



## Voluntary Stewardship Program

Work Group Meeting, Tuesday, May 28, 2019

Attendees: Ben Floyd, Elsa Bowen, Kristen Balko, Tim Robinson, Mark Steadman, Keith Schaffer, Jeff Schibel and Lara Floyd. Ron Meilke, Rex Harder, Gareth Krause, and Vivian Erickson were on the phone

Meeting started at 7:05p.m. with Ben Floyd providing a brief overview of the agenda items.

Elsa then provided a brief update on the outreach activities. To date 687 VSP flyers have been mailed to Lincoln County residents with a focus on the residents in the Hawk Creek area. Mailings have also been sent to residents in the Duck Creek, Canniwai Creek and Lords Valley areas. LCCD staff will follow up with phone calls in the next few weeks to schedule more site visits. Elsa said the hope is for members of the workin group to spread the word on VSP to their neighbors to get more involved.

The District received three phone calls back and made two site visits appointments from those calls. Tim was able to meet with Randy Vissia and Chris Laney on their properties for “practice” site visits. He distributed packets of information based on these site visits to the VSP group.

Tim explained the process he goes through on these site visits. He shows landowners the collector app that can record data on conservation projects, the critical areas checklist. He then uses to develop site plans based on this information. These site plans can then be used to plan future conservation projects funded by VSP or other sources as they are based on NRCS BMPs.

Ben then asked for more information on individual practices and connecting them to a map of critical areas. Elsa said are represented by a property map, a soil map, and in a critical areas map.

Tim then explained that the next step is to develop individual stewardship plans for each landowner. It is a simplified process than what an NRCS planner might do to develop their plans.

Keith then asked if the public would have access to this information. Tim said yes, but not the stewardship plans and Elsa said the maps will be available online in the next few months.

Mark asked how many critical areas a property could have. Elsa said a max of 5, but they would all be included in the same report.

Ben asked Tim how long a site visit takes. Tim responded about an hour for an initial site visit, more for a follow up stewardship plan meeting. Jeff asked how long it takes Tim to go through

the whole process. He responded a few hours to meet and record the practices.

Jeff asked what kind of plan would exist in Odessa where there are few critical areas and their practices frequently change. Tim said he would likely not visit that area much due to these reasons. Ben said there could be critical areas around the landowner's properties. Elsa added these landowners could be contacted anyway as there might be irrigation inefficiencies that could be funded outside of VSP.

Tim said his focus is on streams to stay ahead of regulatory agencies. Elsa said the land data on wetlands came from the Lincoln County planning office.

The next steps are to continue mailing out flyers, following up with phone calls, and reaching out to the VSP workgroup for site visits to get feedback. Sample examples will also be produced to show landowners what is involved in the process.

Gareth asked if there will be an inventory of all farms. Elsa answered yes – referring to those who have not participated in cost share programs funded through FSA, LCCD, or NRCS. It could be used as an outreach tool for these opportunities. Mark then added we can count practices that are done by the landowners themselves.

Elsa reported LCCD has purchased equipment using funds set to expire at the end of June 2019. The purchases include a laptop and tablet for Tim, two drones to do before and after flyovers of properties, a printer plotter to print maps of critical areas, and a paper folding machine. She reported \$240,00 has been authorized to Lincoln County through WSCC for the next biennium.

Ben then asked for feedback on the 2-year report regarding section 2.6 on Agricultural Viability. Gareth said a concern of his has been the increase in foreign owned land in Washington State. Keith added this issue connects with the economic feasibility of the agriculture industry. Mark said the consolidation of companies is a concern. Keith disagreed, saying it can sometimes result in cost savings for the producers. Tim added the push for the US to invest in GMO is a concern. Keith said the controversy involving Roundup (and the ingredient glyphosate) is a growing issue. Rex added this last issue is a good example of inconsistent messaging to consumers and the need to educate people through VSP and other conservation programs.

Vivian then went over the implementation efforts from May 2018 to the present as seen in the draft 2-year report. This report describes projects that have been completed and tie the report back to the standards listed in the state RCW. Updates will continue to be made based on outreach efforts until the report is submitted in August. Jeff asked if an irrigation example picture can be added to part 3.

Vivian explained appendix C will include a chart that lists all the conservation practice data collected on these projects. Ben suggested this be cut out of the 2-year report as it might raise more issues later. It was decided to cut it but to include it in the 5-year report.

Ben explained the report has been distributed for comment. These comments are due by June 7. They will be put into the next version available at the next meeting on June 18. This meeting will be web-based, but LCCD will have the webex system set up at their office for participants to view.

Elsa then asked if this report will need to be presented to the Lincoln County Commissioners. Ben said no, but LCCD should send a final report to the three Commissioners. The final report will be submitted to the state late July or early August.

Attendees:

*Workgroup members:*

Ben Floyd

Jeff Schibel

Tim Robinson

Garith Krause -phone

Elsa Bowen

Keith Schafer

Mark Stedman

Kristen Balko

Rex Harder - phone

Ron Mielke - phone

*Other Attendees:*

Vivian Erickson-phone