

Chelan County Voluntary Stewardship Program
VSP Advisory Committee meeting
Tuesday, March 26, 2019
9:30 am – 12:00 pm
MEETING NOTES

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present to offer comment.

Administrative items

Written roles/expectations: Neil reviewed the draft “workgroup roles and operations”. Under item 7, invitations will continue to be extended to tribes and environmental organization. Several changes/additions were made. A final version will be brought to the next meeting. Neil noted that the State Conservation Commission has determined VSP workgroups operate under the Open Public Meetings Act. All workgroup members need to take the OPMA training. This can be done by viewing the training video on the Attorney General’s website. Neil will send a link; all workgroup members notify Neil after viewing so a record can be kept

Potential ag members: Mike has asked the Board of County Commissioners to each appoint two growers from the agricultural community. Commissioners are supportive of the idea and are recruiting. Mike thinks he’ll have a draft list for the April meeting.

Outreach

Ag Roundtables: We want to re-engage people with the VSP. Idea is to let people look at mapping, do ground truthing on what we’re compiling. Also want to engage around project development. Ask for ideas and show them some possibilities. Want to do more than a canned “VSP approach” presentation. That’s why additional funding was required from SCC. Plan to do as soon as possible and do a roundtable in every watershed.

Stemilt meeting materials: Lisa prepared draft meeting materials for this meeting with producers, scheduled for tomorrow afternoon. There’s a 20 minute presentation, and they plan on showing the revised short-form stewardship checklist. She described this handout for the workgroup. A half hour is set for q&a, for a total time of one hour. She will be showing a powerpoint. The workgroup had no questions.

Monitoring Report

Review updated report: This is the second draft shown to the workgroup. The high points include:

- Areas shown as “developed” are going from ag to non-ag
- 2/3 of ag acreage is in orchards
- There is a bit more hay, silage, vineyards since 2011
- In exhibit 4 the increase in pasture land is likely because it is being more accurately counted; generally, have a stable acreage

Lisa reviewed the “riparian imagery and vegetation height” document. Mike Cushman asked to have streams included next time the document is printed, to show the overlap between ag and critical areas. There was some discussion about how vegetation is shown. Matt from CoreGIS will be training county staff, including the scripts that are prepared.

The report will answer how ag is doing; what have we lost and gained; where has enhancement occurred since 2011. Mike Cushman has about 26 projects total included in the data. There are 4 lower Entiat projects still to submit. He wants to somehow acknowledge work done pre-2012.

Regarding the Technical Panel, Bill Eller said we can either wait and bring materials to the April 10 meeting, or submit in advance. Workgroup members generally favored submitting in advance, so the panel would have time to review.

Monitoring/Implementation Priorities: The suggested priorities are from the workplan. Lisa walked through the attachment showing the proposed priorities. Project examples are shown on page 5. After review, Neil reviewed the proposed motion. It was felt that memorializing this decision on priorities was best by motion. After discussion, the motion was approved by consensus.

Technical Panel Presentation

The logistics for the April 10 meeting with the Technical Panel were discussed. Britt will call-in; Neil and Lisa will be there in person. Bill noted this would be the first monitoring report presented to TP. Lisa will prepare, in advance, a power point presentation and an updated monitoring document with comments.

Final comments

Bill Eller said the House budget includes VSP at the same funding level for counties as before.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Britt Dudek, Chair
Vicki Malloy
Neil Aaland, Facilitator
Mike Kaputa, Chelan County
Lisa Grueter, Berk Consulting
Hannah Pygott, Chelan County
Graham Simon, WDFW
Mike Cushman, CCD
Bill Eller, WSCC

DRAFT MOTION ON SPENDING AND PRIORITIES

It is hereby moved that funding available for implementation of the Chelan VSP Work Plan be used as follows:

1. The general priorities for spending on implementation, outlined in the attached document titled "Implementation Priorities" and dated March 25, 2019, are hereby approved by the Chelan VSP Work Group.
2. The following additional implementation items and approaches are approved:
 - a. Obtain one (1) Spatial Analyst license for Chelan County Natural Resources department (CCNRD) at an approximate cost of \$2,700 in order to run further analysis on the data in house.
 - b. Determine the cost-share amount protocol for funding landowner projects including:
 - 1) 100% up to \$50,000/year/landowner as per the State Conservation Commission (SCC) policy.
 - 2) collection of Identifiers to help determine consistency with priorities and protocols that are project specific (demographics, size, restoration activity type etc. to "score" or rate cost-share amount.
 - c. The Work Group endorses CCNRD and the Cascadia Conservation District (CCD) to complete pre-project development without individual project approval from the Work Group. Pre-project development will include but is not limited to: consultant hiring to determine project feasibility and cost, biological benefit etc. This is a very important stage of project identification and will allow Technical Service Providers to accurately inform the Work Group in determining and streamlining implementations.
 - d. The Work Group authorizes Technical Service Providers to be the ones that complete the work AND file for reimbursement in lieu of the landowner. A cost-share agreement will still be in place with each landowner, but this decision would prevent the financial, physical and planning burden of the projects being placed on the landowner.
 - e. CCNRD and CCD will provide periodic updates to the Work Group regarding implementation activities status.

