

Adams County VSP Work Group Meeting Notes

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

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

Attendees:

Work Group Members	Other Attendees
Grant Miller – Landowner	Evan Sheffels – Washington Farm Bureau
Lynn Olson – Landowner	Erik Pentico – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Craig Simpson – East Columbia Basin Irrigation District	Bill Eller – Washington State Conservation Commission
Matt Harris – Washington State Potato Commission	Ben Floyd – Anchor QEA
Cara Hulce – Adams Conservation District	John Small – Anchor QEA
Marie Lotz – Grant County Conservation District	Nora Schlenker – Anchor QEA
Tim Unruh – Adams County Building and Planning	

Follow-up from Last Work Group Meeting

The language surrounding the reduction of chemical input costs was discussed, specifically that the language should be focused on reduction of inputs with the note that unforeseen circumstances may arise that would result in an increase in inputs, such as discovery of a new pest. This should be incorporated into the adaptive management process to evaluate changes that are outside the control of producers, which may require a change in goals and benchmarks. This will allow the Work Plan to stay flexible enough to adapt to these types of unforeseen circumstances.

Additionally, it was decided that conservation practices that benefit wildlife game species on agriculture lands will be addressed through enhancement. Certain practices that are especially beneficial to game species and that only occur on agricultural lands (outside of critical areas) will be highlighted in the plan, such as protection of corner habitat around an irrigation circle. It was also pointed out that many accreditations, such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), require tracking of animals on properties and these programs can also be noted in the Work Plan. Conversion from rangeland to cropland was brought up as a potential issue; if this affects a critical area then it would be addressed under the protection goal. Long term trends for shrub-steppe rangeland can also be considered under adaptive management.

Hydrology indicators were also discussed and it was determined that they would not provide useful information to inform adaptive management. This is because the Columbia Basin Project management and operations will have a greater impact on hydrology in the County where the project exists and for other water bodies stream gages do not exist to track trends. Therefore, the hydrology flow indicators will be removed from the Work Plan, and a justification for why this was done will be added.

Work Plan Content Review

Implementation: The implementation section of the Work Plan relates to the measuring, tracking, and reporting that will occur after adoption of the Work Plan. It was discussed that the Work Group will continue to be responsible for the implementation of the Work Plan. The technical lead (Adams Conservation District [CD]) would be responsible for reporting progress on the Work Plan. Both the Adams CD and the Grant County CD would be responsible for technical assistance and tracking progress in their respective districts. The Work Group thought it would also be beneficial to have a VSP liaison who is a retired farmer or peer who has a good existing relationship with producers that can work with them to encourage participation in VSP. Additionally, it was discussed that outreach should occur before adoption of the Work Plan to ensure that producers are familiar with the plan before it goes into effect. It was decided that this outreach will occur in the Fall 2017/Winter 2018 and Work Plan updates and submittal would occur in early Spring 2018.

VSP Self-Assessment Checklist

The Draft VSP Self-Assessment Checklist was discussed and it was determined that the first page should highlight what happens if VSP fails, to help get the attention right away of producers and others who read the checklist. Additionally, the language should be more general and focus on what producers can do to help VSP succeed. Specifically, focus discussion on how farmers can take credit for the actions they are already implementing on their farms. It was also discussed that the “Other Local Resources” listed in the checklist should be contacted and included in the Fall/Winter outreach before the Checklist goes into production.

Next Steps

Send additional comments to Nora at nschlenker@anchorqea.com by Friday May 19, 2017. The revised Draft Work Plan and Appendices will be sent to the Work Group on June 9, 2017. The next Work Group meeting is scheduled for Tuesday June 13, 2017, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Adams County Building.