

**WHITMAN COUNTY**  
**VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP MEETING**  
**July 7, 2016**  
**3:00 p.m.**

**MEMBERS:**

Alan Thomson	Art Swannack
David Lange	David Swannack
Jeff Pittmann	Joan Folwell
John Pearson (Absent)	John Stuhlmiller, (Phone)
Jon Jones	Kim Weerts
Tracy Eriksen (Phone)	Nancy Belsby
Larry Cochran	

**3:07 p.m.** – Ben Floyd, (on the phone,) let’s have introductions of members present in Colfax. Alan Thomson, Art Swannack, David Lange, David Swannack, Jeff Pittmann, Joan Folwell, Jon Jones, Kim Weerts, Larry Cochran, Nancy Belsby.

Introductions of members on the phone, Tracy Eriksen, John Stuhlmiller.

Ben Floyd - It looks like Tracy is the only one who wanted to take advantage of the technology. That is just fine.

Other individuals on the phone; Pete Martin, (inaudible) Recovery Board; John Stuhlmiller, Farm Bureau; Jason Kunz, Fish and Wildlife; Jack Meyer, VSP Coordinator, Yakima; Vivian Erickson, Anchor QEA; John Small, Anchor QEA.

Ben Floyd – Jack Meyer is the VSP coordinator for Ecology replacing Tom Clingman.

Audience: Tom Kammerzell, Landowner; Jennifer Boie, Palouse Conservation District; Brad Johnson, Palouse Conservation District, Mark Storey, Whitman County Director/Engineer.

Ben Floyd – Just a few ground rules. This is an experiment. We thought it might be an opportunity to take advantage of technology and be able to potentially have a few more meetings to avoid travel costs. We can still go back to the other approach if you are not comfortable with this. We will learn from this experience and then we will decide how to proceed going forward. If you have comments and questions, please start off by stating your name each time you want to speak.

As we go between slides and switch topics we will make sure to pause and ask for questions or comments. I would also ask those on the phone to mute when you are not speaking and please don’t put us on hold. We have had conference calls with elevator music after someone put us on hold and it makes it difficult to hold the meeting.

Art Swannack – How many people in this group have the capability of actually doing this in terms of internet connection, software or technological knowledge?

Ben Floyd – It is really a matter of whether they have an internet connection at their computer. The software is all being housed in Anchor QEA and we are just sending our screen to the others. So, Tracy Eriksen is the one worker member that logged on. Tracy, how is your experience?

Tracy Eriksen – In the past, my experience has been very good. I've always communicated through a text in the past but right now I have a very good picture here of the VSP. I'm good right now.

Ben Floyd – Did you have to download anything to display the picture?

Tracy Eriksen – It all came through on the download internet access. Nothing special.

Nancy Belsby – Are you on St. John Cable?

Tracy Eriksen – Is anybody there? I've got to learn how to run the mute button. My internet provider is St. John Cable.

Art Swannack – Some people are not on high speed internet in the rural areas. That is my concern with this method. If it works, fine, but I'd ask Ben and you guys to be aware that everyone doesn't have high speed capability in the rural areas.

Ben Floyd – Okay, point well taken.

Mark Storey – Anyone that would like to or doesn't have the capability, we will continue to have something here and we will have a debriefing with staff and the consultants to make sure this is working out for everybody. I would certainly appreciate any comments regarding this or if you want something different. We will figure it out.

Ben Floyd – This is not a switch in our meeting format. We will still have our in-person meeting. We thought we would try this for July and maybe it could be a tool that could be used for us in the future if you wanted to have additional meetings to provide this flexibility. If it doesn't work, we will go back to in-person only but still have a Web-ex for John or Steve Martin, Jack, and Jason if he can't make it down from Spokane and anyone else.

We will still have that capability and I can be there in person; our Anchor staff can participate if they are not able to be there in person, or for cost reasons. We are trying to hold the line on costs. This is just an experiment. Like Mark mentioned, we will re-group and see if it is something we want to do and go from there.

Lincoln County has asked us to try this and I don't think they have high speed internet in their different areas. So we will try that for them in two weeks. I can share those results as well. I don't believe this is a high data usage approach when we are doing this, but I can't verify that.

Okay, we would like to follow up on a few items. So, John Stuhlmiller has offered to give an update on the Statewide Advisory Committee Technical Panel meetings that were held recently so, John, please provide that update now.

John Stuhlmiller – Thank you. I thought it would be helpful for all of you to hear what the committees are doing. So, you know the distinction between the Statewide Advisory Committee and the Technical Panel. The Technical Panel is the four agencies; Ecology, Fish & Wildlife, Agriculture, and the Conservation Commission. Those four vote, if you will, when a plan is rolled up and sent to the Conservation Commission. They will send it to the Technical Panel to review, to see. Basically, the test is for 10 years with all things being equal and considering any other planning, will it protect critical areas

while maintaining the viability of agriculture. That is the role of that Statewide Advisory Committee, is two folks from agriculture, two from the counties, two from tribes and two from the environmental community. We are down in members right now but we are working in getting that back up. That group is to advise the commission on basically all things voluntary stewardship program-wise.

So, we met on the 30<sup>th</sup> which was the second of our most recent. We were sort of active at the very beginning of the process three years ago and then went in hiatus until we actually got funding and got things started up. Now the group is cranked up so we met first, the Statewide Advisory Committee. I am one member from ag, two ag representatives. So we met in Lacy on June 30<sup>th</sup> and had a good conversation related to a couple of things.

One, what is our role and in trying to key the roles of the advisory committee versus the technical panel? Then we began looking in particular at some technical advice, I'm not sure what they called it that they are putting together. The technical panel is working on it sort of, looking for the name of the document, draft frame work. Just to candidly share, the tricky part as the technical panel does things, technical panel is supposed to, not necessarily engage what you at the County level, because there is the bullet at the end.

So you want to see what advisory committee to advise work groups on, you know, here's the statute, what do you think and advise there. We don't want too much of that flow of advice from the technical panel to erect the county so it doesn't poison the well, so to speak. You want to be an independent entity and when you send your process, program in, the work plan, that is when you will engage in that direct conversation.

So, the technical piece they are working on or the draft frame work for technical review of VSP work plan, that is the document that should be helpful to you but we jumped in and started to wrangle over words, so we are working that process. That will be coming out pretty soon. We have another meeting scheduled, I think it is another July meeting. I can't remember. So those two groups are meeting and it is important that we do get our proverbial act together so that we can (inaudible) you.

You have been struggling with some of the things that we (inaudible) advice level with technical panel and statewide advisory committee related to what really is your task and do you need to do maps and some of those things (Inaudible). I just want to offer that, I just want to give that staging to let you know that at the state level we are working hard to get some useful documents to you to help, sort of some frequently asked questions kind of, that is sort of, put this document in that category. So, let me pause there, that is probably more than enough to share.

Ben Floyd – Are there any questions for John?

Alan Thomson – No.

Ben Floyd – Okay, I have a question. So the guidance FAQ, frequently asked question information, do we think that is coming in August, September, late July?

John Stulhmiller – It depends on how our conversations go. We had some disagreement on what ought to be in and the language to use and so the disagreements are just wrangling over the words and what should be statutory reference (Inaudible). I would say within two months so we are already half way through July so I would say look for it by the end of August, probably.

Ben Floyd – Anything else as far as statewide perspective in terms of lessons learned or how we are doing in relationship to others, things we need to be mindful of or any other guidance for the group?

John Stuhlmler – So, now I have put on my hat as a participant in this process. The reason we wrangled over mapping, I encourage you to look past that and kind of think of that as sort of global or almost the theoretical level, not worrying about do you have a map that shows Art Swannack's place correctly and is there really this or that? Don't be focused on that yet. Get the information collected but focus on what do you mean by that, oh, that, (Inaudible) we've got a really nice piece, we are working the words on Thurston VSP. It is an ag viability, I guess you would say definition, and it is several brief paragraphs that really hone in. I think it will be a useful tool that everybody in their own county planning process, some have (Inaudible) scratch your head and say what does ag viability mean?

Of course we know what it means. It means well, you know, well, you know what it means. So, we would struggle with that so it is a nice little piece we will be able to share. Evan Sheffels has been taking the lead on that from our shop and that will be, we are circulating it at the Thurston level and at the Chelan level and I think you all will be able to provide that out. That will be a piece that will be really helpful as you think about it. You'll make it a Whitman County statement but it will be a lot of the pieces that will help you focus in on what do you mean by ag viability, what do we mean by ag viability?

