

Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Work Group Meeting Minutes
July 19, 2022 at 8:15 a.m.
Conservation District Boardroom/Zoom

I. Call to Order

Work Group Chair Rick Turner called to order the regular meeting of the Columbia County VSP Work Group at 8:19 a.m. on July 19, 2022.

II. Attendance

In-person Attendance: Rick Turner, Joy Eckhoff, Roland Schirman, DJ Frame, Val Turner (Conservation District Staff), Aneesha Dieu (Conservation District Staff), Dena Martin (County Planning Staff)

Zoom Attendance: None

III. Approval of Minutes

- Schirman moved to approve the June 16, 2022 minutes. Frame seconded. All approved.

IV. County/CCD Updates

- Martin provided a budget update through June, 2022. The work group discussed a possible future amendment to move funds from cost-share to allow for increased monitoring.
- Martin provided a summary of the July 14 Joint SAC/TP meeting.
 - There was a good deal of feedback regarding tying supplemental budget funds to salmon recovery and have decided that is no longer a requirement, though it is encouraged. The proposal will go before the Commission on July 21.
 - Several updates are in the works for increasing the functionality and user-friendliness of the 5-Year report.
 - Walla Walla County presented their projects and asked questions.
- Val Turner provided an update on active VSP cost-share projects:
 - Warren has submitted his VSP survey and all paperwork is in.
 - Truesdale permits are in from County and WDFW just issued HPA.
 - Phinney is moving forward and will plant grass in the fall.
 - Peyton is complete and paid out.
 - Archer is complete and paid out. Willows will be planted in the fall.
 - CD covered nutrients on Hatchet Field.
 - Touchette has trees ordered.

V. Discussion/Action Items

- **Dieu presented a VSP cost share application from Bill Warren for a fish screen replacement**
 - Dieu reported that the existing fish screen that was supplied by the Conservation District was washed out in recent high flow events. The screen prevents fish species while irrigation water is pumped from the river to water orchard trees.

- The piping and infrastructure is intact and only the self-cleaning rotary screen needs replaced.
- The project falls under BMP 587 Structure for Water Control.
- The project budget is \$6655. The landowner would be responsible for 25% (\$1664), with VSP cost-share covering the remaining \$4991.
- *Eckhoff moved to approve VSP 2022-02 Warren Fish Screen Replacement as proposed. Schirman seconded. All in favor.*
- **Dieu provided an update on the joint-agency web-based monitoring project**
 - In order to meet the legislative requirement for VSP to show that voluntary methods are successful in protecting and enhancing critical areas, Dieu has proposed the development of a web-based portal that would be a one-stop-shop for existing data from other agencies. Agencies with data include the DOE, WDFW, WSDA, NOA, the Tribes, which all gather their own data, but don't work together.
 - The portal would also include layers of known voluntary practices and implemented projects. It is expected that these efforts could be matched with historical data layers (such as water quality and water temperature) to paint a picture of the success of voluntary projects.
 - The project will also show gaps where information is missing to help determine what additional monitoring needs to take place.
 - The initial project would focus on WRIA 35.
 - Dieu has been talking with Fluvial Geomorphologist Reed Camp about the project and requested a project cost estimate. The estimate exceeds \$10,000, which requires a soft solicitation for bids. Dieu will provide the same information to other entities and present the bids and qualifications for review at the August meeting.
 - The work group discussed data-gathering, privacy issues, agency cooperation, website maintenance, potential budget amendments and other issues.
 - Dieu said it is hoped that if the project is successful, it could produce funding for further development. It could also be a pilot project for other Conservation Districts.
 - If approved, money would need to be moved from the Cost-share/technical Assistance portion of the VSP Budget into Monitoring.
 - *Eckhoff motioned to move forward with the monitoring project concept and approve Dieu to perform a soft solicitation for bids. Frame seconded. All in favor.*
- **VSP Fair Booth**
 - Martin asked if the work group wanted to have a fair booth since it seems to get little attention and is duplicated somewhat by the Conservation District.
 - Val Turner said the District will not be highlighting VSP this year as they are highlighting pollinators.

- Work group members agreed that it is important to keep VSP visible and suggested a booth highlighting cost-share projects and the proposed monitoring portal.

VI. Comments, concerns, items not listed on the agenda

- Rick Turner asked Schirm how all the agencies work together when they all have different goals. Schirm explained the review process and admitted that there isn't always great communication between agencies, though it has been improving. He credits the improvement in communication on the efforts and cooperation of the agency field staff.
- Rick Turner expressed concern about showing positive data, but only some of the agencies agreeing with the positive impacts.
- Schirm said that it is hard to quantify that we are accomplishing what we say we are, but we are. The 2011 benchmark was already better than many places in the state because of the measures already in place. He feels the County has shown enough improvements that it won't be an issue. He said sometime federal agencies express concern based on fish response, but that can be based on impacts that exist once the fish have left the system.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 8:15 a.m. on Wednesday, August 24, 2022 at the Conservation District boardroom and via Zoom.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.