

Pend Oreille County VSP Work Group Meeting Notes

Tuesday, March 6, 2018

10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Larry Cordes – Landowner

Michele Masuen – Landowner

Mike Jensen – Cooperative extension

Ron Meyer - Landowner

Sharon Sorby – County weed control

John Galley – Landowner

Mike Lithgow – Kalispel tribe

John Small – Anchor QEA

Ben Floyd – White Bluffs Consulting

Lara Floyd – White Bluffs Consulting

Welcome and Introductions

- Each person introduced themselves and explained why they want to be involved with the VSP process. Andy Huddleston from the County, David Marcell from the Conservation District (CD) and others were excused for illness or other conflicts.
- Mike Lithgow mentioned how they have native plants that they are raising that could be available for restoration projects
- Larry Galley commented about how there are records from the 1980s on best management practices that would be helpful in developing the work plan (Mark Melby did the planning work for the CD)

VSP Process Overview

- Less than 3000 acres of agricultural lands in the County raised the question in the past by VSP participants about whether it was necessary to develop a VSP work plan, but after discussing it further the meeting attendees decided there would be benefits to having VSP in the County.
- Work group members wondered if the work done on VSP in 2016 and 2017 was a waste of time? It was not a waste of time and the information developed during that time will be incorporated into the VSP work plan.
- The group discussed why Pend Oreille County should finish the VSP process? To avoid regulation of agricultural lands, to receive state resources to support implementation and to also include a focus on agricultural viability.
- Look for days during hay season that are rainy to have meetings this summer
- Change times for future meetings; agreed to start meetings at 5 pm and to also provide snacks/light dinner as part of meeting
- Work Group members expressed concerns about also having funding available for projects along with the planning process - If the legislature funds VSP, Pend Oreille County will receive its share of the funding and the Work group can decide the allocation of funding between administration and project implementation.

Work group roles and responsibilities

- If you have any pictures off wildlife, agriculture or typical agriculture properties in the County, please email (lara@whitebluffsconsulting.com) or text them to Lara (509-460-2001). We will use these in the VSP work plan.

Ground rules

- White Bluffs will update the Ground Rules to include comments provided by the Work Group.
- White Bluffs will send out a link of open public meetings act training provided by the WA State Attorney General's office for anyone who hasn't seen it. All Work Group meetings are subject to the open public meetings act.
- Work group members can participate by phone or internet and can even vote if not attending in person.
- Add federal agency representatives to section e – ex-officio participants.
- NRCS was invited to be a part of this process but asked to be removed from the email communications

Overview of work plan elements

- VSP doesn't address compliance with other regulations but it does address GMA critical areas requirements and actions under the plan and can also address elements of compliance with other regulations. In addition to protecting critical areas, VSP also addresses agricultural viability - it's a balanced approach.
- Do forestry practices get addressed through VSP? Most of the grazing is done on forest ground. Activities regulated under the State Forest Practices Act fall under the regulatory underpinning along with the Endangered Species Act and other regulations. Some forest management practices that benefit grazing can be addressed through VSP. More information will be shared on this topic at a future meeting.
- White Bluffs and Anchor QEA will work on mapping private forested lands used for grazing.
- VSP will not cover every type of land management –only those practices specifically related to agriculture land and activities management.
- Seattle City Light, Pend Oreille PUD and the Kalispel tribe all conduct certain types of monitoring - surface flow, surface water quality and other information on the natural environment
- We will send a link of the county website where we will put the meeting agenda, presentation and other meeting materials.

State Technical panel

- They will want to know how we organized the workgroup
- White Bluffs and Anchor are proposing a method used by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) – Conservation Practices Physical Effects or CPPE tool - for evaluating effects on and benefits to critical areas from agricultural best management practices. The state technical panel will also require aerial imagery evaluation and consideration of other indicators from existing data sources, as discussed above, to backup and verify CPPE findings.

- We can use the conservation practices implemented since 2011 as credit for protection measures under VSP. We will look to the Conservation District and NRCS for information on conservation practices implemented since 2011.
- State VSP advisory committee is there to resolve any concerns identified by the state technical panel that are difficult to resolve. State technical panel meetings are open to participate in by phone and computer if you want to listen in.

Work plan Sections 1 - 3

- We will use plans from Ferry, Stevens and others as a starting point for the Pend Oreille County VSP work plan. Stevens and others have been approved already. We will also work closely with the CD in developing the work plan.
- How will the work plan address surface water quality and what is agriculture's responsibility versus what happens on US Forest Service and private timber ground that affects water quality? Monitoring information and documented practices will identify agriculture vs other contributions. Agriculture will not be responsible for addressing the problems created by others or occurring on their lands.
- The group discussed how to organize plan implementation and reporting. The group decided to organize the County by the Little Spokane River as one area and the rest of the County as another area.
- The group discussed whether to include small acreage operations in VSP, and concluded that all agriculture activities and lands in county, whether on small or larger parcels, should be included.
- At the next meeting, the agenda will include an opportunity to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of agriculture in Pend Oreille County.

Next Steps

- Give us your comments on Sections 1 – 3 by the 23rd of March. Comments can be emailed to Lara.
- We will consolidate those comments and have responses for them and have chapter 4 to review at the next meeting.
- We will be including GIS data summaries highlighted in tables in a future draft of the work plan.
- Lara will email out the draft Ferry VSP work plan and approved Stevens VSP work plans as follow up to the meeting.
- Talk to Tommy Petri about joining the Work Group. John Galley will be an interested party to include on all communications but he will be gone for much of the planning period and not available to attend meetings.
- WSU has a drone available for information collection and the Kalispel tribe is also capturing drone footage of restoration projects

Next Work Group meeting will be on Thursday, April 5th at 5 pm (dinner provided). It will be held at the WSU Cooperative Extension Office in Newport