Ben Floyd – That will be made available later in July?

John Stuhlmler – So it depends, the draft we can send anytime. We are kind of hoping that it will be something that will sort of collectively at the state advisory committee and the (inaudible) but it is a working definition that can be used by anybody. I can send that to Ben, even now, I could show you the draft we are working on.

Ben Floyd – I think that would be great.

John Stuhlmler – Again, it is a (inaudible) piece and you'll want to take it and say, no, no, no, Whitman County whatever, make it personal.

Ben Floyd – Okay, any other comments for John? Then the couple other items we had to discuss was the open government trainings, the online training that is about 18 minutes. Is there anyone that has been able to complete that training in the last month?

Alan Thomson – Larry Cochran, Joan Folwell, Jeff Pittmann, Brad Johnson, Jennifer Boie and David Swannack, Kim Weerts. Is there anyone who has not done it? Just one,

David Lange – We just had to do it in the conservation district. How long does it last?

Alan Thomson – So, David Lange has done it in the past. Is there a sunset on that, does it end?

Art Swannack – Every four years.

Alan Thomson – Nancy has done it and Jon Jones has done it with Ecology, too. So, I think that everyone has done it.

Tracy Eriksen – I did it a couple of months ago.

Ben Floyd – So, then we won't bring this up anymore. We will do our best to make sure to comply with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Subcommittee update. Vivian, do you want to give us an update on the subcommittee? Remember, just an introduction for Vivian. We had a subcommittee that we identified that would help us to better formulate the ag conservation practices and variation in different types of farming operations and ranching operations that exist in the County to help us develop as a starting point for the full work group discussion, the elements of the conservation measures that would go into the work plan. So, we had a smaller subgroup that agreed to get together, so Vivian, tell us what the next steps are on that.

Vivian Erickson – Our volunteers members are Alan Thomson, Art Swannack, John Pearson, Kim Weerts, Jon Jones and David Lange. We are working on scheduling our first work group meeting. For folks who haven't yet responded I sent out a Doodle poll last week to try and get a date tentatively scheduled on our calendar over the next 2-3 weeks. We've got a couple of folks who have responded. The most popular date is July 13<sup>th</sup> from 3-5 p.m. Jon, John Pearson and David Lange does that date sound okay for you?

David Lange – Yes, on both of those. John Pearson is not here.

Vivian Erickson – So (inaudible) it sounds like July 13<sup>th</sup> might work and then we will also maybe get an alternate so just for the larger group, we will be meeting, more than likely be a web meeting and we will start working through some of the items that were mentioned in the introduction. Thanks for your follow up with that.

Ben Floyd – Any questions or comments? David Swannack, I am going to share what you shared with me by email if that is okay. David expressed a concern that if the plan is going to be put together by a small group and make decisions without the larger group then he had concerns about that. I tried to reassure him that this was just doing some homework to be able to bring back to the larger group. The larger group will make all the decisions consistent with our ground rules on this. I will just say if anyone else is interested in being part of this subcommittee, please let us know and we will make sure you get all the information and the meeting invites and all of that. David, is there anything else to add from your perspective?

David Swannack – Nope.

Ben Floyd – Okay, specific action item update. Vivian, do you want to cover that as well?

Vivian Erickson – Sure, since the last meeting we have been following up on some action items that we discussed. We are in the process of putting an information request for CRP data that won't necessarily have map locations but we can obtain summary numbers of projects in acreages. We are working on collecting that data.

Ben Floyd – So, one of the things you asked us for was to be able to update the maps. You showed us large blocks of land that was shown as non-ag land or range land that was CRP land. So, we are not going to be able to map those with NRCS data, so if you want those maps and I think this might be kind of related to what John Stuhlmiller was talking about earlier. You know the value of this, but if you want to map these, you will probably have to hand write those on a map so that we can show that CRP

acreage. Just a heads up and that is something that we will discuss in the sub group to try and get a recommendation on that as well.

Art Swannack – It might be worth following to have that discussion, discussing more block mapping rather than getting down to the detail level, such as these are the general areas where the basalt rock, scab rock flows and the other area just consider it as farm land.

Ben Floyd – Okay, any other comments related to that follow up item? Okay, Vivian.

Vivian Erickson – Since our last meeting we, at the last meeting we looked at agricultural land cover mapping that we have been developing and that was a combination of the State Agricultural data from 2015 and the USDA data from 2011. We recently saw that the (inaudible) state data from 2011 available so we will be updating some of our mapping based on that data since it is available. We weren't able to incorporate that in the information we are going over today but it is something that we are working on.

Then moving on to the agricultural land cover map update, another thing that you requested today but we are in the process of separating out is that we discussed having our agricultural land cover separated by grain, cereal, and dry land legume and dry land other crops as far as our dry land category. Right now, we have legumes and other crops and vegetables lumped together but just to help us look at where those rotations between cereals and legumes will be happening will be pulling out legumes as a separate mapping category. Are there any questions on that?

David Swannack – I guess I am blank on this. Why do we have to separate out the ag lands into the various types of crops? Why isn't it just ag land?

Ben Floyd – We were just thinking it might be helpful from a different types of measures that are applicable based upon different crop types and (inaudible) lands, but that was just the direction we were heading. So if you have a different perspective do you want to share more about that?

David Swannack – I guess to me, ag land is ag land. You work the ground, you seed the ground, and you harvest the crop. You create dust in everything you do because that is part of farming. So, I guess it is ag ground. I don't see any difference between doing a legume and doing a wheat crop in the long run.

Ben Floyd – I think that is a good point. The activities that you talk about the same, there is probably some difference between irrigated versus dry land.

David Lange – Tracy Eriksen was talking about cover crops last time, if we are transitioning in the next 40 years in the cover crops it would be pretty fascinating mapping to see how far west the legumes would stretch. I don't know; that would just be a thought. I understand David's concern completely. If it burns up, probably in Tracy's mind, I'm not trying to put words in his mouth but if cover crops spread west it might actually reduce the amount of black summer fallow, which would be huge. So, it is just a thought. I don't want to burn up all the money on that mapping. Is that what your concern is, Dave?

David Swannack – I just think (Inaudible, microphone is squeaky).

David Lange – It could be.

Jon Jones – I think what we were getting at, at the last meeting was how much summer fallow there was in the crop. We are basically trying to separate the summer fallow (inaudible) rotations from the seed wheat and barley rotations. Just a thought.

Ben Floyd – So, separate the peas, wheat, barley rotation.

Larry Cochran – I think the map would be more interesting if the different rainfall areas were mapped. It would give you more information than what the types (inaudible, lousy microphone!)

Ben Floyd – Well, then we may not need to do much more refinement to our maps than we have already done. We do have precipitation and we can break it down finer as well. Right now, we are showing the range and we will show you that here for Union Flat Creek.

Art Swannack – The only value I remember is similar to Jon Jones' comment is that we were looking at what rotations were currently being done or were possible in certain areas and that might affect the criteria under VSP for management practices.

John Stuhlmiller – I think this is the nexus there, if it is helpful in determining where conservation practices do or do not apply?

Ben Floyd - It sounds like we have different opinions on this topic and I think points have been made both for getting more specific and not getting as specific. Let's just table this discussion but let's think about it more and we will re-visit it at our next meeting and have some more discussion on it and have a few options and then we can decide how to proceed. Okay? Vivian, any other follow up items?

Vivian Erickson –No, I think that covers it. We made some revisions to the streams that have been posted to the website. It was that unknown layer that had crow's feet all over the County and we went back and forth about how all those were topographical lows and how the maps made it look like maybe there was more water out there than there is. So, we just kind of saved out that layer; it is still mapped because is part of the state layer but just know that we revised that on the website and we will also be looking at it today with Union Flat Creek.

John Stuhlmiller – I just have one quick follow-up item is that Joan provided us a contact on Palouse Prairie. Thanks for that, Joan, and we will be following up to identify where those remnant prairie areas exist in the County and include that in the mapping.

Ben Floyd - So the next agenda item, we are going to focus on Union Flat Creek, baseline conditions information that we are pulling together as part of the baseline that took place, what existed in 2011. We have also some information that Brad Johnson and Jennifer put together for the Palouse Conservation District on conservation practices that have been implemented since 2011 and so that will be included on part of that discussion. That will take the bulk of the rest of our time.

