

Adams County VSP Work Group Meeting Notes

Tuesday, September 13, 2016

10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Attendees

Work Group Members	Other Attendees
Jake Wollman Jr. – Farmer	Loren Wiltse – Adams County
Lynn Olsen – Farmer	Carmen Andonaequi – WDFW (alternate)
Cara Hulce – Adams County Conservation District	Zach Meyer – Ecology
Eric Pentico – WDFW (advisory)	Chelsea – Adams County
Evan Sheffels – Washington Farm Bureau (advisory)	Scott Yaeger – Adams County
	Ben Floyd – Anchor QEA
	John Small – Anchor QEA
	Nora Schlenker – Anchor QEA

VSP Overview and History

Ben Floyd introduced the concept of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). VSP is an alternative to regulatory protection of critical areas, such as buffers. One of the main points is that VSP has dual goals of protecting critical areas and promoting or enhancing agricultural viability. Therefore, proposed measures collectively cannot sacrifice one goal over the other. Through this process, the Work Group will prepare a Work Plan to achieve these goals, which will ultimately need to be approved by the State Conservation Commission. A successful Work Plan will protect and/or enhance critical areas functions and agricultural viability as compared to the baseline conditions (as of July 22, 2011). If the plan fails to do so, critical areas will be regulated by Adams County under the Growth Management Act.

Work Group members expressed some concern that this is a large task for such a small Work Group and emphasized that more members need to be added. Additionally, they expressed some concern that the number of agency representatives was larger than the number of farmers; however, this concern was abated when it was explained that agency representatives are only advisory and do not take part in decision making for the Work Group.

Adams County VSP Status

The VSP process for Adams County is starting later than other counties, but we should still be able to meet all project deadlines, and we can learn from other counties that are further along in the process. Anchor QEA has started compiling general baseline conditions data, including baseline mapping* for:

- Streams and Wetlands
 - This is based on the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) stream data. The “Unknown” streams layer over-represents the number of water-bearing streams that are likely occurring in the County.

- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
- Wetlands
 - There may be wetlands shown on maps that were created by an irrigation project that have become regulatory wetlands. Additional discussion will be needed on how the Work Plan addresses water conservation efforts that could affect these wetlands.
- Geological Hazards
 - Traditionally, geological hazardous areas are mostly focused on avoiding development on landslide or earthquake liquefaction areas; however, the VSP will mostly look at wind and water erosion potential as it relates to agricultural viability and critical areas functions. The Work Group needs to decide if and/or how to include geographic hazards into the VSP.
- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs)
 - Anchor QEA is coordinating with Kevin Lindsey and will supplement maps with additional Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) information.
- Precipitation
 - Maps show 1-inch increment ranges because agricultural practices can vary significantly with small changes in precipitation.
- Agricultural Cover
 - The major agricultural activity categories are dryland, irrigated, and rangeland.

* It was stated that these maps are only meant to be representative and will not dictate where critical areas are in the County. It was agreed that it is not worth our time to debate what should be shown in the maps; instead, a disclaimer should be added to the maps stating that regulation of critical areas will come from the definitions in each jurisdiction's code. Evan Sheffels has a good example of a disclaimer that was used in Stevens County.

Work Plan Elements

Ben reviewed the key elements of the Work Plan (see presentation). It was decided that the Adams County and Grant County conservation districts (CDs) will provide technical assistance for plan implementation, as both CDs serve within Adams County. Grant County CD should be invited to participate in future meetings. Additionally, it was reiterated that participation in this program is voluntary and participants can come and go as they see fit. The benefits of participation include preventing critical areas from being regulated and improving viability of agriculture.

Draft Ground Rules

Ben reviewed the draft ground rules and requested feedback from Work Group members at the next meeting or by e-mail. The Work Group members showed interest in having a Chair of the Work Group or at least someone that could work closely with the technical team, but decided to revisit this once the Work Group has more members.

Follow-up and Next Steps

Adams County is still looking for at least three additional Work Group members, potentially representatives of rangeland and dryland farming, and the Potato Commission. Anchor QEA will reach out to Matt Harris at the state Potato Commission and the Grant County CD to inquire about participation, as well as Rex Harder who has rangeland property near Sprague Lake. Current members of the Work Group will speak to peers about potential involvement in the Work Group and direct them to Loren Wiltse. Cara Hulce will share at an upcoming Adams County CD board meeting that additional Work Group members are being sought.

The tentative next meeting date is Tuesday, October 11. Anchor QEA will contact Work Group members at the end of September to confirm the date. Notice of the meeting will be posted in local newspapers and the meeting agenda will be e-mailed and posted to the website 1 week before the meeting date.