



Voluntary Stewardship Program

Work Group Meeting, Tuesday, September 20, 2016

Recap and introduction with John Small of Anchor QEA at 7:00 pm with a review of the agenda and any July meeting follow-up. This meeting is being held as a “web-ex/call-in meeting”. John reviewed Crab Creek Drainage baseline case study with discussion of including mapping of public lands. WSCC issued clarification that public lands are not managed under VSP. Mark Stedman thinks the public lands discussion needs to continue. Review of Lincoln County—Precipitation and Public Lands & Ag Land Cover/Public Lands mapping.

Reviewed Slide for - **Work Plan Necessary Elements RCW 36.70A.720**

Next Slide - **Agricultural operators:** withdrawal from program. An agricultural operator participating in the program may withdraw and is not required to continue voluntary measures after the expiration of an applicable contract. The watershed group must account for any loss of protection resulting from withdrawals when establishing goals and benchmarks for protection and a work plan.

Next Slide - **VSP Work Plan & Draft Outline presented by Vivian Erickson and John Small:** Eddie Johnson had some questions about Management Plans. He is concerned that we should be dealing with the end results and not writing the management plans. John Small commented that VSP is more focused around results (no obligation) like EQUIP etc. VSP determines what will be the results that we are looking for. Eddie replied – there are many ways to get to the end result. List all the plans you want but the end result is what you need to get to there. John Small - Goals & Benchmarks could cover what Eddie is asking about; end results and how to get there.

Next Slide - **Agricultural Activities/Conservation Practices Framework and Ag Viability:** Elsa Bowen reminded everyone that this list was created from NRCS standards. John brought up the question “If someone is doing something beneficial how do we find out about it?” Vivian – We know the NRCS practices but what are the others that are not being counted? We’d like feedback for the next meeting in October.” **after the meeting it was determined that there was not a meeting scheduled for October**

Next Slides - **VSP Checklist, Chelan County Example & Guidance Framework Elements:** John posed the question “Would a similar checklist be desirable for Lincoln County? Do we like the look of the form and examples? Keep in mind the checklist can be tailored and developed once we agree on measures to be include.”

Next Slide - **Rangeland Management and Conservation Practices:** Dennis Bly shared his property example of approx. 4,000 acres of rangeland-3800 acres pasture rangeland and 200 acres of

meadow irrigated by Crab Creek with 250 head of cattle with approximately the same for calves with 70-80 yearlings.

Typical range practices: grazing typically begins in May, 7 fields (500-600 ac each) with rotating of fields through June. After Oct until Thanksgiving they are free ranged with hay feed and meadow grazing through winter. Conservation practices on the Bly property were covered in the slide along with changes and challenges including – fencing repair and maintenance, weather dependency, and riparian study group recommendations.

Dennis shared that that he received one of the many letters that came from ecology after neighbors reported about fencing the creek. After 2 yrs of discussion some landowners built fences but Dennis did not, he used the EQIP program instead. Dennis stated that DOE didn't want any grazing; he was never very concerned with cows tearing up the creek as they never have. Dennis straightened and fenced off the lower part of Ranch Creek with limited access for the cows. Dennis stated that the cows would rather drink out of a water tank anyway and that a ½ in of water on frozen snow will cause more damage than cows ever would. John's question for the group – "How do we tell this story and others?" Dennis was thanked for sharing his practices with the group.

Next Slide - **Rex Harder**, lots of the same practices as Dennis but Rex has added additional wells. Managed grazing at Sprague lake with EQUIP program and has also utilized solar powered stock watering wells which were funded through FSA. Rex stated that solar is nice because you can add more and store it. Conservation practices on the Harder property were also covered in the slide along with challenges including – Irrigation water shut-offs, water storage during high flow for use during dry periods, reduced winter runoff, costs of weed and moisture management for good grazing conditions. Rex commented that he is providing beef for "Blue Apron" as a Washington product and he'd like to see county and entity support. Mark Stedman gave Rex kudos for being involved in Blue Apron and for the oversight to stay on the cutting edge.

Next Slide(s) - **Conservation Practices & Functions, Potential Risks to Critical Areas & Ag Viability**. John reviewed the slide without discussion from the workgroup.

Next slide - **Participation in VSP**: several options to consider.

1. Do nothing
2. Implement changes 100% producer funded with no commitment to maintain
3. Seek technical assistance (industry, CD, or NRCS), then implement (producer 100% funded)
4. Variation of option 3 – determine applicable program/financial incentive is available, enter into contract, and implement (producer/program funded)

Next Slide - **Conservation Practices & Function and VSP**: slide was reviewed without conversation from the group.

Next Slide - **Questions, Comments, and Next Steps:** There were no questions.

Next meetings will include –

- Confirming measures to include in Work Plan
- Verify plans to reference
- Intro to protection and enhancement benchmarks and grower participation goals
- Discuss and plan outreach strategy
- Continue discussing protection and enhancement benchmarks/grower participation goals
- Review draft checklist
- Discuss monitoring options

December - January Anchor QEA will prepare a draft plan and for February-April discuss/refine draft plan.

Next Steps –

The next meeting is November 15, 2016, 2-4PM Public Works Building. Ben will be back for this meeting.

Attendees:

Workgroup members:

Craig Madsen

Jeff Schibel

Keith Schafer

Rex Harder

Ron Mielke

Dennis Bly

Mark Stedman

Eddie Johnson

Tom Harding

Val Vissia

Elsa Bowen

Other Attendees:

John Small

Nora Schlenker

Vivian Shin Erickson