We do have ag liability discussion potential but in light of what John shared with us about what is coming out of Thurston County we may not really spend much time on that, we will just share a few things, mainly some questions. We will probably skip over that item at this point but you will see the slides. Then we will conclude by talking about the work plan outline and our next steps. Any comments or questions?

Okay, Union Flat Creek drainage. Why are we picking Union Flat Creek? Mainly because it covers east to west and it is a little simpler than another drainage that we could have chosen. It does have a little bit of variation in it so we thought rather than trying to deal with the whole county lets divide it up into bite size pieces, drainage areas specifically. So, we are going to show you background information that we have collected so far to illustrate what the baseline will be and also point towards how this baseline information will feed into developing the work plan.

Vivian Erickson – We discussed at our last meeting how Union Flat Creek extends from the eastern to the western end of the County and how this is one sub drainage basin on the (inaudible) level of that it might make sense to break it out into some sub regions to help us define the different types of critical areas and ag (inaudible) that are happening in each of these sub regions. You can see that we have a western and the central up here and the eastern. Ben went out here and drove out in this area to check out the terrain and the vegetation.

It seemed like there were some good starting points to begin with to start separating the sub basin three region. You can see also on top of the precipitation (inaudible) and that the group reviewed at the last meeting, the 16-18 range in the western slice in the more 18-22 range and above in the eastern slice. You've got also your ranks of main stem Union Flat Creek (inaudible) and then our agricultural land cover which is in high in each stretch. Any questions?

So, for agricultural land cover we took the maps that we prepared at our last meeting and we just zoomed into this one drainage looking at the west central and east so you can see where we have more range land occurring on the west end and more irrigation crops on the west end and moving into the more dry land area with cereal, and other vegetable dry land as we move east and there is more moisture.

Here is a quick percentage coverage of what the distribution is as we move from west to east from less moisture to more moisture.

David Lange – What is your clarification of vegetables? Are we talking hay?

Vivian Erickson – We've got all of our specialty crops that showed up in the ag land, we've got legumes in here. I'll have to double check to see where we put hay. It might have fallen under other crops. Is that something that you feel should be separated out?

David Lange – I think it is just a clarification thing. I don't think there are any vegetables in that mapping. The hay number probably takes the vegetable number, would be my guess.

Ben Floyd – We will revisit on how fine a point we want to include on this.

Vivian Erickson – The data from the State, we might have about 2 acres of something included in the data layers so it is a way for us to lump all of the cereals from these other crop types.

Larry Cochran – I think if you look in the farm bill stuff our dry peas, garbanzos and lentils are considered vegetable crops.

Vivian Erickson – This slide represents soil (inaudible) of the western central and east portions of the Union Flat Creek, so drainage basin is by cereal crop cover with grassy areas on the steeper sloped

areas. These photos are to show the what (inaudible) within the distribution (inaudible) within the County, what it actually looks like out there. Still in the western site, there is a little bit of upland and lowlands dominated aerial crops and you've got your water channel going through the cultivated areas.

In the central region there is more of the forested slopes that have the vegetative draw with pasture and (inaudible) woody riparian areas. Then here on the eastern side you see more of the (inaudible) grass vegetative lows and then along the slopes in the background you see those draws. Any questions?

Ben Floyd – So, now we will talk about the Fish & Wildlife habitat conservation areas. Next slide. The State has identified priority habitats and species throughout Whitman County. Jason Kunz is probably the updater of that PHS data for the County. For Union Flat Creek you have two areas, one on the west between Winona and LaCrosse, the data migration corridor and the range land area. Then you've also got the area on the south side of the stream just south of Pullman and Colfax, well not quite to Colton, Ewartsville, that area. That is the other area that is identified. So, from a Fish & Wildlife habitat standpoint and the PHS perspective, it is fairly straightforward in terms of what we are managing, but this isn't the end of the story.

Next slide. Again, basically the same information that shows mammals. Mule deer are what dominated the habitat type that has been mapped for this area. I would just qualify that what has been mapped versus what exists there is possibly a disconnect there. There is surely more information on the ground that typically gets into the mapping.

Next slide. So when you focus in to specifically riparian areas this is the stream. So the State shoreline goes from basically the confluence with the Palouse River to the upper extent of that central reach or where SR 194 crosses Union Flat Creek. So, that is the Shoreline of the State under shoreline jurisdiction, the County Shoreline Jurisdiction program.

The streams that are in the next color of blue, the lighter blue in addition to the main stem are areas where according to F & W is fish use or potential for fish uses. Then you have little drainages or topographic lows that are no fish use and then other areas that are unknown. Really, you got the main stem and then you have a few streams that feed into it that are the potential aquatic habitat that is generally active or in place in the drainage. Any questions?

Next slide. So what does a riparian look like? This is a typical example. This is in the western side just a little bit north of LaCrosse and a little bit east of LaCrosse. Quite often you see hay fields or wheat fields right up to and top of bank and then you've got an inside channel that is like 2:1, 1 ½ to one slope quite often and a mix of grasses and weeds that are in the riparian area. The riparian areas are like maybe 10-15-20-25 feet wide on each side, depending upon on the topography.

Next slide. Another example. Sometimes you see a pocket that will go out where you either have a wetland or a fenced-off area for grazing and so you might see more vegetation that is included in there but this is pretty typical of what you see on the western edge. So, not a lot of function there. The vegetation protects water quality, so sediment getting into the stream and then the aquifer provides some cover for water fowl.

Next slide. This is another example. This is one where I don't know for sure, I am just speculating here but perhaps with chemical fallowing in the past it may have tilled some of the vegetation along the stream and then you have weedy vegetation grow up instead.

Next slide. This is showing you a channel. You can see that there is a topographic low basically through the middle of field and cultivated.

Next slide. Then you get into the central part and you start getting more structure, more trees in addition to the grasses.

Next slide. This is an area that is just west of the Klemgard County Park. This area is set aside as open space so you can see actually you have a more active flood plain, you still have a lot of grassy vegetation but you also have some weedy vegetation as well. There is more weedy vegetation upstream and downstream of this also. This is more representative of what it might look like if it weren't heavily grazed or cultivated.

Next slide. This is an example of potential impacts from grazing on the picture on the left. You can see at the water access and probably a crossing there and then grazing that goes through out the whole stream channel and the riparian area.

Next slide. Here is another area where higher function habitat is also being grazed and currently being grazed. As you go to the east, let me just pause and say we are not making a value judgement on those conditions. Because you remember the baseline of 2011, the requirement is to protect from further degradation. So, in an area that is already degraded it is important to document that that degradation existed as of 2011 and so that we know that that function wasn't there or that function was already limited. That is part of the baseline documentation.

I just want you, we are not picking on grazing, necessarily. We are just showing these are some of the impacts or some of the conditions that already exist within the baseline. So, then as we move to the east we get back more to open areas and the grassy with (inaudible) vegetation included in the riparian area and then ag activities along both sides of the stream.

This is not too far outside of Colton but it was interesting to note here, you've got the grassy stream and the wheat field next to it. I think it is wheat and then you can see all along the hillside that is where the habitat is. It is in between the upper field and the lower field and there is draws or hollows that exist and primarily north facing slope. So, as we look at critical areas and habitat functions and those draws or hollows, maybe as important as what it happening in the stream habitat. Or something we have to consider along with the stream habitat.

Jason Kunz – A lot of that area between the two fields is that a Hawthorne thicket.

Ben Floyd – It could potentially be Hawthorne, I didn't get close enough to verify that. It is not a ponderosa pine or cottonwood.

John Stulhmiller – You are going to see your mule deer starting and it definitely got some migration area where, because mule deer are all throughout the Union Flat Creek so that is definitely important habitat structure there.

Jon Jones – I'm going to regress a little bit to the beginning choosing Union Flat Creek as an example. Because Union Flat Creek is one of the unusual creeks in Whitman County in that it has no 303D listings on it. I think all the other creeks in WC have some listings that were identified by Ecology in 2011 and

Union Flat Creek escaped anyone doing any kind of water quality monitoring. So it might be, if we are going to use an example and use water quality as one of the parameters we are looking at, Union Flat Creek may not be one of the better ones because we don't have any baseline for water quality. Just a thought.

Ben Floyd – Okay, so water quality directly if not something that we have, we don't have to take on surface water quality compliance as part of VSP. We are focused on the critical areas, right? Fish & Wildlife, habitat, conservation area, wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas and geologic hazards. So, the fact that we don't have 303D listings or water quality data is not necessarily an issue, because we focus more on the ecological functions as they exist within any of the drainages including Union Flat Creek.

