

**WHITMAN COUNTY  
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM  
MEETING  
October 6, 2016  
3:00 p.m.**

**MEMBERS:**

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

**Phone:** Vivian Erickson, Anchor QEA; Nora Schlenker, Anchor QEA; John Stuhlmiller.

**Audience:** Ben Floyd, Anchor QEA; Mark Storey, WC Director/Engineer; Brian Bell, Whitman Conservation District; Elinor Huber Clerk.

**3:08 p.m.** - Ben Floyd – Let’s walk through the agenda for today. We will have a quick re-cap from the prior work group meeting. That will be done by Vivian. Then we will talk about conservation practices. Examples of conservation practices. Then we will review the existing work plans and make sure we have all the right documents. I appreciate the gentleman and Nancy have given me additional documents to be aware of. Certainly this is not intended to cover everything, but anyway, we will come back to that in just a few minutes.

Then the main topic we will cover today is an introduction to goals, benchmarks and measurements. In the work plans not only do we have to identify the conservation measures, practices that will happen on the ground, we will also have to prepare and identify those in the context of what we think is going to happen in the next 5 and 10 years once the plan is in place. So we will talk about goals, benchmarks, and measurements today and then come back and hit it again in November. So today, in the introduction, November will be more in detail, we will actually be reviewing some draft language related to goals and benchmarks.

Then we will spend some time talking about outreach. That is our second topic. We will talk about how we can get people involved in the planning process while we are formulating the plan, and then in the plan how do we effectively get participation in the VSP during implementation. That is why we have asked the conservation district representatives to come here today to share how they work as well. As we know there are lots of other businesses, private enterprises that also help with implementation, technical assistance, that kind of thing. We want to have a discussion with you about outreach. Then we will talk about the next meeting and the next steps and go from there. Any questions on the agenda? Vivian, take it away.

Vivian Erikson – Just to do a quick re-cap from our last meeting. At our last meeting we talked about a couple of things and in the discussion during the meeting we talked about when we are writing through the work plan to be a pretty broad description of agriculture. Just because some of those practices change every year especially with those crop rotations and the number of crop rotations you are getting in. We just wanted to highlight the fact that we heard that last month and we will make sure that we do the characterizations and descriptions when we are talking about the type of ag activities that are happening.

Also, when we are talking about conservation measures, we are going to talk about this next on the agenda item, but the list of example conservation practices that we've been sharing at the past couple meetings, we will make it clear that these are examples of conservation practices. They are not requirements or a limited list. It is a toolbox for us to get started on and to provide examples of the conservation practices that are occurring. We will modify our language on how we describe that.

Also, thinking about some of these ag liability issues, providing an understanding and a characterization of some of those insurance requirements for ag liability. Then this is the highlight of the conservation measures that we have discussed. As far as some of the next steps go we are going to prepare a tailored VSP checklist and focusing on the County conditions and ag types that are unique to the County. Something we will be discussing in the near future. Are there any other key items that you heard at the last meeting that you want to make sure we have heard and emphasized at this time?

Art Swannack – What was discussed on the insurance requirements?

Ben Floyd – I think it was that the insurance drives these certain practices have to be in place to be consistent with the policy.

Joan Folwell – Or was it the fact that if a producer employed certain methods that will give them insurance that they won't be liable for future punishment or changes in the law.

Ben Floyd – I think that would be the case particularly if you look at endangered species out of compliance, certain conservation measures that have been approved and planned. But I think we were talking, and it was David Lange who was talking about this. I think it was more in the context of their requirements for crop insurance.

Jon Jones – Like seeding dates.

Art Swannack – I was just wondering if it covered, I ran into an issue with a friend in the Lamont area that they were dropped and then put back on because of the yield variability they had in trying no-till up there. They were saying that you are too risky and your farming methods aren't successful enough for us to believe that you should be covered by crop insurance. They got another year but I think that needs to be noted in our discussion that you have some of these things that work and may not work, but that crop insurance is essential to farm operations having

operating loans and other things from bankers because that is the only guarantee that is out there right now for the revenue side.

Ben Floyd – I think that is a great example and that was along the lines of the conversation that we had.

Kim Weerts - David Lange was talking about rotations that the shut off date for insurance for fall canola was the day before our last meeting. So he said, *“So you can seed up to the 20<sup>th</sup> of September but what in the world is the insurance company doing regulating or dictating how we are farming?”*

Ben Floyd – That is a question for another arena. I do think it is important to acknowledge in the work plan that insurance drives businesses and someone may want to do direct seeding or plant at different times and may not have that flexibility with their insurance. That is more of an ag liability issue to work over time. It may not be the biggest ticket item but again, we want to try and capture several elements of this ag liability and how things are going to be implemented.

