

Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Group Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2021 ~ Columbia Conservation District/Zoom

I. Call to Order

Work Group Member Val Turner called to order the first quarter 2021 meeting of the Columbia County VSP Work Group at 1:03 p.m. on January 19, 2021. Turner facilitated the meeting as former Chair Marty Hall has been sworn in as Columbia County Commissioner and will attend in an advisory/informational capacity for future meetings. The meeting was via the Zoom meeting platform due to COVID 19 meeting restrictions.

II. Attendance

Val Turner, Don Howard, Roland Schirman, Tom Schirm, Joy Eckhoff, Terry Bruegman, Aneesha Dieu, Marty Hall (Commissioner), Levi Keesecker (State Conservation Commission), Leslie Michel (State Conservation Commission) and Dena Martin (Staff)

III. Approval of Minutes

Schirman moved to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 meeting; Howard seconded. All approved.

IV. Updates from State VSP

- Keesecker and Michel said they are available to help with the reporting and monitoring processes. They reminded the work group that submittals from other counties are available for review on the Commission website.

V. County Updates

- **Quarterly report:** The fourth-quarter report was submitted to the state and was made available for work group review.
- **Work group membership:**
 - New work group member Joy Eckhoff introduced herself and shared about her background as an research agronomist for Montana State University.
 - Martin will begin soliciting former work group members to return to the work group once the 5-Year report has been submitted.

VI. Implementation Progress

Conservation District Project Manager Aneesha Dieu provided an update on current cost-share projects.

- Phase one of the Hutchens Educational Nutrient Management Project (VSP 2020-02) has been completed and it is the first cost-share project to request reimbursement from 2020-21 VSP grant funds.
- Dieu described the Hutchens Educational Nutrient Management Project for the benefit of new work group member Joy Eckhoff.

- Most projects are on hold until spring.

VII. On-going Items

Martin and Dieu presented a data worksheet and PowerPoint presentation detailing data included in the 5-Year Report for work group review.

- The report maintains that all protection and enhancement goals were met.
- Two of the 18 benchmarks fell short of the protection benchmarks but were more than compensated by stewardship practices that far exceeded the required protection benchmarks.
- The work group approved the following adaptive management for the unmet benchmarks:
 - #3 Grazing Mgt. (CS) is a largely undocumented practice and will be replaced with Watering Facilities (614).
 - #7 Irrigation Water Mgt. (449) is seldom utilized as the county is predominately a dryland farming community. This practice will be replaced with Forest Stand Improvement (666).
- Dieu explained that several of the monitoring methods listed in the VSP Work Plan were difficult to utilize or provided poor data. The work group discussed monitoring methods and made the following determinations:
 - Washington Department of Health groundwater quality monitoring, U.S. Geological Survey water quantity and quality monitoring and Washington Department of Ecology water quantity and quality monitoring will be removed from Table 5-6 Indicators and Monitoring (Work Plan p. 74).
 - Tucannon and Touchet Webmap Data Analysis, created by Anchor QEA, sponsored by the Bonneville Power Administration and housed by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will be added as a monitoring method.
 - The Work Group will solicit, review and select one to two additional replacement monitoring methods after reviewing options gleaned from neighboring VSP work groups, Columbia Conservation District staff and State Conservation Commission staff.
- *Howard motioned to approve the report for submission to the State; Schirman seconded. All approved.*

VIII. Comments, Concerns, Items not Listed on the Agenda

- a. Schirman asked if an article could be submitted to the paper noting that the 5-Year Report has been approved and submitted, in hopes of raising interest in VSP. Martin said she will submit press releases to The Times and The Chronicle.

IX. Next Meeting

Michel said that the Tech Panel should respond with report comments by March 21. A tentative meeting date is set for Thursday, April 8 at 1 p.m. to review tech panel comments and alternative monitoring methods. The meeting time may need to be changed to an evening meeting, depending on producer availability. A new Chair will be elected as the first order of business at the April meeting.

X. Adjournment

Schirman motioned to adjourn; Hall seconded. Turner adjourned the meeting at 1:53 p.m.