appointed to the Work Group should contact Loren Wiltse (lorenw@co.adams.wa.us). Cara Hulce will send the consultant team contact information for the local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Ritzville, because staff there may be able to provide more information and data on land use in Adams County, as well as conservation and planning efforts of the West Palouse Team that may overlap with the VSP efforts. Additionally, the consultant team will follow up with Craig Simpson on irrigation-related issues as they pertain to the VSP.