Motion made by _____

Seconded by _____

Implementation Priorities

Draft March 25, 2019

Overview of Work Plan Priorities

Consistent with the Work Plan, and summarized in the Field Guide, the following priorities should be reflected in implementation priorities:

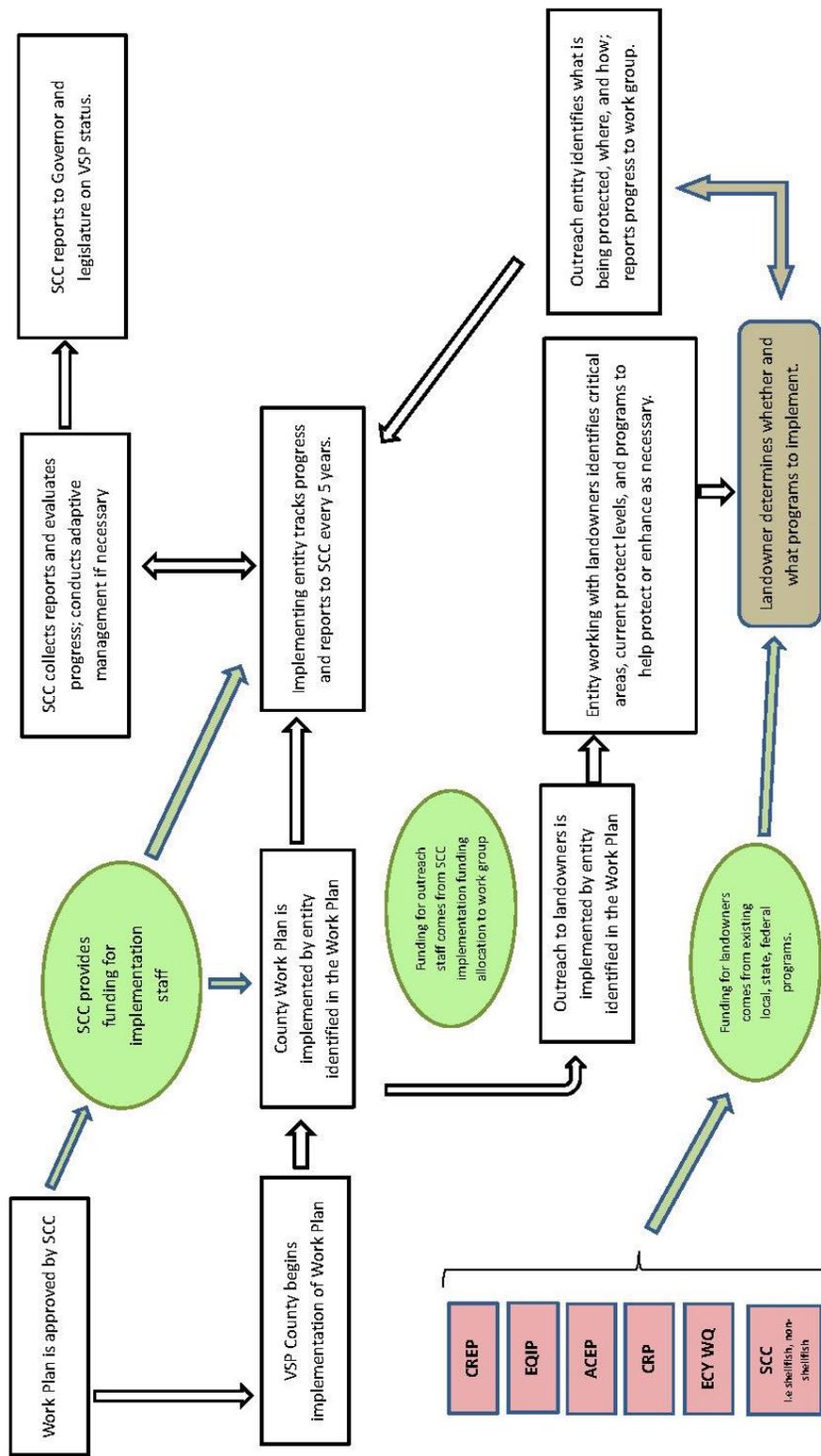
- **Priorities for critical area protection** include:
 - The Overarching Goal addressing protection of all critical areas that intersect with agriculture to maintain a viable ongoing VSP Work Plan.
 - Protection of Fish and Wildlife Habitat given the extent of agricultural intersection with streams and riparian areas as well as upland habitat that support mule deer and elk.
 - Outreach as a priority benchmark for protection to ensure a viable VSP program with willing landowners.
- Voluntary enhancement goals are a priority along with protection goals. Enhancements by willing landowners can serve to offset unanticipated critical area degradations. Enhancements can also contribute to net improvements in functions and values that: benefit water quality; promote a predictable water supply; reduce conflicts with flooding and stream channel movement (river processes); while contributing to agricultural viability. Specific measures to help implement enhancement goals are identified in the Work Plan. **Given scarce resources, and the extent of the agricultural intersection, enhancement priorities include Fish and Wildlife Habitat measures.**
- **Regarding agricultural viability:** Priorities for evaluation and implementation include promoting conservation practices that avoid unnecessary regulations and increase agricultural viability in Chelan County.