We’d like to see maybe no-till more prominently used in a certain part of the County but maybe for insurance reasons or because of risk and it is still kind of experimental stage, maybe we under promise, set a more modest goal for certain types of practices in those areas.

Art Swannack – I’d say with the basically negative return due to the drop in crop prices, don’t expect a lot of farmers to put out a lot of cash to try anything for the next few years because they are trying to survive for the next few years. Don’t set high goals that are going to be huge adoption rates because I don’t think people are going to put out a lot of experiments.

Kim Weerts – Dave said that last month too.

Ben Floyd – What I translate that is, is guidance for the first 5 years, at least. We are going to be pretty modest in what we are setting as far as, we have to protect, to demonstrate protection of critical areas and so we will have to cover that but we may not have a lot of enhancement on top of that program.

Jon Jones – I think we should probably stay away from saying that no-till or direct seeding is good, especially, although we will all agree that it is good for water quality, but a better way maybe to put it down is a certain percentage and this group can come up with a percentage of cover on the ground. Thirty percent cover, fifty percent cover, and if we get the percentage right a lot of farmers could continue a fallow rotation if they did it carefully and still meet the requirements of the VSP.

Ben Floyd – There won’t be requirements, there will be the voluntary goals that you have outlined. That is something that you think is achievable based upon a certain level of participation.

Jon Jones – I don't think we should paint people into a corner.

Ben Floyd – No, and I think that is why the whole discussion about conservation measures that are examples; every situation is different. We want to have maximum flexibility, we are not trying to push people in one direction or another. Any other questions from the last meeting? Okay.

Okay, so we will go into conservation practices now. You had a homework assignment. That was another follow up item from the last meeting, was to identify any additional conservation measures beyond those we have identified in the tables, that you want to have included. We had a date of September 25<sup>th</sup>, and I want to tell you people weren't beating down our doors with suggested additional conservation measures.

Remember this table we provided with this "other" down at the bottom, "*workgroup members please add other measures.*" Is there anything else you want to include as examples, types of conservation measures in your initial tool box, and this is also going to be the basis for the checklist we are putting together?

Jon Jones - We also agreed that we could add to these as the need came up.

Ben Floyd – Absolutely.

Jon Jones – Didn't we, the discussion was to keep it as general as possible. Wasn't that the idea?

Ben Floyd – I think general and open ended. What I heard more was keep it open ended. These are practices, yes there are other practices. This is just the first part. This is like for all types of land and then we have dry land, irrigated, range land and livestock measures. It is a good starting point.

Joan Folwell – The information that I presented to you from Fish & Wildlife is more guidelines because they are not a regulatory, well they are a regulatory organization or agency in some respects, but not as far as individual landowners and having to regulate their activities.

Ben Floyd – What Joan provided was information from Fish & Wildlife, the retail conservation partnership program and the programs that are funded underneath that which we have the measures that are included, the RCPP are in this table. Voluntary public access and habitat incentives program. The wetland reserve easement program, so we will make sure that the measures that are covered under these programs are also included in this table. Were there any other measures or is this a good working draft that we can include in the draft work plan and we can also use as the basis for the VSP checklist?

Art Swannack – I personally thought it covered enough. Again, as John said, we wanted it to say that this is not an all-inclusive list and there could be other measures that would satisfy needs, protect the critical areas while maintaining and enhancing the liability of ag.

Ben Floyd – So we have "other" under each category so these things can be added. Someone may use spring development for livestock but may not do exactly every element that the NRCS FOTG manual says related to that but they might do half or two-thirds of it and it is still an improvement over another watering method. Maybe it is more of variations maybe all or part of the measures, all of that counts as good in terms of stewardship and protection of critical areas. Is that maybe the kind of language that we want to include is that partial implementation of measure is also a good thing?

Art Swannack – Those are two issues. Partial implementation you should be given partial credit, if you can substantiate it. It's benefitting somehow the critical area. The other one is we do need a statement. I prefer it underneath just like you have on any other table, a footnote that says something like, "These are not all possible measures and other measures could be added that would be benefitting critical areas while maintaining and enhancing liabilities of ag." Knowing your paperwork probably not as well as Jon's you need to have it listed on each sheet down as a footnote or as a footnote to that series so that anyone reading through realizes this statement was what we had.

Ben Floyd – Maybe what we will do is take the "other" and put a footnote on there and at the bottom of the table it will just say what you said.

Kim Weerts – One of the other counties' in their checklist, didn't they have like a, it didn't say "other," it said something like "producer idea," or something like that. So that it doesn't necessarily have to be a FOTG that if a producer comes up with his own idea and it is improving, then they should be given credit for that also.