The conservation measures and the habitat functions can affect water quality but we would, I guess, address water quality indirectly through conservation practices that improve habitat functions, or protect groundwater quality and protect surface water quality as part of that. So, filter strips for example, can also increase riparian or habitat function and also provide water quality. This picture is a lot of vegetation that would probably filter out runoff going through the grass and into the stream, but we look at that as a function standpoint and say, yes, that is one of the functions is to protect water quality. It provides a little bit of cover but it is pretty simple riparian area and not a lot of function there.

Larry Cochran – Just another little tidbit about Union Flat Creek, the older generation used to say it would dry up during the summer until Colton and Uniontown put in their sewer treatment plants. Now it has water in it year around. So it has been changed over time, too.

Tom Kammerzell – When were these pictures taken?

Ben Floyd – Two weeks ago.

Tom Kammerzell – That is my concern that you are showing pictures from 2016 but the standard is supposed to be 2011, so you are using two different concepts there. The documentation is from 5 years after the level that it is supposed to be held to.

Ben Floyd – Not necessarily. We weren't doing VSP in 2011. We have the maps and the data sources and everything that come from 2011. These pictures are more representative of the variation of conditions and one year is not going to tell you what happened. It is different obviously from 2011, but I still think the general conclusions we can draw from these pictures are probably still helpful to the process.

Tom Kammerzell – I would caution you to be very careful because in 5 years' time there may be different usages that have taken place in that time period.

Ben Floyd – I think that is a good point. Do you know of anything specific that we have shown that has changed in that time frame?

Tom Kammerzell – Yes, on one particular piece, not on Union Flat but throughout the County you would have to go back and research each and every piece to know what the standard was in 2011 because I am familiar with one piece that was being farmed in 2011 and it is a much greater usage now, totally different.

John Stuhlmiller – (Inaudible) Washington State crop data pretty accurately. I think as we get out of ag uses that were a little more challenged, but fortunately that is not an issue for the VSP, that really is just our focus is in ag uses. We have pretty detailed mapping from 2011.

Joan Folwell – This is just another anecdotal piece to add to the mix. About 10-15 years ago, the stretch of Union Flat Creek that went through the area known as Union Flat, which is I think pretty close to the picture that you have up now, was yielding 5 pound trout. Just another piece of information. The health of that stream of that length is going to change, of course, throughout its length but that particular stretch was pretty productive.

Ben Floyd – Five pound trout, is that what you said? I did see some fish but I didn't see any five pounders but I thought the fish around Klemgard where you could get close enough and you didn't see, the channel wasn't completely covered with vegetation.

Art Swannack – My interpretation of baseline as of 2011 means not just what crop was on that piece of ground in 2011, but what was the farming practice going on in 2011 in terms of rotations and in terms of what was happening as a whole, not just at that immediate moment. Is that your understanding, or John's?

John Stuhlmiller – I was trying to direct there had been a change, a radical change in that intensity of ag use with irrigation, for instance, or a completely different crop cycle. The other data source we have is the national land cover data source from 2011. The challenge there is very coarse, it is 30 meter (inaudible) 100 foot by 100 foot squares and it doesn't really pick up a lot of the details. You don't see the riparian area, even though it exists in that data set. It is 28 feet wide.

Ben Floyd – We have the 2011 and the 2015 State Ag Crop Data so just comparing those two data sets we will be able to identify what is changed and we can share that by drainage. That will capture some of that variation and then, of course, the conservation district have also implemented many projects throughout the County, and in particular the Palouse Conservation District through the upper part of this drainage. So it will account for that as well. The variation of crops or if crop came out of production or land came out of production and also the conservation measures, as well. Art, do you think that will provide the specificity that you are looking for?

Art Swannack – My comment would be we have to watch how specific we get on our specificity because we are looking at farming operations that may have a 2-5 year cycle of production and it could get a little longer depending if guys are rotating hay through some ground. So, we have to look at that whole and say this was normal in 2011. That is our baseline, but what was that area normally doing in 2011, not specific to the field but maybe specific to the area.

Are they generally doing any type of rotation like wheat, barley, summer fallow or are they doing another type of rotation that has three or four crops or continuous crop? I'm just cautioning, don't get believing that 2011 as a baseline means they only grew wheat in this bottom in 2011. It could be 2-5 different crops but that is a normal type of crop to grow at that time in that rotation is more farming practice than it is crops specific.

Ben Floyd – Okay, so we're not going to get it down to the crop level if that's what has to be there in perpetuity it's more cultivated ground under a variety of different rotations. It could include a, b, or c,

and that's what will be included in the baseline that rotation is what I hear you saying. We will make sure that is what we characterize.

Larry Cochran – One of the phrases that could be in there somewhere is “Generally accepted farming practices,” which is vague but covers all the practices that we are doing so you are not just locking yourself into specifics.

Ben Floyd – Okay, and there are definitions of ag activities that are included in the statute as well that we will reference.

Next slide. This is another example of a draw or hollow. You have a small drainage that really extends out to a field. So, down below is a wheat field so the water is absorbed into the soil and some of it also makes it into the stream. But you've got some more habitat and you can see the deer off to the left. It is not focusing on deer, deer is kind of maybe an indicator for this type of habitat but there are other species, mammals that use that habitat as well.

Next slide. So, this shows a side channel, basically a cultivated channel or a small little channel that forms spring runoff. So, the one on the left shows it before it comes back into the stream and the one on the right shows it coming back into the stream. Just an example of some of the waterways that we have that exist in the County.

David Lange – I might make a comment on that. You see those flats are pretty limited on how they are farmed. So, when the plow finishes the field over the last 100 years it makes a type of a dead furrow that looks like a drainage ditch so you want to be a little bit careful on what is erosion and what is chemical soil movement.

Ben Floyd – Okay, I have to think about that a little bit. I was just trying, we had a discussion about where do these water bodies really exist in the County based upon the map that we showed at the last meeting? I took a picture as an illustration of this is probably cultivated and then during spring run-off you had a little channel that followed the topographic low back to the stream.

It probably flows for a little while and then maybe moves the seed around a little bit, you can see the crop, I think this is the legumes field. Where that area is wet it is probably, I'm not sure what is happening. It was just the characteristic that I wanted to capture. Your point was that sometimes these are created through chemical means through the tilling or,

David Lange – Yes.

Ben Floyd – I appreciate your helping us get educated on farming practices and conditions in Whitman County. The more you can help us understand the nuances and the details of what happens, the better play we will be able to put together for you. So, thank you for those clarifications and please keep them coming.

Next Slide. I will hand it over to John Small and he will talk about the few wetlands that exist in Union Flat Creek.

John Small – We do have some maps, wetland areas primarily entirely in emerging wetland areas, and then some riverine riparian areas that have been mapped out as well. The larger areas are in the west.

This is a just a breakdown of the percentages and it is primarily fresh water emergent wetlands in the west. Scrub shrub in the central area and then in the east a mix of lakes, small ponds and fresh water scrub shrub wetlands.

I think what is important here is the riverine wetlands which are (inaudible) riparian areas that are mapped in the west. Those are the larger riparian areas and more easily characterized (inaudible) we see challenges understanding riparian conditions further up in the watershed where it is a pretty narrow band. It can be a (inaudible) short in some of those corridors primarily just how grass land filter strip up to a channel or it can be one or two trees where it is wide. We don't have the capability of mapping the conditions and characterizing them as accurately as an ideal baseline might. However, I think there are some things we are exploring, we just sort of generalize again at this larger watershed scale, this (inaudible) scale.

What the overall baseline conditions are and have something that is repeatable enough that we can hang our hat on the fact that we are protecting, improving those conditions. It is something that I might talk with you off line about. I spoke with Jack Meyer about how we approach that in the work plan and what the work plan can, maybe to do set that up for future efforts as better data become available or more help from the State.

Next slide. A lot of these systems have extensions of the stream channel network and are low lying areas that you can probably do at the farm and have established primarily native grasses.

Ben Floyd – This is just a small wetland, riparian wetland area along Union Flat Creek on the west end. That is cattail wetlands.

John Small – This is more of a (inaudible) riparian again one that is going to be very hard for us to map with the data that we have but these are the areas we are trying to characterize and understand so that as we establish that baseline and start to track how the conditions in these areas are changing over time. Are these areas in a county-wide sense growing, shrinking, staying the same? Are they threatened by ag practices, are they threatened by other things such as evasive species, pests, some other, fire can be an issue.