Implementation and Funding Approach

The State Conservation Commission has developed a framework for implementation, suggesting that state funding for Work Plan Implementation could assist with outreach resources whereas other existing federal or state programs that are in place for cost shares or projects could be employed for interested landowners.

Exhibit 1. VSP Implementation Framework – State Conservation Commission

Flow Diagram for VSP Funding After Work Plan Approval



Outreach Priorities

See Outreach Implementation Strategies.

Cost-Share Priorities

COST-SHARE REQUIREMENTS

Funding for VSP Implementation in terms of on-the-ground conservation practice installation may come from a variety of existing federal, state, or local programs. The Work Group will allocate resources based on Work Plan priorities.

When State Conservation Commission funds are used for cost shares, there are specific requirements. The State Conservation Commission has provided guidance on Cost-Shares, indicating that each Work Group is free to allocate funding as appropriate to their Work Plan, but that should be an implementation budget and project management protocols to ensure that cost shares meet the State's cost share policies and procedures, particularly: Commission's cost-share policies and procedures, specifically the [Grant and Contract Procedure Manual](#) and [Cost Share Process](#) before making a decision to offer VSP funds for cost-share. Conservation districts like CCD are well versed in these procedures.

Some highlights include:

- Reimbursement cannot exceed 50% of total project costs.
 - SCC has given district supervisors the authority to establish their own individual cost share reimbursement rate not to exceed 100% of the total project costs and a landowner labor rate not to exceed \$22.00 per hour.
 - The form must be submitted at the start of each biennium and is good for the entire two-year period.
 - If changes need to be made during the biennium, a new form must be updated and submitted before the cost share contract is signed by the landowner and district.
 - If no form is submitted to SCC, the default rate of reimbursement will be 50% and \$22 per hour.
- Individual signing the cost share contract must be authorized to commit the entity to upkeep the practice(s) installed for the entire specified design life.
- Cost share assistance shall be for practices identified as allowable NRCS practices, or alternatives approved by a professional engineer licensed by the State of Washington.
- Cost shares on public lands require State Conservation Commission approval.
- SCC aims to monitor 25% of the cost share projects put on the ground to validate compliance with the agency policy and legal requirements.

POTENTIAL COST SHARE PROJECTS IN CHELAN COUNTY

The Work Plan priorities focus on Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Outreach, and Agricultural Viability through conservation practices, as well as overall Critical Areas protection. CCNRD and CCD staff have been approached by interested producers with proposals that fit under these priorities, for example:

- CCNRD staff have been approached producers about a fencing project to keep livestock out of a stream. (For example, see NRCS Code 382.)
- Chelan County staff are aware of other stream-related enhancements in the Wenatchee basin, with several conservation practices related to this on the stewardship checklist.
- Based on October 2018 VSP Work Group input, CCD is interested in avoiding sedimentation in critical areas such as by advancing irrigation efficiencies, and this is captured in conservation practices on the stewardship checklist.

There may be more effective means to support cost shares, e.g. labor to manage cost shares. Consider whether Americorps is available (half is paid for by other government funds), or FFA labor.

These proposals can be further advanced as projects that meet VSP Work Plan goals and benchmarks as priorities for implementation within this 2017-2019 biennium.

For the next biennium – 2019-2021 – to ensure adequate planning and implementation over more than one season, the Work Group is anticipated to develop a more specific program and criteria to allocate funds.