

Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Work Group Meeting Minutes
August 24, 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 8:23 a.m. on August 24, 2022.

II. Attendance

In-person Attendance: Rick Turner, Joy Eckhoff, Terry Bruegman, DJ Frame, Marty Hall (Columbia County Commissioner), Aneasha Dieu (Conservation District Staff), Dena Martin (County Planning Staff)
Zoom Attendance: Brian Cochrane (WSSC)

III. Approval of Minutes

- *Eckhoff moved to approve the July 19, 2022 minutes. Frame seconded. All approved.*

IV. County/CCD Updates

- Martin provided a budget update through July, 2022 and provided a breakdown of expended and committed cost-share funds.
- Dieu provided an update on active VSP cost-share projects:
 - Touchette (reforestation) will plant in the fall. Trees have been purchased. Weed mats will be placed around the trees.
 - Phinney (pasture management) is moving forward and will plant his final grass planting in the fall.
 - Bishop/Truesdale (bank stabilization) is waiting on the Corps permit. It is anticipated that it will be approved between Sept. 1 and 15 in time for project completion by Sept. 30.
 - Warren (fish screen) is completed and awaiting for financials for reimbursement.

V. Discussion/Action Items

- **Dieu provided an update on the joint-agency web-based monitoring project**
 - Dieu emailed three agencies for bids but received no responses aside from Cramer Fish Sciences (Reid Camp).
 - Dieu asked to send another request for bids and allow another week for responses to ensure soliciting requirements are met.
 - The Work Group can select/approve the consultant via a Zoom meeting, following the response deadline.
- **Dieu presented a VSP cost share application from Phillip Millet for a riparian enhancement project.**
 - The project includes planting approximately 600 trees and shrubs to establish a now barren riparian zone on Whetstone Creek. Currently, the creek is farmed up to its edge in many places. Establishing a

riparian zone will enhance critical areas by reducing erosion and potential nutrient runoff.

- The project budget is \$8650. The landowner would be responsible for 25% (\$2163), with VSP covering the remaining \$6488.
 - Dieu will apply for VSP Supplemental Budget Funds cost-share funds as this project meets the guideline requirements.
 - The work group discussed the proposal and agreed that it would provide a positive effect. Turner asked about the availability of plantings. Cochrane was interested to know the viability of the proposed one-gallon plantings as opposed to smaller plantings.
 - *Eckhoff moved to approve VSP 2022-03 Millet Riparian Enhancement as proposed. Frame seconded. All in favor.*
 - If funds are not approved through the VSP supplemental budget, the work group approved payment from the existing County cost-share budget.
- **Dieu presented a VSP cost share application from Phil Farmer/Bill Ranken (Columbia Straw Supply) for a livestock fencing project.**
 - The project includes replacing approximately 3780 feet of fence that was destroyed in the 2020 flood, when the river changed course. The project will keep grazing cattle out of the Tucannon River that is home to ESA listed Steelhead and native Spring Chinook and bull trout.
 - The project budget is \$10948. The landowner would be responsible for 25% (\$2737), with VSP covering the remaining \$8211.
 - The work group discussed the project, including whether or not it would qualify under the supplementary budget guidelines and how long approval would take if so. Cochrane expected that projects will be approved pretty quickly if they meet the guideline requirements and are a “clean project.”
 - Dieu will apply for VSP Supplemental Budget Funds cost-share funds as it is believed this project meets the guideline requirements.
 - *Eckhoff moved to approve VSP 2022-04 Columbia Straw Fencing Project as proposed. Frame seconded. All in favor.*
 - If funds are not approved through the VSP supplemental budget, the work group approved payment from the existing County cost-share budget.

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

- Dieu announced that the Conservation District has hired a new resource tech, who will start in October. He is a trainee from Minnesota who wants to develop a better background in agriculture.

VII. Next Meeting

A short Zoom meeting will be held at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, September 7, 2022 to select a consultant for the multi-agency, web-based monitoring project.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 a.m.