



Voluntary Stewardship Program

Work Group Meeting, Tuesday, November 15, 2016

Elsa and Ben Floyd started the meeting at 2:00 pm with a review of the agenda and any follow up questions from the September meeting, including the clarification from John Small that public lands will not be addressed in VSP. All leased lands conservation practices will all come back to the owner. Mark Stedman questioned what if public lands comprise private lands? John Small - Not sure as it depends if there is a large enough impact or not. Say, more noxious weeds on public land vs private; how do we subtract that from the scorecard? Private landowner would not be held responsible. Mark Stedman is worried that a farmer could never meet the standard if he's adjacent to public lands. John - As long as you are making improvements it would allow you to still be a part of VSP.

The workgroup was asked by Ben if they'd like the VSP Checklist for Lincoln County to be similar to Chelan or Thurston County? It was suggested to be renamed "Self-Assessment" and the Work Group agreed that it was a much better description and a much better tool for outreach and understanding VSP.

In reviewing the next slide - Existing Data and Plans the question came up on how all the different creeks will be addressed. All creeks will be addressed the same for assessment; goals will be different for each but approach will be the same. Lincoln County SMP has a new updated plan, Jason Kunz will look into what WDFW has for plans. Jason will get the programs & acres that Todd Barstad is working on in Lincoln County.

The Top 10 NRCS Practices 2011-2016 & CSP Participation were reviewed. The Work Group will revisit the practices for the Lincoln County list. Ben pointed out that Lincoln County is already above the protection standards with these practices but should focus on underrepresented practices in the future and still try and capture practices even if they don't match NRCS practices perfectly. Vivian from QEA will be updating the table and will be resending at the end of the week. Val will then forward to the Work Group for "homework" for the next meeting.

John Small reviewed Goals, Benchmarks, and Measurements and how to establish a baseline to meet or enhance practices. Protection goals must be met through VSP but Enhancements goals are not required to be met through VSP. If one area doesn't meet the VSP benchmarks it will not void the entire VSP for Lincoln County. Benchmarks will be evaluated on a countywide basis. John is already finding that there is an upward trend based on conservation habits in Lincoln County.

If we want to link NRCS practices to benchmarks ie; water quality, soil health, habitat, and hydrology, how then do we monitor our benchmarks? Important not to be specific but flexible enough to capture what is really going on. Monitoring and data collection will be gathered every 5 years for comparison. How Lincoln County will monitor will be identified in the VSP plan and also who will be responsible for monitoring.

Roles and Responsibilities - State, Local and Landowners Role and Responsibilities were reviewed with discussion also on Outreach. Where can we share the Lincoln county VSP plan development and our draft of Self-Assessment? Some suggestions were Ag Expo, Fertilizer and Chemical distributors, Farm Bureau, Seed distributors, and private businesses with exposure during February and March as our goal. Creating a ¼ page ad/info card was also discussed to direct people to the VSP website for more information and promotion in general of VSP.

Agricultural Viability – Ben once again stated we still want to keep things very flexible and asked for comments. Keith Nelson pointed out that we were losing cattle/cattle operators and that numbers have dropped in Lincoln county. Ron Mielke wondered if we could add *Weather Enhancements*? There was discussion of what it could be called and the conclusion was to add *Environmental Variation* which would cover most concerns. There was some discussion about the Hirst Decision and what effect if any would be felt in Lincoln County.

Next Steps –

The next meeting is December 13, 2016, 3-5 PM Public Works Building.

Attendees:

Workgroup members:

Tom Harding

Garith Krause

Keith Nelson

Ron Mielke

Mark Stedman

Eddie Johnson

Tom Harding

Val Vissia

Elsa Bowen

Other Attendees:

Ben Floyd

John Small

Bill Eller

Zach Meyer

Sue Lani Madsen

Jason Kunz

Vivian Shin Erickson