Ben Floyd – So we will go back and look at that language and pull that into the document.

Alan Thomson – What does FOTG mean?

Ben Floyd – Field Office Technical Guide.

Jon Jones – It is the NRCS bible.

Brian Bell – Go back to 390, this is an example and it is Herbaceous Cover. So here is the code and it tells you what the NRCS is looking for in that particular code. These codes are all funded under the NRCS. There are dollar amounts associated with this and what makes it more complicated is that every state and county is different in terms of rates. The language is pretty much the same but they are different for FOTGs for every state. If you go to FOTG and click on Washington and you can find out all these different numbers.

Nancy Belsby – How do I find those numbers when I look them up?

Ben Floyd – We will send you a link, so all these measures has the NRCS number and a description of what that measure entails. It is pretty informative. Rather than us trying to define in detail each one of these, particularly since we are now using them more as just examples, we just want to use those definitions that are already established.

Brian Bell – They are really general, which is nice, very subjective.

Ben Floyd – Maybe saying the same thing in a different way is that conditions vary, so you want to be able to have flexibility if it says you should use a hammer but a wrench makes more sense.

Art Swannack – Riparian Herbaceous Cover next to the Skagit River is a whole different thing than Riparian Herbaceous Cover next to the Palouse River when you get into western Whitman County. You have to have some adaptability to make it appropriate for the land site you are working with.

Ben Floyd – The Palouse main stem compared to Union Flat Creek, there is just a whole lot of variation even within the County.

Vivian Erickson – Just a heads up, Ben, after our last work group meeting we also did send out a link to the NRCS definitions by code and I can send it again after this meeting if you want.

Ben Floyd – Send it out again and make sure Elinor is included on the distribution. Are we missing measures? Maybe, but not any that come to mind and you want to add, we will qualify with some footnotes and Brian has some measures that he might suggest. We are asking all of the conservations districts to give us input for you to consider. You can decide what you what to incorporate in those or not and we will highlight what those are. I would assume, as far as more examples the better so we will have a more complete list of examples.

Jon Jones – It would be pretty cumbersome if we put very many examples. They are pretty general. A terrace sounds wonderful the way it is written in the FOTG, but some places terraces do not work even after they have been installed they don't work. It is a site specific in kind of a common sense approach.

Ben Floyd –But if we write that context around the examples wouldn't you want to have a more of a complete toolbox than a less complete tool box?

Jon Jones – Sure.

Ben Floyd – You say, yes and I'm seeing a nod and no way over here. I want to hear you guys work this out. Why do you see it differently?

Kim Weerts – Okay, my concern is that the ultimate goal is to get as many producers to buy into this as possible. When I was looking at the other plans I see a lot of verbiage; it is very cumbersome, and you get about half way through and it's like blah, blah. So I think keeping things broad and referencing is better than making a product that producers won't buy into because they just won't take the time.

Jon Jones – Good point.

Ben Floyd – So if it feels overwhelming, why bother?

Jon Jones – I think when the agencies review this, Fish & Wildlife, Ecology, and whoever is going to review it, they might have some other thoughts. Maybe we could pre-empt some of those. I don't know, but if we don't include more they may have some things we really don't want.

Ben Floyd – Okay.

Joan Folwell – Well, I think lengthy lists perhaps like this one can be included as an appendix, rather than in the main body. I think the more options you present the more it gets the mental machinery going. In talking with one of the Fish & Wildlife representatives there are so few people that know about programs. This document can be an advertisement for what is out there to educate the public. That is my reasoning for putting down as many options as possible.

Jon Jones – Also, we're going to have a score card.

Ben Floyd – We’re going to have goals, benchmarks and measurements. A type of score card.

Jon Jones – The producer, the landowner comes in and says, “Check, check, check, I got 89, I’m good.” Is it going to be that simple?

Ben Floyd – I don’t know if it will be a number but it will be rolled up; it’s not going to be on a farm by farm basis. It will be rolled up so there will be flexibility. If you have some degradation but you have some improvements you hope collectively they will balance out and you are protecting what you have on a county-wide basis. Other thoughts about more versus less? Do we want to recognize Mark? Okay, Mark.

Mark Storey – Just a thought, listening to more versus less. A number of years ago we were creating a regional transportation plan for the Palouse region and one of the things that we demanded of our consultants was to create a brochure that turned out to be a 4-page brochure that set up at the satellite level or a B-52 level, and goes through the program and gives people the idea of what the program is without having any of the nuts and bolts to go through.

