



## Kittitas County Conservation District

2211 W Dolarway Road, Suite 4 Ellensburg WA 98926 (509) 925-3352 www.kccd.net

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### Voluntary Stewardship Program

## Watershed Group Meeting

Hal Holmes Community Center, 209 N Ruby St, Ellensburg

10:00 AM Monday, December 20, 2017

## DRAFT Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** *Anna Lael, John Small, Nora Schlenker, Terry Clark, Mark Charlton, Brian Cortese, Kevin Eslinger, Jack Clerf, Lila Hanson, Karen Poulsen, Jim Miller, Matt Cox, Bambi Miller, Justin Bezold, Mitch Long, Heather Kosaka, Sherry Swanson, Mark Crowley, Karen Hodges, Kat Satnik, Jennifer Nelson, and Mark Moore*

- I. **Welcome** – Anna welcomed the attendees to the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Watershed Group Meeting.
  - a. Introductions were completed.
- II. **Anchor QEA Presentation** ([click here for link](#))
  - a. John reviewed the agenda and meeting objectives outlined in their Presentation.
  - b. Nora gave a recap on the previous November 20<sup>th</sup>, Watershed Group Meeting.
    - i. Introduction of goals and benchmarks
    - ii. Request to add agricultural viability metric to Section 5.
    - iii. Enhancement benchmarks which will provide follow up in today's meeting.
  - c. Goals and Benchmarks
    - i. Nora reviewed the Enhancement benchmark section required for the plan.
    - ii. Enhancement benchmarks will be generated by using the Rapid Watershed Assessments (RWA) completed by KCCD. The RWA will be used to predict how many practices can be implemented within the next 10 years.
    - iii. RWA will account for the practices that have been completed to date but not accounted for in the protection benchmark.
    - iv. Enhancement benchmarks vary based on the amount of funding. Nora stated that they added text to Section 5 stating that the enhancement benchmark is contingent on funding.

- d. Review of Maps and Mapping Data
  - i. Anna reviewed the updated maps with the Watershed group. The Community Planning Areas were generated from the County tax parcel classifications, Washington Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) crop data and Farm Service Agency's (FSA) field boundaries. The planning areas included:
    - 1. Kittitas Valley
    - 2. Shrub-Steppe Upland
    - 3. Forested Upland
  - ii. Anna then reviewed the map with the type of agriculture within each community planning area: irrigated, dryland, rangeland, and orchard/vineyard.
  - iii. Next, Anna reviewed the critical areas within each planning area. Anna mentioned that we still need the Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) data from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Mark Charlton asked if Jennifer Nelson with WDFW could comment and Jennifer said that she is pushing on agency staff to supply the updated data as well.
  - iv. Kevin asked if the mapping includes upper County irrigated ag. Anna stated yes it is plus it includes orchards on the Columbia River.
  - v. Anna and John discussed how the community planning areas are broader than the earlier version of the geographic areas but were created based on using the same general set of practices.
- e. Implementation
  - i. Roles and Responsibilities
    - 1. John stated that implementation is tied to funding and currently there is no guarantee that funding will be approved by the legislature. Anna said that, if implementation money is approved, Kittitas County receives the funding and would then contract with KCCD for outreach, reporting and recording.
    - 2. The Watershed Group would continue attending suggested quarterly meetings to review the status of implementation and determine adaptive management needs.
    - 3. KCCD would build and create watershed reviews and reporting.
  - ii. Education, Outreach, and Technical Assistance
    - 1. John reviewed the self-assessment checklist. The self-assessment checklist will be a key tool for producers and an important component to direct outreach which will be led by KCCD.
  - iii. Outreach Brainstorm

1. John reviewed the outreach brainstorm matrix with the group. The group commented that one on one meetings with producers will be important and farm tours should be added to the matrix.
  2. Kevin asked if there is a budget for outreach and Anna said that, yes there is funding in the current Biennium, for the next year and a half. The next Biennium funding is unclear at this point. John reiterated that VSP and its requirements are tied to funding.
  3. Members also suggested having information at the Farmers Market and meeting at existing producers meeting, ie hay growers.
  4. John also suggested educating seed and fertilizer companies about VSP to “deputize” them to share the program and the need for participation.
  5. Anna suggested short videos might be a good way to show case VSP efforts to agencies and legislators.
  6. Kat suggested emails with prize drawings as a possible incentive for landowners to participate.
  7. Justin suggested contacting the hay buyers and listing VSP on the Kittitas County tax bills.
  8. Mark Charlton stated that what producers will want and need to know is what buffers will be required as this will be the greatest impact to producers. Anna responded that in the plan benchmarks, a buffer size is not identified.
  9. Mark Charlton had a concern that there isn’t County representation at the meeting and they need to buy off on the plan. John said that the County can’t regulate agriculture in critical areas if the County has joined VSP. Kevin asked if enrollment in VSP begins when the plan document is completed. Anna said yes, and that should be this spring.
- iv. Monitoring, Reporting, and Adaptive Management
1. John stated again that monitoring, reporting and adaptive management will also be dependent upon receiving funding.
  2. There will be annual monitoring and tracking requirements and the development of adaptive management as needed.
  3. The 2 year status reports will be more like data dumps but the 5 year progress reports will be more in depth.
- v. Budget

1. The group reviewed the budget which is based on the assumption the County receives \$250,000 in total funding. The budget includes:
    - a. Education, Outreach and Technical Assistance \$165,000
    - b. Monitoring, Reporting and Adaptive Management \$70,000
    - c. Watershed Group Coordination \$15,000
  2. Heather with Ecology suggested that the group have a member succession plan.
- vi. Exiting Plans and Programs
1. John reviewed that the list of existing plans and programs and stated that there a lot of existing programs in place through the following agencies.
    - a. Kittitas County Conservation District
    - b. Department of Ecology
    - c. Salmon Recovery Funding Board
    - d. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- vii. Regulatory Underpinnings
1. John reminded the group that even though VSP will be in effect, there are still other rules and regulations that apply, but that VSP offers an alternative approach to critical areas protection where agricultural activities occur.
- viii. Self-Assessment Checklist
1. The group reviewed the checklist which will be used as an initial outreach tool.
  2. Brian suggested that a note be added regarding practices used before 2011 and practices used after 2011.
  3. Kat would like the Kittitas County Water Purveyors (KCWP) to be added as a resource on the checklist.
  4. A discussion about monitoring began. Bambi asked how change in the County is monitored and John said through aerial photos, tax parcel related codes, etc. and that various trends will dictate the focus of monitoring. For example if not much change is happening on rangeland but changes in irrigated ag continues, the focus would be on changes in irrigation practices.
- ix. Review of Comments
1. The group reviewed the list of comments received for the plan to date.

2. A couple highlighted comments were a request to add climate change and noting the potential increase in frequency of flooding and droughts.
  3. Karen Poulson said that the plan needs to look at ag land being converted to development. John said that land coming out of ag and into development will be covered under County regulations for critical areas.
  4. Kat asked if under irrigated pasture, livestock could be included. John said that it will included.
- x. Next Steps
1. Comments on Section 5 are due January 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  2. Prepare Section 6 and the Appendices.
  3. January Watershed Group Meeting
    - a. Discuss comments to date
    - b. Next meeting set January 18<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-12:00

**III. Adjourn**

- a. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM.