

**Whitman County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)**  
**Watershed Work Group**  
**GROUND RULES**  
**(Updated Draft April 7, 2016)**

**Ground rules will be used at every meeting. It is both the facilitator and the Participants' responsibility to see that the ground rules are followed.**

1. **Decision-making** - All members are expected to participate in all phases of discussions and decisions. The Watershed Work Group will work together to achieve consensus on VSP work plan elements. The Work Group will operate by consensus. Consensus is defined as a decision that falls within the “endorsement” to “formal disagreement but will go with majority” continuum (see attached exhibit).
  - a. 7 for a quorum for the WA Open Public Meetings Act (7 out of 13 WG members); informational meetings can still be held without a full quorum present
  - b. A simple majority quorum must be present for decisions to be made. A quorum exists for a meeting if there is a majority of the Watershed Work Group present for the meeting (7 members). If a quorum does not exist, the members present shall decide whether to continue with an informal discussion of the agenda for the meeting.
  - c. When possible, the Watershed Work Group will discuss any issue in at least two meetings, to allow time for members to discuss issues.
  - d. If the Watershed Work Group is unable to reach consensus on any issue, it will consider other options:
    - Refer the issue to a subcommittee to identify options and recommend an action for the Planning Unit to consider.
    - Table the issue temporarily, and revisit it during a subsequent meeting.
    - Take an advisory or “straw” vote to help the committee decide what action to take next
    - Leave the issue unresolved and note it as such. The option of providing a minority report was discussed and while a provision for a minority report was not provided this option is something that could be revisited in the future.
  - e. If consensus cannot be reached, a voting process may also be used to resolve issues. Voting will occur by a hand-count. Each member will be identified in meeting notes by name with their vote. An affirmative vote will be based on simple majority approval of the voting members present.
  
2. **Respect for Interests** - The Watershed Work Group members represent a full range of interests related to protecting critical areas and sustainable agriculture in Whitman County.

- Every idea has merit.
  - Suspend assumptions, listen carefully, and speak to educate.
3. **Creativity** - The members commit to search for opportunities, options, and alternatives.
  4. **Open Dialogue** - The members agree that they have a responsibility to discuss the issues and plan development, and to use open and candid communication with each other.
  5. **Open Meetings** - All Watershed Work Group meetings will be open to the public. Observers are welcome to attend Work Group meetings and provide public comment at specified opportunities during each meeting. Written comments are also welcome. Summaries of each meeting will be shared with an Interested Parties email distribution list.
  6. **Speaking** - One person will speak at a time, and the facilitators will make every effort to assure that everyone will have an opportunity to speak. The facilitator will recognize each speaker.
  7. **Attendance** - Attendance is critical to the success of this planning process. Each member will take the responsibility to get the information they missed due to an absence. Members may waive the opportunity to participate in decisions due to lack of attendance.
  8. **Responsibility to meet needs** - Each member will take the responsibility for getting their needs met, for getting the needs of those they represent met, and for getting the needs of the other members met. Additionally, Work Group members are responsible for the statements that they make to the other Work Group members as well as to the public regarding the work of the Watershed Work Group.
  9. **Start on time** - Watershed Work Group members agree to start the meetings on time and end them on time.
  10. **Humor & Miscellaneous** - We agree that humor is appreciated and welcome. We commit to having fun and encouraging it in others.
  11. **Use of cell phones** - Unless there is an emergency, responding to pagers, cell phones, telephone messages, etc., will wait until the members are on a break, or the meeting is over.

**Definition of Consensus**  
**Voluntary Stewardship Program**

Consensus is defined in terms of agreement along a continuum. Watershed Work Group members may register their degree of agreement with the language in any of the six columns:

1	2	3	4
<b>Endorse</b>	<b>Endorse with a minor point of contention</b>	<b>Agree with reservation</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
“I like it”	“Basically I like it”	“I can live with it”	“I have no opinion”

(Adapted from: “Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making,” 1996)

Notes: 1) Agreements with scores ranging from 1 to 6 is considered “agreement by consensus.” 2) Blocking (disagreeing and not supporting the decision) is not consensus.