It just said for rail, here are our goals, for roads, here are our goals. Something like that might help satisfy some of what I am hearing up here. Because some people will only read a 4-page brochure and not get into the 58-page nuts and bolts. I think if you can get them at least thinking in the right direction with something that is an overview, I think you are way ahead of the game.

Ben Floyd – So our proposal actually is to have a 2-volume work plan. With Volume 1, it is maybe 15-20 pages of what VSP is, the group that put it together, the critical areas. It’s like how that VSP 101 the summary of your program, the goals, benchmarks, and measurements all that. Then to have Volume 2 be a technical appendix which has these details included. More of a baseline conditions of the critical areas so for those who do want the details, they have that more detailed document to go to.

For those that want less detail, what does this mean to me, that 20-pager with a short checklist that goes along with it? There is a check list that is that 4-page brochure and could be a stand-alone separate from that. But we are open to your suggestions on all these different types of communication tools. What do you think about that idea of a two volume? One that is shared and another one with more the technical details, like the agencies or those that are going to be implementing the policies?

Nancy Belsby – To go ahead with this two part thing. Yes.

John Stulhmiller – Before we concur with this two prong approach, we have been doing this with Thurston and Chelan, for the very important reason that you want the primary document to be able for folks to read it. So for readability purposes, pull all the extra stuff out, the supported documents and go for a much higher level and then all the resource documents are behind. You’re going to be using the “fix it as you go,” model with this plan, so first, here is how we are going to get it.

The structure and all the particulars will work out as you employ and adapt the plan as you go. So, the technical advisory group is not looking at did you get everything done for the first 40 years of the life of this plan. They are looking more at, is the framework there and does it provide a plausible protection as well as enhancing the viability of ag? So don’t worry about getting all the things in the first version of the document.

Alan Thomson – Just a general comment. I think attention spans are a major issue with human beings so something that is succinct and easy to read that gives you the general idea of what we are doing and then a second volume for the details. I think it is a very good idea.

Jon Jones – I think it is a good idea; maybe the only good way we can do it. Volume I should be part of the outreach effort. That would be something that a farmer or landowner could pick up and read it while he is waiting at a stop light, to get the overview when he has a few minutes. We should design that first volume so it could be handed out at meetings and then direct those people to more information.

Art Swannack – I think you will need three volumes. I'm thinking about the attention span. Here is the reason I'm saying that. Fifteen to twenty pages is not an easy read. For a lot of people that is a detailed look at what the program makes sense. The easy read is here is the broad generalization of the program is what Mark talked about. A lot of people it is one page or maybe two sides of a page. You will have to figure out some type of introduction brochure or hand-out that goes before anybody looks at this.

Honestly, NRCS is the one that is going to read the 15-20 page manual and then the document with the details. The farmers are most likely going to be outreached by the local NRCS office to participate in the program.

Kim Weerts – On top of that, in reading the Chelan and Thurston, I got real tired about hearing the RCW's in the VSP program and who put it together because producers really don't care. So, there could be like two lines of each.

Jon Jones – I think they do care. Everybody's got an interest in what kind of vegetation there was originally or what we are trying to recreate.

Ben Floyd – I think she is saying, and I had the same impression, too much regurgitation of the RCW and the process and here is the explanation. The number of days those were pilots so they were trying to get everybody on the same page. But your reaction to it is very similar to what we felt too. There has to be a way to shorten that down and put in some substance and make it an easier read and have the details in the back. How about Volume I and Volume II and a summary brochure?

Kim Weerts – By the time we are done with this everybody will know a little bit about VSP. Those two were the first and it was brand new, but I think as time goes on there will be newspaper articles. It won't have to be explained so thoroughly.

Alan Thomson – Is it necessary to have all the RCW's and the WAC's in there? Let's just make it general. We could have it in the more detailed part of the document but the summary up front, the State Conservation Commission, the Legislature, all of a sudden this program comes about. It doesn't have to be 2-3 pages long explaining that.

Ben Floyd – I think we are in violent agreement that we want to have it be simple, easy to understand and meet the process. The requirements stuff that to us that are in the business, that stuff that we also have to refer to is not really what others care about.

Kim Weerts – I think we need to have all three volumes available to anyone who wants it. I don't think the detailed one only sits at the conservation offices or whatever. There will be people who want to do it on their own and maybe just want to ask a few questions but don't necessarily want to be in a program.



Ben Floyd – That is a good point. While maybe the large majority that might participate in this might want to “just tell me what I need to do.” We are having multiple audiences that will be looking at that and we need to make sure that we have the information available to everybody. This has been a good discussion.

You’ve jumped ahead a little bit but I think this is helpful and this is actually something we are going to cover at the next meeting in more detail. We may just go into what we think the executive summary or the brochure, Volume I and Volume II is going to look like.

