Kittitas County Voluntary Stewardship Program

Watershed Group Meeting
July 22, 2022 10AM to Noon
KCCD Conference Room

Or virtually via Zoom platform at:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89475086125?pwd=OUFMMUZENVM3aG1sdmlBa1FqSTdnQT09
Meeting ID: 894 7508 6125
Meeting Passcode: 965061
Dial in: +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Review Meeting Minutes

- March 4, 2022

Watershed Group Membership

Representative Group	Member	Alternate
Kittitas County Cattlemen's Association	Terry Clarke	
Kittitas County Farm Bureau	Mark Charlton	Brad Haberman
Kittitas County Hay Grower's Association	Brian Cortese	
Kittitas Reclamation District	Kevin Eslinger	Urban Eberhart
Cascade Irrigation District	Jack Clerf	
Dryland Operator		
Lower County Operator	Karen Poulsen	
Upper County Operator	Jim Miller	
Small Acreage	Matthew Cox	
Small Acreage (Organic)	Bambi Miller	
Yakama Nation	Phil Rigdon	John Marvin
Trout Unlimited	Erin Eaton	Justin Bezold
Washington Water Trust	Ethan Lockwood	
Kittitas Conservation Trust	Mitch Long	

Financial Assistance

- Cost Share Opportunities
  - EQIP WaterSMART
  - RCPP (pending)
- Construction
  - Fish Barrier Removal Board
  - Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- VSP Funding Assistance
  - Native Planting projects
- Conservation Commission Salmon Recovery Funding

Critical Areas Ordinance Update

- Examples of Landowner Scenarios
  - VSP does apply (existing ag practices)
  - VSP does not apply (new ag practices and/or home)

Address, Place, or XY
300ft
-120.495 47.031 Degrees
Earthstar Geographics
POWERED BY
esri

Address, Place, or XY
SS1C
PFO1C
PSS1C
PAB1H
PEM1A
300ft
-120.494 47.027 Degrees
Earthstar Geographics
POWERED BY
esri

Address, Place, or XY
600ft
-120.728 47.169 Degrees
Earthstar Geographics
POWERED BY
esri

Address, Place, or XY
PUBHh
M1
600ft
-120.728 47.169 Degrees
Earthstar Geographics
POWERED BY
esri

Discussion Topics

- 2022 Water Quality Monitoring

Discussion Topics

- Renewable Energy Project Siting

March 22, 2022

Dear Washington State VSP Work Groups:

The Yakima County Work Group is facing a conflict of interest and competing goals in regard to other State Agencies and their programs. All VSP work Groups conduct their activities and work plans with the purpose of attaining the goals embedded in the statement below.

It is the intent of chapter 360, Laws of 2011 to: (a) Promote plans to protect and enhance critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted, while maintaining and improving the long-term viability of agriculture in the state of Washington and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses ..."

The issue Yakima County VSP Work Group faces is the permitting of solar farms under the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC). The EFSEC was established to *"provide a "one-stop" siting process for major energy facilities in the State of Washington. EFSEC coordinates all evaluation and licensing steps for siting certain energy facilities in Washington. EFSEC specifies the conditions of construction and operation. If approved, a Site Certification Agreement is issued in lieu of any other individual state or local agency permits. EFSEC also manages an environmental and safety oversight program of facility and site operations."*

Our concern is the conflict where "siting" of these large (thousands of acre facilities) are being placed on and proposed in areas where agricultural activities are currently being conducted and critical habitat of which many species of concern or threatened depend upon. The work of the EFSEC does not coincide with the States' VSP law as stated above. By example the Goose Prairie Solar Site will convert agricultural land to an industrial use and will impact migratory and forage areas of many shrub steppe species.

In addition, the EFSEC can and does implement mitigation elements within their permitting. Many times, the mitigation is to overcome the loss of "habitat". When this is done the acquired land for mitigation is often "agricultural land" that is then converted to public land. This in effect doubles the amount of conversion and again is in conflict with the law governing VSP.

The Yakima County VSP Work Group points out this conflict today in the hopes of creating awareness. If your VSP Work Group faces similar issues where programs, legislation, or land use rules conflict with your VSP Plan please communicate it with us. We hope that this facilitates a discussion where the conflict can be addressed and corrected so all parties are successful.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please send correspondence to the Yakima County Work Group technical service provider at North Yakima Conservation District, 1606 Perry Street Suite C, Yakima WA 98902.

Yakima County Work Group Chair
Mr. Gail Thornton

June 27, 2022

Yakima County VSP Work Group
C/O North Yakima Conservation District
1606 Perry Street Suite C
Yakima, WA 98902

Re: Support of Yakima County VSP Work Group Letter dated March 22, 2022

Dear Yakima County VSP:

The Chelan County VSP Work Group has reviewed and discussed your letter regarding the siting of solar energy facilities on agricultural lands and their impacts to the stated goals, objectives, and laws enacted by the Voluntary Stewardship Program. As with any land use decision, conflicts arise between programs at the local, state, and federal levels. Your letter, raising awareness of these conflicts, clearly calls for a discussion of the siting of industrial projects within agricultural areas and we concur and encourage all other entities to engage in this dialog.

Simply put, we are not making any new agricultural lands within our counties. In fact, the opposite is the rule. Whether it is for conversion to residential housing, industrial facilities, or habitat restoration, the acreage of agricultural lands continues to decline. Each conversion is not typically the single event that causes agriculture to no longer be viable, but it is the totality of these "cuts" that add together to endanger our local ability to raise food and fiber. All these projects have their need within our society, but without discussion of the overall impacts at a landscape level, the comprehensive effects are overlooked or even ignored.

We take seriously our mandate under chapter 360, Laws of 2011 to: *"(a) Promote plans to protect and enhance critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted, while maintaining and improving the long-term viability of agriculture in the state of Washington and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses...."* To do otherwise would negate the hard work of all those engaged in the Voluntary Stewardship Program as well as producers of food and fiber affected by the program. Competing uses of lands where agricultural activity occurs should be greatly scrutinized and discussed before being authorized. While homes, industrial plants, paved parking lots, and solar installations are not absolutely permanent conversions of agricultural land, we all understand the history and practicality of ever reclaiming those lands back into agricultural productivity.

Again, we support and encourage your efforts to promote awareness and additional discussion on the siting of industrial solar facilities on agricultural lands.

Regards,

Britt F. Dudek
Chelan County VSP Work Group Chair

Badger Mountain Solar
Kittitas Valley Wind
Desert Claim Wind
Columbia Solar
Wild Horse Wind
Grays Harbor Energy Center
Chehalis Generation Facility
High Top & Ostrea Solar
Goose Prairie Solar
Wautoma Solar
Columbia Generating Station
Horse Heaven Wind
Whistling Ridge
Tesoro-Savage Vancouver Energy Distribution Terminal
Legend
Operating
Application under review
Approved - Construction Started
Approved - Construction Not Started
Rejected
No Longer Operational
* Locations are approximate

Review Goals & Benchmarks and Adaptive Management

- Updating based on accomplishments to date
- Separating management and structural practices
  - Irrigation Water Management vs Sprinkler Conversion

Action Register

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