

Pend Oreille County VSP Work Group Meeting Notes

Thursday, April 5, 2018

5 pm to 7 pm

Jon Driver - Landowner	Amanda Parrish – Lands Council
Larry Cordes – Landowner	Andy Huddleston – Pend Oreille County
Michele Masuen – Landowner	David Marcell – Pend Oreille CD
Mike Jensen – Cooperative extension	John Floyd – Pend Oreille County CD
Sharon Sorby – County weed control	Karen Skoog – Pend Oreille County Commissioner
Ted Davis – Landowner	Mike Lithgow- Kalispel Tribe
Travis Hanson – Landowner	Ben Floyd – White Bluffs Consulting
	Lara Floyd – White Bluffs Consulting

Follow up from last meeting:

- Andy will have the website updated by April 12
- Comments by Larry Cordes: Correct Pend Oreille river runs south to north not north to south (line 126 in work plan)
- Correct growing season for Pend Oreille County is 120 days in river valleys and 90 days in mountains (lines 165-167 in work plan)
- Remove Ferry County CD reference and update with Pend Oreille CD in Appendix A, page 10.
- When is the work group officially organized? Andy will work with the Board of County Commissioners to have this completed by the May meeting. Ben and Lara to provide Andy with a list of suggested work group members, including Commissioner Skoog
- Potential morning meeting might be better for producers when scheduling the July meeting?

Chapters 2 and 3:

- Goal is to protect conditions as they existed in 2011 and everything gets measured against 2011
- Sharon Sorby said there are potentially 3 wells near Lone and the river as shown in the CARA north county map
- Andy check with City of Newport about delineated wellhead protection areas for City water supplies

Section 3.2: SWOT analysis information to add, update, move or delete after discussing with Workgroup

(Strengths): Add the following:

- High quality Timothy hay production
- Low cost of production relative to other areas
- Feeding local people- much of the cattle raised in the County is consumed in the County
- Move strong demand for product to opportunities section
- Established floodplains maintain lower land costs for agriculture

(Weaknesses):

- Add: Distance from suppliers and markets/shipping costs
- Move: "Reliance on public lands leases to support ranching" to Threats
- Edit: Fluctuating price of hay and fertilizers by adding "and fuel costs"
- Edit: Include Cost of electricity "and PUD rate increases; lost historical competitive advantage of low cost power"
- Edit: Limited options for crop diversity change wheat to "hay" and cattle...Add last sentence: "Also some crops such as oats will be eaten by game species just before the crop is ready to be harvested"."

(Opportunities):

- Edit: Regional market for grass fed beef to "local and" regional market for grass fed beef
- Edit: New technologies by adding "(e.g., improved seed types)"
- Add: Partnership opportunities with the CD and NRCS
- Add: More comprehensive farmers market centrally located in County to serve larger Spokane area

(Threats):

- Edit: New "and updated" regulations "and trade policies"
- Edit: Predation of livestock "and changes in game patterns of migration and forage areas"
- Edit: Wildfires, "floods", and landslides "(and impacts to roads system)"
- Delete bullet on landownership changes
- Add: Inflated land values drive up costs
- Add: Invasive plant species
- Delete bullet on public land management
- Edit: Younger generations not interested in "larger commercial agriculture operations, although they have shown some interest in smaller agricultural operations or seeking other career opportunities. Baby boomers more represented in larger commercial operations are retiring "

Chapter 4:

- Karen Skoog reminded the group that permission is needed to fly drones over private property
- Andy asked if landowners can get credit for doing conservation practices that are not necessarily compliant with NRCS standards? Yes! Any conservation practice that maintains or improves conditions over the 2011 baseline helps with VSP.
- The County receives \$110,000 per year to support VSP implementation. This funding can be used both for program administration and conservation actions. VSP provides a lot of flexibility in implementation as long as the protection goals are met.
- Many conservation practices are self-funded by producers and collecting information on these practices will be important for tracking VSP performance
- Each county gets the same amount of funding regardless of County size or population
- If the legislature stops funding VSP, then the VSP program goes into a holding pattern until additional funding is provided, or the county decides to adopt a regulatory approach

Next Steps:

- The VSP Overview and Outreach document in Appendix A is a good communication tool in sharing information about VSP with producers and others. Mike Lithgow mentioned it could be good to have a condensed version such as a 1 page flyer or tri fold to give out, along with a poster placed in strategic areas around the county. Put condensed version on County website also. White Bluffs to follow up with Anchor QEA on revised overview and outreach document.
- FAQ: put a question and response that emphasizes voluntary participation and the range of participation, and that producers do not have to be part of a federal government program to be part of VSP
- Projects could be ranked in order of importance or consistent with established criteria that can change from year to year, to qualify for VSP project implementation funding
- It was suggested that the work group consider meeting quarterly early on in implementation to provide guidance on how to get VSP successfully operating
- Start education and outreach this fall and consider sending out postcards
- Could do an intersection with agricultural lands, critical areas and the Assessors property data within the County to use in developing a contact list
- Ben and Lara to provide Andy with a list of suggested work group members for board action. Then once the work group is established the County will follow up with a letter to each work group member letting them know they are part of the work group.
- Double check/compare the number of farms in county assessor's records with the USDA data used in the plan.

Next VSP workgroup meeting: Tuesday, May 1, 2018, 5 to 7 pm, WSU Cooperative Extension Office