So, what should be included? How should they be described? How do we account for the practices that are being implemented that are grower funded not part of government programs? We talked a little bit about this last time. How do you account for that in terms of activity that is happening? Credit that we get as far as the 5-10 year plan? Any suggestions?

Any lessons learned from the other pilots, John, about how do you account for this? It is happening? How do we account for the many good practices that are implemented by growers but funded outside of government programs? People that are doing things on their own. We had some examples about what John Pearson is doing on his land. We are trying to understand if the other pilots have come up with a good method or a way to proximate that benefit.

John Stuhlmiller – Everybody is thinking the same thing. Since 2011 we’ve done a lot of good things on the ground. Then the other is we’ve done good things but don’t necessarily have a, didn’t pay our receipts, things that have been done that necessarily didn’t go into a farm plan or anything. Just good stewardship practices, in general or whatever.

The good news is you are writing a plan that Whitman VSP group can do narrative and say, these things have been happening this is what also helps to cement. Your narrative would basically say we are meeting our protection standards by all these awesome things the producers are doing like, and you can add those in that that goes into your calculus for the protection standard.

As well for the liability of ag but really is part of that to say that here is how we will ensure that the 2011 protection standard is met. So you can do it in narrative form, you can also list things, even site, lump things together, say 135 acres of whatever. You can do it narrative, you can do it with what you actually have folks that offer up. You could say, like the 20 acres that Pearson Farms did this on. The intended purpose is to show that you are enhancing ag and protecting critical areas.

Ben Floyd – Okay, any observations?

Jon Jones – I think it would be pretty hard to come up with a practice that works for bettering the environment that the FOTG doesn’t contain. The FOTG is really comprehensive to look through the whole thing. There is a practice for just about everything and they are fairly specific about those practices. If you don’t do it this way, it’s not going to work. They are right. It is just a thought.

Nancy Belsby – One of the issues we’ve had with Ecology in the last few years is they want to plant woody shrubs along the riparian areas there in the channel scablands where we have a different environment than other parts of the state. That needs to be important.

Jon Jones – Site specific is important. Don't plant any vegetation, it's not going to grow there. I think that is what Ecology is really saying. We don't want to plant pine trees in alkali,

Nancy Belsby – They were trying to get us to do that and we told them it doesn't work in the channel scablands.

Jon Jones – When they do a total maximum daily load they look at historical vegetation that was there. They don't try to force anything that wasn't there.

Art Swannack – I have to disagree with you on that, Jon, but it may not be the people that are actually doing the science on the ground. I think it was the policy makers that were forcing that through saying, we don't believe any buffer below this size with this much, three-fourths of the width tree height is valid. So, NRCS science says it needs to be site specific, it needs to be appropriate for the environment, fit the ecology. I won't give DOE that much credit.

Ben Floyd – I would give Fish & Wildlife even less credit on that.

Art Swannack – I think there is some value and I'll call it a Lego approach to building new practices. You can look at, this farmer did eight trips to get his field ready for planting and now he is reduced it to four. It may not necessarily fit a practice but it could be one piece that could build a new practice. He did a four trips, he used a 2- pass type implement in addition to whatever else. He'd have to do each creation on its own but I do think there could be some value in having that Lego box sitting there. Okay, take these pieces of different practices, build it together, we will evaluate it, or the State will evaluate it after a while and say whether it worked or not. But give people that opportunity.

Ben Floyd – You will evaluate it; you will be able to see an implementation of this.

Kim Weerts – The one slippery slope that I see with using the FOTG's and relying on them so much is, that as an example, if you do everything in the FOTG then you are going to get funded. That is basically what it is for. You have to, they give you the practices that you are required to implement in the program that you are in and they will fund it. But there is also, you don't have to do, you said that the FOTG makes, if you do everything in the FOTG that that's really the only way you are going to be successful. I would have to disagree with that. As an example, you don't have to permanently fence off the river from livestock to be successful in having good water quality or in achieving stewardship of the land and the water.

Ben Floyd – I think that flexibility is something we are going to try and incorporate into the work plan. Let's go to Review and Incorporating Existing Data and Plans. Brian, you will send us the measures you wanted to suggest to be included? Okay, then we will share all the information.

In the RCW it says, "Review and incorporate applicable water quality, watershed management, farmland protection and species recovery data and plans." So, we know that there are watershed assessments and plans that are out there. Nancy reminded me of one that I missed in our list, which is the instream flow study for the WRIA 34 of watershed plan. The Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan, the Groundwater Management Plans, actually some different groundwater management plans, Total Maximum Daily Loads, and all the Clean Water Act compliance, NRCS programs and then the handout that has additional details.

I've been given some suggestions. Maybe rather than spend a lot of time talking about source documents, if you know of other plans, programs, etc., that you don't see that we have included, send us an email.

We want to make sure we aren't missing anything. That goes to conservations districts, too. Make sure we are starting with all the right information. That is a homework assignment and we are thinking that is something you already know or you don't know and so would you be okay if you provide us those documents by a week from this Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup>.

Art Swannack – The watershed assessment plans WRIA 34, what documents are actually there that were completed?

Ben Floyd – The watershed plan was approved, WRIA 35. I used to have them memorized.

Art Swannack – I didn't know. The only ones I was looking at was the plans that were created for a lot of farms but I don't know, what would you do with those? Those were the FSA required NRCS,

Jon Jones – The TMDLs, you could use those for some historical data.

Art Swannack – But TMDLs weren't what we had for the farm program. We had the individual farm plans which basically followed all the same standard of minimizing soil loss and other things of that order.

Ben Floyd – I don't know how we can incorporate individual farm plans. I think that is getting too detailed, but if there was a wetland that was done for the County that documents functions and ratings that we weren't aware of, that is something that would be helpful for us. Specific studies on specific drainages, maybe there was a habitat study done on Palouse main stem, for example, by Fish & Wildlife in 2009 that we didn't know about. Some of those source documents.

John Stuhlmiller – One of the ways it helped to get information for Thurston and Chelan was that request you just made to the group. You could work through either the statewide coordinator, Bill, or to the four agencies that are part of the technical panel. But Fish & Wildlife may have something. These are going to be references only for your appendixes or the document we referred to earlier. Anything that is out there it doesn't mean it applies to the VSP necessarily, but it is stuff that is out there.

You've done your due diligence and then you see if there is any correlation between that plan or that ag for instance that can blend in. You put the burden on whoever was the sponsor of the plan so if it is an Ecology TMDL, you put the burden on Ecology and ask how did this apply where ag occurs in critical areas. So that you make it specific to the task at hand.

Ben Floyd – They will respond as to how it will relate to the intersection of ag and the critical areas in a timely manner?

John Stuhlmiller – That is yet a test to be fulfilled. We put the burden out there so it is not falling on you. You should not be feeling a burden to get all that stuff brought in and understand all those plans.

Ben Floyd – Joan brought us an example of a shrub steppe document that Fish & Wildlife developed that talks about restoration and guidelines for restoration and it may be applicable in terms of enhancement, but that would be helpful if we also had Fish & Wildlife tell us this is the way we think it applies to VSP.

John Stuhlmiller – That one in particular is a great example outside of the basic mandate to protect and enhance the viability of ag but it is part of the other piece which is to find ways through voluntary measures only that you can enhance. So if you bring in and say here is the wish list from Fish & Wildlife

for shrub steppe and we can accomplish that if producers want, they can do this and we can figure out a way to fund it or encourage it or whatever. But that is a want not a mandate piece.

Jon Jones – It might save us some time when the first step of the TMDLs, do a technical study and a literature search is a part of that technical study, so Ecology might have all the literature available in one place. I don't know, sometimes it doesn't show up in the final document it is just too cumbersome, but it may be in the notes up there.

Ben Floyd – I know the watershed assessments have a lot of those things. It is just that those documents now are 2007, 2008 so they are a little bit dated so there has probably been some work that has been done since then.

Nancy Belsby – I think there is a lot of valuable information that was put together at WRIA 34.

Ben Floyd – Absolutely, and 35. We also have a little bit of Hangman Creek, so we will pull that information together. We will also follow up on John Stuhlmiller's suggestion to get the agencies to help us find the relevant information. Okay, so the due date for those documents is when? October 14<sup>th</sup>.

Okay, we have John Small on the phone, and he will talk about goals, benchmarks and measurements.

John Small – Our objective is to introduce the concepts for the purposes of the VSP. What we mean by goals, benchmarks, and measurements and then put them into context of adaptive management and help folks understand clearly why these are different, what is different about them and how they relate to one another?

We have the RCW here to explain that within the context of goals the legislature is looking for measureable benchmarks that within 10 years our designed result to protection and enhancement for critical area functions. What we have seen in the two pilots are the use of some broad goals that to prevent the degradation of critical area functions is a very overarching goal. They chose a single benchmark to protect critical functions and values where there is that intersection.

I think our approach might be to break the goals down a little further and the benchmarks quite a bit further, but what is critical here is really understanding what are we going to measure, model or how are we going to know or convince others that we've met that standard of protection for conditions in July 22, 2011. That is where they have suggested repeating baseline mapping looking at cumulative acreage of conservation practices. Looking at participation rates and that sort of thing.

It gets a little more difficult to understand that the exact connections here between, that obviously doing livestock fencing is going to help in this instance that intersection of Fish & Wildlife habitat areas. When I look at that this I have to question, first of all there are some benefits to ag that aren't mentioned here. But also the aims and goals for any of these should be integrated as much as possible between ag viability and critical areas protection and ag. I see more opportunity there to combine those.

(Inaudible) that developed the critical areas ordinance are assisted by the State with this document called Critical Areas Assistance Handbook. It provided five goals for critical areas protection. I put these in here not so you would read them thoroughly and adopt them. I think they are very broad and probably deal with a few issues that extend beyond the intersection of critical areas and ag. There is some geologic hazard associated with ag lands but I don't think it is what the legislature was intending when they wrote

the geologic hazards portion of the critical area ordinance. It was more focused on building and development patterns and some of that specific seismic and volcanic issues in the State. Maintaining healthy functioning ecosystems is great but for a county plan that is specific to this ag intersection we might look a little more specifically at shrub steppe habitat riparian habitats and some of those specific areas where we see that intersection being most important.

On the next slide, starting to think about the potential of the Whitman County VSP Goals would look like. We talked in terms of ag viability, protecting topsoil quantity and quality is really important and that is how we have approached geologic hazard areas. Protection of surface water quality is important not only for aquatic habitat but also for a lot of terrestrial species that are also requiring that clean water.

We chose to create the habitat in the aquatic and terrestrial. There are a lot of different ways to explain that. We could combine that as habitat; we could further subdivide it especially terrestrial habitat or add wetland habitat. Protection of ground water quality is unique to critical area as well as minimize flood risk and damage. These align fairly well as the five critical areas.

I think there is certainly a lot of room for the work group to discuss their priorities around each of these. Whether each of them really belong at the level of a (inaudible) and then further refine what you would like to see protected specifically or what priorities the work group has in terms of these goals.

There is also a requirement for goals for participation and those are in a different section. They don't necessarily fall within the same adaptive management program exactly as the rest of the plan. That is something we will have to wait and see. I would get an example of how the goals, benchmarks and measureable standards are interrelated and my hope there is to get this group thinking about the goals, not worrying too much about the measureable standards that we start to think about what are the benchmarks, what are we trying to achieve.

I think of the goals as the aspirational good idea. It is not something super tangible; it's something like we want to protect it and enhance shrub steppe habitat. We know it is a major component of the ecology of Whitman County before development and agriculture it is still an important part especially in the rangeland. As the science evolves we learn more about what is good about the remaining shrub steppe habitat and what is limited about it.

So when we create the goal we can just leave it open-ended. I think of the benchmarks as notches on the thermometer the lines where you can see, are we reaching this level of function or the next level of function? For most of our goals one of the benchmarks will be, what did that function look like in 2011?

In the case of shrub steppe habitat, maybe it is just based on acreage of mapped shrub steppe habitat. Maybe it has something to do with habitat quality as well. What we have proposed is also to include some aspirational benchmarks. Look at what would be a meaningful increase in the acreage of shrub steppe?

What would we mean by decreased fragmentation? Is that in the larger patches of undisturbed shrub steppe, better corridors between large patches? (Inaudible) get all excited about the ratio of edge to center areas and that sort of thing. They have an educated influence on the type of species that will be present in a landscape and there can be a matrix for that.

Then ultimately, the gold standard is looking at, are we seeing a greater diversity in the vegetation and in the (inaudible) using that habitat? The only benchmark we need here is, maintain acreage of habitat in 2011. The advantage of having some other benchmarks above that is that if there is a big event that

happened or there is something natural or unnatural that we lose shrub steppe habitat through natural disaster or changes of use. Having built up that buffer keeps the program above that July 22, 2011, standard. We have something to fall back on.

We are proposing some benchmarks that may be a bit more aspirational than what is required in the RCW. For each of those benchmarks having some measureable failure, some things we can go out on the ground or satellite imagery or whatever and measure whether that stream temperature, whether that grass species in the shrub steppe habitat or there is the number of different bird species in the area. All of those things to be used to quantify whether or not we are effectively meeting these benchmarks.

That is our approach to goals, benchmarks and standards. Our hope in this meeting is to give you a broader understanding and then go back and think about what are the goals that make the most sense for the Whitman County VSP and what specific goals we want to establish and work towards developing benchmarks.

Ben Floyd – So, are there any questions on what you have heard or comments?