If these systems become so fragmented that they are not able to regenerate, we could start to see a rot (inaudible) overtime. Those are the things we are trying to understand in these slim, narrow riparian areas, primarily as it relates to water quality, water quantity for fish downstream. A lot of these areas are unlikely to be fish bearing and we look at streams primarily as fish habitat under critical areas. So understanding how riparian areas affects water quality can be one of the main things.

Ben Floyd – One of the things we don't have a good handle on and I don't know if there is a data set out there that can get at that, we looked at USGS, but does anyone know if there is a good map of springs in the area? This is a picture that I took looks like an area that was spring fed. The draw doesn't go up very far, there has to be a water source. I couldn't tell what it was but it seemed like some shallow ground water was emerging here and then it ran maybe a quarter mile down from top to bottom down into the stream.

Art Swannack – I think you would drive yourself crazy trying to figure out where all the springs are in WC if you are going to try and map that. Some of these areas are wet 5-6 feet below the surface so the plant has enough root ability to get water but I know of areas in different fields in my area in the northwest county you just have a spot that is wet because it happens to be where the rock and the soil

have met up underground and start emerging and the soil is moist in those areas. So, what is critical to be mapped under this in terms of critical areas is probably a better focus for us to decide on, than it is where is every spring in the County.

John Small – It would help us to understand what comes from the critical drivers for water temperature but as Ben said such data set does not exist.

Ben Floyd – This is another side channel tributary. If you look closely behind him was also mowed and so he has some cut grass in addition to what is growing.

Joan Folwell – Jason, I don't want to put you on the spot but I sort of like to know where Fish & Wildlife stands on the issue or what definitions you can contribute to this discussion, things like that. Maybe it is too early for specifics like that but from my point of view we need to start incorporating thought about the issues that F & W has too.

Jason Kunz – I did hear John Small say that some of these tributary draws might not be considered critical areas. But I would say that if a stream network on the drainage pattern comes from a natural basin and it is collecting water and conveying it over land and it connects to the downstream, the main stream, it is considered waters of the State, and so it would be included in your F & W habitat conservation areas or critical areas in that regard.

Waters of the State is just one term that is used to collectively throw in all wetlands, streams, large ponds, 20 acres or greater, anywhere where fish are planted by Fish & Game or the tribe, is considered waters of the State. So there is a little bit broader definition of critical areas. We don't have to get into the weeds on that at all right now. But all these areas are important for just the idea that we should be wanting to protect the water courses from being polluted by sediments. Where is the opportunity to do some protection? We will look for that and that is called stewardship. So, I think we are still moving along pretty good. It is still a little early for me to comment too specifically right now.

John Small – Just to clarify my comment, was that streams fall under Fish & Wildlife proclamation area. We are primarily thinking about impacts to fish. We are implementing that fish bearing waters because obviously that water comes from somewhere and it is usually upstream and a much smaller system so we have be more (inaudible) in the areas we are looking at. I was trying to focus on the functions that we are trying to address in my mind in WC that is primarily water quality, water quantity.

Jason Kunz – Trying to abate certain erosion issues that cause degradation. I think one thing to point out also, with looking at protecting certain areas or focusing on important areas that are very much of habitat value and function, that is where the tributaries go into the main stem. Those areas produced cleaner and colder water compared to the main stem and a lot of fish do seek out that as refuge during summer time as well as winter time, when the high (inaudible) are occurring and flooding is occurring in the main stem. They will seek out those tributaries that are more structurally stable and have intact riparian, so they are very important.

Jon Jones – Ben, are we going to address anything with some of the farmed wetlands and the tile that drains them? It can have a cooling effect on the water, which is good but it also has a flushing effect, so you get a lot of high water and low water. It contributes to a flushy system. I don't know if we can address that or even if we should. Just a question.

Ben Floyd – I count the farmed wetlands but there was a second part of that I didn't hear.

Jon Jones – The tile drain.

Ben Floyd – So, they are part of the existing baseline, right? It has been ongoing so I think the question is, are there enhancement opportunities that we should consider related to those that could be part of the mix? I would say, yes. Any conservation measure that is going to try and (inaudible) some habitat function as long as it is a voluntary effort and is something we can point to, I think we would consider that as a potential enhancement opportunity. We would consider both of them as a potential enhancement opportunity.

Jon Jones – Okay.

Larry Cochran – When you talk about springs and what not, I was just thinking of my own place. It is so dependent upon the winter conditions, when our moisture comes, how it comes, what the weather has been. Some years I can work all my fields without going around the mud holes and then there are years the mud holes will move in different places and some years they are not there at all. So, I'm not sure how you can make specifics on some of these things, because they are always changing.

Ben Floyd – Right, the run-off and temperature all factor into timing and we probably won't be able to get that fine in the work plan but in the implementation and specific conservation practices that you, Jon, and others might want to implement, those factors will come in to play as the project is put in place on the ground.

Art Swannack – I just make an observation of this photo. That is an existing farming ag practice as of 2011. You can tell by the age of the fence posts. Based on the photo that is an existing practice that was occurring, the brush and everything is growing into the fence that has been farmed that way for quite a while looking at the grass and everything else.

Ben Floyd – I'm sure it has. Downstream of this the little tributary channel goes into the road drainage ditch and then the wheat land goes right up next to the road, so you've got the shoulder of the road and then maybe a foot and a half wide little trickle of water and then 2 feet of that is the edge of the cultivated field. I don't know if it was out in the middle of the field at some point but that is where the water is now.

Art Swannack – So you are saying the current ag practices are reducing sedimentation by planting right up to the road edge?

Ben Floyd – I suppose but it looked to me that it was bare field that was moving dirt.

Alan Thomson – Just one thing to bring to your attention on farmed wetlands and prior converted crop lands. Those are exempt in the current version of the WC Critical Areas Ordinance. So, I am assuming that is going to be something that we will be talking about in this process here because I don't (inaudible) much for our WC ordinance.

Ben Floyd – Yes, we will focus on it as much as we have practices and if people have areas that we can identify it that we want to improve the measures, but this is a voluntary program and we will cover all ag activities and potential impact to critical areas, including existing conditions where you have converted crop land. The test of protecting critical areas is that we protect them from further degradation. Those

practices can continue and maybe we have other conservations measures that actually improve conditions within a particular drainage over the baseline in 2011. Or maybe a wetland was able to reestablish and come back and we can cap that as well.

It is not where we are going to have a specific program that just focuses on former wetlands and tile drains and it will be a set of conservation measures for dealing with that situation just like we have conservation measures that can deal with restoring and reconnecting flood plain. So, those will all be tools in the tool box dealing with the conditions and other conditions in the County.

Jason Kunz – I'm curious if there are incentives for landowners that are voluntarily buying into this and when they do have to do some ditching that they do apply a conservation measure that is going to result in mitigating the temporary impact. Of course, consequently resulting in improved habitat conditions, will they get incentives for that so if they volunteer to do that, do they get like a better pay check or whatever you call it?

John Stuhlmler – So, that is ahead of the game because the group that is assembled today will decide what the plan will include and what incentives will be included in all of that, so it would be premature to say anything related to that, but it would be very possible that any enhancement is to be voluntary in nature. But it would be with whatever kind of incentive. It could be, doesn't have to be cash, it could be any regulation, it could be whatever kind of incentive.

Ben Floyd – There is still the HPA process and all the other regulations that don't go away even with the VSP and the work plan being in place. Those are still permits from WDFW and like I say, hydraulic project approvals, any other permitting or requirements that are needed, those are still in place but on top of that we have the voluntary measures that will be implemented on a drainage by drainage basis. Hopefully, to protect and in many cases to provide some functional uplift for that drainage separate from those permitting processes.

Joan Folwell – In looking at the data that was provided for the wetlands, everything is in percentages. You notice the first line of less than 1% in all areas of Union Flat Creek are wetlands, and that is easy enough to understand. But the second part of that chart that says, "Percent of all wetlands," now is that across the State? Question #1.

Question #2, your wetlands are such a small area to begin with when you say 45% or 19% it sounds like a large amount but I wonder if we could realize that in actual acreage? Because you can look at that small acreage in two ways either that it is so small it is not worth our concern or it is so small and it is really important and it is worth our concern. So, I wish you could actually post that in acres instead of percentages.

