

**Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program**  
**Work Group Meeting Minutes**  
**January 10, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.**  
**Conservation District Boardroom/Zoom**

**I. Call to Order**

Work Group Vice-Chair Joy Eckhoff called to order the regular meeting of the Columbia County VSP Work Group at 1:00 p.m. on January 10, 2023..

**II. Attendance**

Attendance: DJ Frame, Roland Schirman, Joy Eckhoff, Tom Schirm, Marty Hall (County Commissioner, Aneesha Die and, Ben Kleist (Conservation District Staff), Dena Martin (County Planning Staff)

Zoom Attendance: None

**III. County/CCD Updates**

• **County**

- Martin provided a budget update and an update on cost-share commitments.
- Martin reported that the State Conservation Commission awarded the following cost-share funds through Supplementary Budget Funding, to be added to the 2021-2023 Columbia County VSP Budget through Budget Amendment #2 dated November 18, 2022:
  - *Phil Farmer/Col. Straw Fencing (VSP 2022-04) - \$8211.00 Cost Share/ \$2052.75 Technical Assistance*
- Martin provided a copy of the submitted Quarterly Report for the third quarter of 2022.

• **Conservation District Update**

- Dieu provided an update on the web portal monitoring project.
  - Two meetings were held with monitoring agencies. Several individuals expressed concern at the first meeting about the project duplicating existing efforts, potential for inaccurate data, project costs, maintenance and submission of data. Dieu said the second meeting went more smoothly with attendees gaining a better understanding of the need for the project and the difference between it and existing efforts.
  - Dieu provided a brief overview of the Tucannonriver.org website, which tracks data on fish habitat restoration efforts in the Tucannon River Basin. The existing website contains a great deal of data but doesn't track upland projects, which are an important part of VSP. It also covers only part of WRIA 35.
  - The work group will need to decide whether to partner with the CTUIR and use the existing portal as a basemap or to develop its own portal and link to Tucannonriver.org. Dieu will work with Reed Camp to develop a pro/con list for the work group to consider.

- Dieu and Camp will work with agencies to develop a table of critical areas and to determine who is willing to provide data for each area. Work group members will be invited to the attend meetings if they choose
  - Kleist provided an update on current VSP cost-share projects.
    - VSP 2019-08 Phinney Pasture Restoration, Phase II will close out this spring. He intends to apply for Phase III funding in the next funding cycle.
    - VSP 2019-03 Touchette Reforestation is completed and waiting for close-out paperwork to be submitted.
    - VSP-2022-02 Warren Fish Screen is completed and waiting for close-out paperwork to be submitted.
    - VSP 2022-03 Millet Riparian Planting will not be completed this year. Dieu will notify the SCC to see if the supplementary budget funds can be returned and redistributed.
      - Millet has plans for a dredging project that will need to be completed prior to the riparian planting. Schirm asked about permitting. Martin will send Millet SEPA and Floodplain Development Permit forms to initiate the permitting process.
    - VSP 2022-05 DeRuwe Watering Facilities, applicant has piping, is ordering troughs, and project is progressing.
    - VSP 2022-06 Malecha Culvert Installation, project has been given the green light, but there has been no movement. Martin commented that the project applied for supplementary budget funds but there had been no response. Dieu said that it had been marked “completed” in the system, which is probably a system error. She will check with the funding panel to see if the project is still up for consideration for supplementary funds.
    - Kleist said they have received interest regarding two potential future bank stabilization projects that will probably take place in the next funding cycle.

#### **IV. Discussion/Action Items**

- **Review/Approve McKinley Watering Facility Project**

- The work group reviewed and discussed application VS 2023-01 for a livestock watering system. The total project cost is estimated at \$45,000. The project has been approved for EQIP funding of \$27,000. The applicant is requesting VSP cost-share for the remaining \$18,000. Because the applicant is receiving other funding, he would be eligible for 50% of the unfunded portion of the project, or \$9,000 (\$18,000/2).
  - Schirm questioned whether or not the stream running through the pasture would be blocked off to prevent cattle access. Dieu was unsure but said EQIP funding generally comes with strict standards so she thought it may be a requirement.

- The work group had additional questions on the project's critical areas benefits (especially if there is no fencing) and requested budget clarifications.
- The work group would like to see more information, and will review/approve the project via a Zoom meeting after receiving:
  - a. a map/sketch of the project site
  - b. additional information on critical areas benefits
  - c. clarification on whether or not the stream will be fenced
- Kleist will work with the applicant to gather the requested information.

- **Other Discussion Items**

- None.

**V. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on March 14, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Conservation District boardroom and via Zoom. A Zoom meeting may be called in February for further discussion of the McKinley cost-share application.

**VI. Adjournment**

*The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.*