John Stuhlmler – I was hoping to just characterize what there is more of and what there is less of in terms of quantifying these as acreages. I think that is much more useful in understanding conditions within each of these areas. We need to balance somehow with understanding what that acreage is spread across in terms of the watershed because the areas that we are analyzing are going to be different sizes. I agree with your comment.

Ben Floyd – What is the date of this wetlands data.

John Stulhmiller – It sort of matched the wetland inventory and PHS updates so it is updated periodically and infrequently but probably the last complete update was several decades ago.

Ben Floyd – That is my only concern with the acres being included because particularly with the waste water treatment plant discharge now that in the (inaudible) it has probably created more air it. I'd be a little concerned about putting the acreage in there unless you just did the total. We didn't have to qualify the data to data, maybe is the thought here.

Jennifer Boie – I just wanted to go back to your question about incentives available for wetlands and wetland enhancement. I know we can get some of the information from FSA and NRCS on the federal programs but we can through our office provide some information on incentives available for wetland enhancement through our local partnership as well.

Ben Floyd – Thank you Jennifer. Let's jump into the section which is frequently flooded areas. This shows you the 100-year flood plain as mapped by FEMA. You've just got a little bit of floodplain in the west and that correlates to where you have a lot of riparian wetlands, incidentally, just between Winona and Lacrosse, the west section there.

Then you've got some other flood hazard areas that are identified down more towards Colton and Uniontown and along Wilbur Creek. So, just shows the frequently flooded areas, and again, it is not that there is any building going on in these areas. The permitting of buildings happens through the County codes but frequently flooded areas have function. If we could create more connected floodplain you could get more habitat diversity and more of those areas would look closer to the picture down through Klemgard Park. That just gives you the percentages of the flow of Union Flat Creek, 6% on the west, 3% in the central and 5% in the east of the total area.

So, critical aquifer recharge areas. In our past meetings you suggested that we follow up with PBAC, Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee, to get whatever information they have related to critical aquifer recharge areas. Steve Roboschan sent us some information on Union Flat Creek and so here is what we found.

First of all, we do have as we mentioned and we don't really care for this data set, but we do have the wellhead protection areas that are mapped for Colton and Uniontown wells in the east part of the drainage. So, those could potentially be critical aquifer recharge areas. They have been viewed as critical aquifer recharge areas in the regulatory of part of critical areas in the past.

Next slide. When you think about what the water supplies are, you have the municipal wells, and then you have a series of rural domestic wells that really go up and down the valley. PBAC has this 1994 Heinemann Thesis and what he showed is that you actually got ground water input from the basalt at Union Center. There is some exposed water from basalt and there are gaging data that shows that there is ground water input in addition to stream that are coming in throughout the upper and middle part and some in the lower part.

So you have ground water contributing to the stream and that can potentially be accessed by rural domestic wells, also. The shallow aquifer itself along the stream is pretty limited. For what I can tell from the wells that the Heinemann study looked at, those are not typically used for drinking supply. Where the basalt aquifer recharge comes from is really uncertain and not known and not described in that Heinemann Thesis.

I'm not really sure other than the wellhead protection areas that we can really show that there is a critical aquifer recharge that exists within this drainage. I just wanted to put that out there. It is murky water. There are practices that can take place for spills, if you had a petroleum spill, and we have practices for dealing with those. I'm not sure what more for this drainage anyway, maybe for the entire county that we will be able to say about critical aquifer recharge areas, because there are none specifically identified again, other than those wellhead protection areas.

Next slide. Conservation Practices and opportunities. Maybe Brad or Jennifer could get close to a mic. They have been starting to share information with us that they have implemented since 2011.

Brad Johnson – When we got that from Vivian, we just pulled together some of the direct seed conservation tillage projects. You can see 4500 acres, 2.27 miles forest and grass buffers and then there is also 26 acres that was separate from that 2.27 miles because I think it was grass or filter strips. Then there is a CRP grass filter strip of 1.5 acres of CRP. That was just quick and dirty exercise this morning with three people that have worked in the office for a while.

We didn't include landowner names, I think those conservation tillage practices were from about 7 or 8 producers and the riparian enhancement is like two or three projects. So we will visit with the district board and see if they want to put these areas on a map without names or how we want to do that. We've talked a little bit about it in Garfield County and just want to get a feel for how comfortable people are for mapping these by just direct seed or whatever. But again, that would be in your farthest reach section, your east section in the Palouse District.

Jennifer Boie – In addition, this is within Palouse CD district boundaries and also that this is only practices that were voluntary that were probably cost shared by the district so there could be a lot of other direct seed acres or riparian enhancement acres that were put in voluntarily by landowners at their own expense without doing any cost share through local or federal programs.

Brad Johnson – Correct, and then of that 4500 acres we cost shared on 200 acres and the landowner did 264 acres. I provided to Vivian those acreages so we can break it down into what was cost shared and what was not cost shared, but like Jennifer said, there are other acres out there that are being direct seeded.

Ben Floyd – Thank you, Brad and Jennifer. Those are the examples of work that has been done, work that is on-going. We really would like to capture everything that has happened since 2011 because I think what that illustrates is that there is a trajectory, not only in protecting but in many cases we are enhancing conditions. The improvements over time will provide functional lift to the critical areas, the F & W habitat conservation area, the wetlands in some cases, so we want to try and capture all of that and include that in the work plan. Are there any questions?

Brad Johnson – This is going to also show the different types of programs that each district has and the type of funding that districts or grant applications that the districts have gone after that will help set the stage for voluntary actions to do stewardship plans and these are all voluntary. We are willing to work with people in the uplands for crop plan riparian areas and different things. I think that when you need it or want to see all the different programs of each one of the districts participate, and they are different across district boundaries within the County, it will be interesting to see all the different opportunities for restoration actions.

Ben Floyd – Other opportunities for protection or enhancement within Union Flat Creek. Are there other tools or things that you want included?

Larry Cochran – The DOE is being forced by the EPA to come up with best management practices, supposedly they will be voluntary and supposedly we will be able to influence what those are but could that fit into part of this VSP when we talk about practices?

Ben Floyd – If those are practices that you want to include as a group for all or some of them, absolutely.

Larry Cochran – It depends on what Ecology comes up with is whether or not we will want them in there or not.

David Lange – You probably want to visit with Nancy in the Whitman Conservation District too, and the monies that Whitman has put out in superior technology and offsite water. So, she would be a good resource. My concern about this Union Flat Creek as the first pictures showed the depth of that creek is anywhere from 10-20 feet deep or something like that. Are we trying to make a pristine wetland out of a water body that doesn't exist that way? The Grand Canyon has the beautiful Colorado River running through the bottom of it. It has steep sides, are we trying to make wetlands out of that? I'm just a little concerned about what we are trying make out of Union Flat.

Nancy Belsby – I have a question about how many pictures of wetlands. We need to define a wetland and I feel like the definition of a wetland used in the farm bill is what agriculture goes by and that F & W in some of these pictures is expanding that area and calling it a wetland. Maybe I'm confusing what I'm hearing but I am very concerned about the definition of a wetland.

John Stuhlmiller – The State and Federal government use the identical wetland definition and I imagine that is the one referenced in the GMA so I think we are fairly clear that wetland means, *"Lands that are inundated or surface water, ground water, at a frequency and duration sufficient to support and under normal circumstances do support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in the saturated cell conditions."*

It goes on a little bit more to talk about what that is but because of its legal status the federal definition is pretty clear cut and there is a very well defined process for delineating wetland boundaries.

Jason Kunz - I would like to add to that, just the maps they were showing and trying to take a stab at what the percentages are that is off of the national wetlands inventory, and that is not ground truthed . That is done by aerial interpretation, I believe. So, everything needs to be ground truthed or should be if you have a discrepancy or concern. There are some times when wetlands do change and there are some things that are erroneous with mapping.

Ben Floyd – Nancy, does that help with your question?

Nancy Belsby – Yes, what John was talking about. There were three items that pertained to the definition of wetland.

Ben Floyd – So, let's go back to David's question, the second part about what are we trying to create here? That is up to you. We are just showing you what the conditions are. We are not trying to make a

value judgment on what is there. We are just trying to say, here are the conditions and here are the functions that are provided.

As a group, we should think about what our responsibility is. To think about what do we want to identify as the work plan for this drainage? There are lots of working ag lands all through this drainage. That is primarily what it is comprised of. It is either being grazed or cultivated, and so in some cases it is probably grazed and in some cases it, you can probably get some weed spray that affects some of the riparian vegetation.

We could come up with a very modest plan that focuses just on protection or we could have protection with a little bit of enhancement, or we could try to do some aggressive enhancement and then you could look at trying to restore the channel and bringing it back up to a higher level so it will smut out. My guess is you don't want to go there because that also has to, we have to deal with the ag viability of this.

Yes, you could come up with a plan that would talk about full restoration in the stream and the floodplain and you would lose a lot of farm ground because of that. It would meet one test, protect and enhance critical areas and but it might not meet the ag viability, so that balance of what we come up with it could be that the plan for Union Flat Creek is very modest.

But that is something as we talk about the practices and opportunities, why I wanted with this information in front of you just get your feedback on that. I'm not suggesting one way or the other. The choice is yours as to what you think ought to be included. Certainly we want to include what has happened since 2011 and as well as many additional plans the conservation district has identified for other potential projects. Then whether we want to do anything beyond that is up to you.

David Lange – Great definition, thank you.

Ben Floyd – Any other thoughts about Union Flat Creek, conservation practices, opportunity? What we will do is make sure we work with the Conservation District, both districts to identify what had happened since 2011, also identify other opportunities that they see and we will summarize that information and that will be included in the work plan as a starting point for discussion.

Jennifer Boie – I just wanted to say that to capture some of the upland work, I know we have some of the conservation tillage and direct seed. As David mentioned, precision ag needs to be captured in there as well. We also at some point, you are going to be adding some of that Palouse Prairie stuff to those maps, so that there might be some upland Palouse Prairie protection or enhancement that gets added to this list and it is just not on that slide.

Ben Floyd – So, add Precision Ag Activities as well as Palouse Prairie protection, once we have those areas identified as potential measures.

Art Swannack – The thought I had is, we want to make sure that we are remembering that we define what the baseline was and then how we are going to measure it from there, but then also this is more of a laundry list of different options for people to choose from. They don't have to do anything in those areas. We need to try and keep this fairly simple because we know we don't have the money to make it complicated and go through the whole evaluation process that way. I would suggest that we focus on what enhancements are possible in a drainage, list those and give them some value for each one in a

general sense and then go on to the next drainage. Not get too carried away in a full detailed wetland study of a drainage to where you start getting into micro evaluation of different areas.

David Lange – Joan, can you clarify on the Palouse Prairie? Is it only registered or certified Palouse Prairie or if somebody doesn't come to the Palouse Prairie and there is just an existing parcel, does it get registered anyway?

Joan Folwell – What has been done to this point, aerial photography over the whole county has been done to compare known Palouse Prairie sites like Paradise Ridge or Kamiak Butte, somehow they can quantify the vegetation in those areas. So anything that looks like that, the aerial map is considered a potential site.

There was ground truthing that was carried out last summer that was mainly in the Palouse Conservation District area. Not only does a Botanist with a PhD, highly qualified individual, go out to look at these areas, he looks to see whether it is indeed a native remnant that has never been plowed and never been used as pasture, he also quantifies it as to the quality. Is it a high quality with lots of forbs and native grasses in it, is there a lot of invasive in it? Is it practical to try and reconstitute that piece? All that goes into his data bank.

This summer that botanist is going around to the rest of the County. Although there were 1100 letters sent out to landowners, only about 100 some people responded in a positive manner. This is not an all-inclusive inventory by any means. But it is interesting because this individual has found out that everything that was located on the map aerially is turning out to be a remnant of some kind of quality.

You might be able to extrapolate if you are a statistician, that anything on that map that was determined to be a possible site, is indeed a site. That is beyond my capabilities but that is the kind of discussion that, Ben, you and your people might have with James Riser, and also seeing what his results from this summer are. When you say, how are they being documented? They are being documented in prior communications with Alan and the Planning Commission. Once we get that mapping done it can be submitted to the County as one of their official maps. I'm not quite sure how long a period that is but it's not going to be done tomorrow.

Jennifer Boie – I don't have the exact date of that aerial imagery for the Palouse Prairie fly over for potential remnants but I would guess it is around the 2011 time period so that fits well with your potential baseline of 2011. We can get the exact date of that aerial imagery for you.

Ben Floyd – When we follow up with contact to John Hanless we will make sure we include in our documentation the data of that aerial imagery. So, since we spent this time talking about Union Flat Creek I realize we are pretty much out of time but I just want to, do you want to try and identify options for improving grazing management within Union Flat Creek?

Larry Cochran – No, I don't want us to be doing that. As far as I am concerned we just spell out what the options are and let the producers decide what they want to do without us putting any specifics in there. We could list what is available and let them pick. I don't want to be pushing anybody to do anything.

Ben Floyd – I didn't say push, I said do you want to provide conservation measures that address the grazing activities or the chemical fallowing that protects the riparian vegetation? Some of the things I

was showing you, do you want to have conservation measures that address some of those opportunities?

Vivian Erickson – Like David mentioned earlier, I have reached out to Nancy Hoobler with the Whitman CD. We spoke a bit prior to the last meeting about the conservation practices that they are doing in her district. What they are doing, does have to do with some of that grazing stuff onsite water, so we do have some practices that are being implemented that we can discuss.

Kim Weerts – I think when you start looking, and I use grazing as an example, when you start giving guidance, I think we are going to run into the same thing depending on what kind of ag practice we are talking about. You have many different factions that believe in many different types of grazing.

As an example, you have the National Riparian Grazing Association that believes that riparian areas should be grazed. You also have entities like the DOE that wish to do exclusionary fencing and have no grazing in riparian areas. So I think we have to look very carefully at what kind of direction we are giving particular individuals, because I think we want to give them the greatest number of options to participate and I think we can do that without listing specifics. Then you are just going to have war all over again.

Ben Floyd – So, if I can rephrase, you are saying if we just take on a few practices related to grazing management for example, that don't cover the range of various ideas out there, then people will feel like that are being pushed and we may get some push back on the plan for not being comprehensive enough.

Kim Weerts – Yes, I think you have people who believe in their grazing practices and probably can prove that their practices are working and improving the water quality, without doing things like fencing and possible off site watering and things like that. Then you add into that the type of grazing that you do whether you're doing mod grazing and intensive grazing or just letting the cows wander around and eat whatever they want to.

I think I agree with Art. In any of these things that we do we need to be very general and then particularly if producers are going to go into a program where they get incentives, each of those entities whether it is CD's, FSA, NRCS, they all have their best management practices and they all have their particulars in what you can and can't do to receive those incentives. So I think that we would be recreating a lot of work that we don't have to do.

Larry Cochran – As far as I'm concerned what we need is a list of places that producers can go to find out things. We have the CD's, we have Extension, FSA, and NRCS. To me, all we need is a list of agencies you can go to and let them work with the producer to define what practices work.

Ben Floyd – Absolutely, we also need to have to demonstrate in the work plan, we will have to have specific goals related to protection and also some ideas about opportunities for enhancement by drainages. So, we will have to call out from the opportunities to improve conditions and then we can, what you are saying, don't go any farther than that other than identifying the toolbox that apply to the various types of conditions that exist within a given drainage.

Art Swannack – It seems like we got into the meat of the conversation at 5:10 p.m. today. I appreciate Kim's faith in me but I have to say that I don't think we can get away with being super generic and get

this plan accepted. I think we are going to have to make some lists of practices but not necessarily advocate for those practices being implemented.

We are saying this is an option for a producer to use so we are going to have to have some details in there that says, this is the baseline, here is potential improvement areas, and these are a whole list of different practices that producers could use for grazing improvement or for farming improvement. Then we are going to check back in the future to see if we have protected the critical area while maintaining and enhancing the viability of ag. We are going to have to have some detail in there or it will never make it past the State, in my opinion.

John Small – I think the best way for us to do that is going to be by tying these into habitat (inaudible) fish because that is ultimately how GMA regulates stream riparian areas. So you are probably more familiar with the limiting factors in each (inaudible) but generally, it is going to come down as temperature as one of the main water quality parameters and flow. I think we should be able to be fairly inclusive but I think as far as we can tie everything back to a function that is limited, we should be okay.

Jon Jones – I agree with Art. I think that this group needs to come up with a list of things and not advocate anything on the list but they can say, you can pick these selections and that will get Ecology off your back or you can pick these and that will get F & W off your back. That will give you a “get out of jail free,” card if you do these things. I think people need to know that if they choose not to do those things, that’s up to them. As long as we make it clear that it is a voluntary program and people can pick or not pick.

Art Swannack – Remember though, this isn’t a person to person basis down the creek. This is the whole holistic view of this drainage operating at or better than what it was when we started. So, if a few people choose not to do something, yet the drainage is operating properly, for lack of a better definition, we are okay and they are okay. If everybody chooses to do nothing and make it worse, then we have an issue. We will end up having to review. Remember, it is all the way down the drainage, not just parcel by parcel as usually critical areas regulate.

Kim Weerts – I agree with both of you as you stated, that I think we need to put some stuff in there. Although we are not going to be able to give them a list of, “Get out of jail free,” card with Ecology because it changes all the time. The same with F & W, it changes all the time. So we can’t do that, but I agree that we could give them almost a scale of things that they could do.

John Stuhlmiller – What I have encouraged you to think about again is the check list notion that we’ve got for Thurston and Chelan. They are a great resource for exactly what you are talking about. So, by the five type critical areas, it talks about NRCS practices that could be implied in the abstract. It doesn’t say that Farmer X has to do that. It is just in the abstract for highly erodible areas and here are a list of NRCS approved practices to deal with unstable slopes or in (inaudible). That check list would be good thing to pull out and show everybody.

Joan Folwell – Like all of us on the committee I think we are groping. We don’t know exactly what the goal is or how stringent or not stringent. I know that Alan has critical area ordinances for non-ag people in the County, maybe he could describe some of those for us. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel.

Also, there are two other conservation districts in the State that were part of a pilot program that has been running for over a year now and I'm wondering if we can get any insight from them to see what they are up to, to give us a little bit more handle on this problem of how specific, how nonspecific we should be getting. Do you have access to those other two CD documents?

Ben Floyd – We do, and the information that John Stuhlmiller just referenced, the conservation measures check list broken down by critical areas, we have that information. We just have been trying not to overload you too much with too much. We are at 5:20 p.m. here, and we are guilty of trying to cover too much territory, but, yes, we have that information and we can start sharing that with you. We will use that in developing the draft work plan.

The discussion here has been helpful too, yet we are trying to figure out what we are going to do. We don't have to make our plan look just like those other pilots. We can make it specific to what we want to or general to what we want to. We just have to demonstrate that we are either going to protect or protect what was there in 2011. So all this discussion about a check list or a list of possible conservation measures that can be included, I think are spot on. I do think we will have to identify enrollment or participation goals above the baseline, or as part of the baseline.

The activities of the conservation districts that have already been implemented since 2011 with the landowners, are certainly part of the goal. So if you had so many acres enrolled in conservation tillage precision (inaudible) direct seeding, maybe we turn that into a percentage and we try to get 10% over the baseline in 2011. Or those kind of numbers are something we will have to get to ultimately, and to be able to demonstrate in 5 and 10 years, and, yes, we are on progress with our target and we got the participation increasing as we had hoped and we have protected.

In fact, it looks like we are enhancing conditions in Union Flat Creek as a drainage, based upon these functions. So, it does have to tie back to functions and how we measure that. It has to be some type of approach in there to measure beyond the toolbox of tools that are available for conservation measures. At least that is how I understand it. John, if you see it differently, please share.

John Stuhlmiller – I do want to jump in. Yes, in that aspect, so what you will find is that the standard is totally up to the group that is gathered today. That would be good to go back to defining stuff of VSP which we are doing. You are taking little bites right now, there's a lot of time yet to go and a lot of work to be done. When you get it all said and done it would be helpful to think that your plans will be different than anybody else's but some of those tools will be applicable out there.

Again, the benchmark is indeed the important thing. That collective effort, it doesn't require anything of anybody but you have to meet the protection standard plus maintain and enhance viability types. So there is the standard and that is what you have to work through. What is ag viability and then you've got to work back to protection and you have to provide the opportunity to voluntary measures to enhance.

Ben Floyd – This has been a good discussion. We've gone about 30 minutes or so about the conservation practices and what the plan is going to look like. At this point, I would like to close this part of the conversation. Actually I think we need to wrap up our meeting and Vivian if you would just go through the slides here. We had ag liability as a discussion, let's skip through water erosion, wind erosion, so just real quickly here, ag liability consideration.

I think we will see the information we get from Thurston County, it will focus on things that are within local influence. We can do things related to land conversion within the County, for example, by protecting resource land. We can do other things within the County to affect ag liability. We can't control commodity prices, so just something to think about. There will be more information to come on ag liability.

Next slide. The work plan outline. We handed this out and really want to spend time on it. This is actually what we started building for you, the regional setting, and the baseline commissions that we have spent a lot of time on, but we are trying to get everybody on the same level of understanding.

Next slide. This shows what the protection enhancement strategies are. It may not look like this but this is where the toolbox is that we were just talking about. The list of options will come into play here, the changes since 2011, both from ag liability and critical area function and the how we are going to implement goals and benchmarks, critical areas protection and enhancement, ag liability, framework implementation, monitoring, reporting and adaptive management.

Next slide. So, next step. We have our next meeting scheduled in September. We will be meeting with the subgroup between now and then a couple of different times, and starting to build that heart of the plan which is those conservation measures that are going to be applicable. We will probably start off broadly and just talk about conservation measures that are applicable to all the conditions within the County and also apply those geographically where you have variations.

We will have our meeting next week on the 13<sup>th</sup> and with the subgroup and we will send out that notice to everybody so you are aware of it, and anyone who wants to participate certainly can. We are not trying to exclude in any way. Vivian just run back up to our agenda.

Okay, just want to make sure if we missed anything. I realize we're kind of wrapping up, shored up this. In September we hope to have a very nice detailed outline of the work plan section on the conservation measures and broken down by the geographic areas. Hopefully, with that and also some goals related to the geographic areas we will probably continue to work on Union Flat Creek and a couple of other areas. Just to illustrate on a drainage basis what this thing is going to look like and so we will be sharing that with you and the results that come out of the subgroup with recommendations for the larger group at our September meeting. Any other comments or questions?

David Lange – Is there any chance you email us the conservation measures check list from the other conservation districts before the next meeting?

Ben Floyd – Yes, we will send you Chelan's. I'm not sure I have seen the Thurston County one but I have seen the one for Chelan County.

John Stuhlmiller – I think they would both be helpful. They are amazingly similar.

Ben Floyd – Okay, we will send both those out. Any other questions or comments? How did meeting format work? Like it or hate it?

David Swannack – I don't like it; for one thing I want the table so we can all write and talk into the mic.

Tracy Eriksen – I found it very good. I was able to hear the group in Colfax and you came through extremely clear. As long as we are working with this type of material I think this works very well.

Jon Jones – I think it is really valuable for face to face. But like Tracy said this kind of thing works fine. I think we still need to have a face to face meeting once in a while.

Ben Floyd – So, our next meeting in September we will be face to face and we will debrief with the County on this process and how it worked and whether we are going to use it going forward or not in limited ways, or other than we will always have the information available for those who can't be in person at the meeting.

David Lange – Is Vivian's meeting next week, is that here in the same room or is it going to be under the same venue and the second question is, Dave, would you like to be on that work group? It might be noted that David Swannack would like to be on the work group. Anyone else?

Joan Folwell – It sounds like it is more applied ag and I feel inadequate because I am probably the only one among you that is not an applied ag person. If you want that perspective I would be glad to offer comments.

David Lange – The work group is not going to make any policies so it is fully reviewable as I understand it.

Ben Floyd – Let's call it the subgroup or the subcommittee it is not the work group. The work group is the larger group. The subcommittee that is going to do a little bit of homework off line and bring it back to larger work group for consideration.

Art Swannack – Is the subcommittee less than half of the group so we don't get into the public meeting act? Or is this intended to be a public meeting as a subgroup?

Ben Floyd – That is a very good question. I think we had less than half at the beginning but I don't know if we are still at that number.

Vivian Erickson – I think we needed 6 members or less and if we did add Dave Swannack that would put us to 7 members.

Ben Floyd – That is fine. We will advertise it as a public meeting if we need to. It is open to the public so let's just make it a public meeting. We can send out more details on that meeting by early next week, no later than Monday. We have to do some internal logistics on that since we just selected that date on the call.

Okay, anything else? Thank you all for your participation and for working with us on this trial and we will be seeing all of you in September and talking with a few of you between now and then.

**5:36 p.m. – Meeting adjourned.**