Kim Weerts – I think my concern is that the more aspirational good ideas we put up there, the more we hem ourselves in and having to perform. If we don't perform to those standards then we don't get to be in VSP anymore. Correct?

John Small - The use of the benchmarks is for holding the ruler up and seeing where you are and then you give it time. It's like measuring the kids on the door jam and I think the value in having some of these aspirational thresholds is that we can show and measure what that beneficial change from July 2011 to the current monitoring period is, and we can say that we have got an increase acreage of shrub steppe habitat or we've got a decrease in fragmentation.

We aren't going to measure species diversity because we don't have funding for that but if WDFW wants to they can. If Whitman County VSP gets challenged, that you are not meeting the requirements to maintain Fish & Wildlife conservation area at that 2011 level because of something going on with your (inaudible) pine forest or the number of pathogens in that ecosystem are mush for me right now; it is getting out of hand.

We could lose forest habitat but we could come back and say that we've had these gains in shrub steppe, in wetland habitat, in other types of habitat and even though we've lost much of our pine forest we're still on balance ahead of the game. I think the danger of only measuring to the baseline is that it becomes difficult to make an argument that you are losing ground somewhere and then losing ground and then failing to meet the standard if you can't show that you're maintaining the baseline on every single perimeter.

Ben Floyd – You talked about a couple natural disasters but that is not necessarily an intersection with agriculture that would result in that, so is it really fair to say that the ag VSP program would be responsible for offsetting that impact?

John Small – If we had temporary loss of habitat after a major storm event. Now just looking at Fish & Wildlife conservation area specifically terrestrial habitat, we've lost a lot of vegetation associated with the floodplain because of a real extreme event that should be beyond the floodplain capacity to absorb it that would be an example within the ag intersection that may be fits a little better.

Art Swannack – The follow up to what John was saying, I didn't think that temporary events would necessarily count against your protection efforts for VSP. It would seem that events that change what is being done long term in an area, say 1-2 years would be measured against your VSP. But a flood that might cause some damage but is recovering over a period of time shouldn't be counted against you.

Ben Floyd – Another bad example.

Art Swannack – I'm not trying to nail him.

John Small – Not such a bad example because we are looking at this 10-year period and a major flood event, maybe not the best example, but if you lose a significant portion of your floodplain vegetation, it's not going to fully regenerate for several years. It's not going to reach maturity for ten years. Those kinds of impacts if they are widespread there would be some need to show that there is adequate protection across the County for habitats in the intersection of ag and critical areas.

I agree that a temporary impact is probably not something that VSP is going to be responsible for. We are responsible for maintaining this standard in the long term and if we are seeing impacts from small random events throughout time those need to be considered in the plan and absorbed somehow.

Art Swannack – So then would it make sense to have a mitigation section in there to help or if you have a disaster, have some section in there that you designate some type of mitigation to try and offset that potential damage. I'm just trying to generate that idea in my head as to how that would work without it being regulatory.

John Small – Another probably more pertinent example would be agricultural conversion. So if you have shrub steppe habitat that is being managed for conservation by the owner and it gets turned over and starts getting heavily grazed, we could see a real decline in the quantity or quality of that habitat. If that happens on a very widespread basis then those types of conversions are conversions from, we talked a little bit last month about the potential to convert some rangeland to dry land agriculture. Again, in more intensive years you can argue the habitat benefits pro and con but those types of changes are the type of thing that in order to maintain that baseline we are going to need to see some gains over time if we expect to see any losses.

John Stuhlmiller – I appreciate where John has been presenting. I think maybe a little askew there when talking about a disaster, but keep in mind what this is about. Remember, it is where ag activities are impacting critical areas. So a natural disaster would be irrelevant in that respect because if the same ag activity takes place, let's take the latter example as a good one to think about. But remember you are creating a plan that will ensure that ag activity that is taking place does not harm. Really when you get down to the gut level, it doesn't do anything worse than July of 2011.

So ag activity that was occurring as of July 2011 that continues in that path is perfectly fine. But what you can't do is have these standards, and I'm looking at the goals and benchmark standards and there is some good stuff there. I would caution acceptance of a benchmark like increase in species diversity. That could be an aspirational goal that is bent on only that is enhancement, so only through voluntary measures would you get there.

But if that is your benchmark that can be a tough benchmark because ag isn't necessarily or hindering the diversity of species in the riparian corridor, for instance. So you start to stretch beyond what you can

hold ag accountable for. There is a lot of things and weather pattern changes, etc., is beyond that. I want to remind you to keep coming back to what those are.

So the first one, maintaining acreage. It is okay but be careful because that is not even a task because you don't hold any farmer to any particular thing. It is that are you maintaining whatever your critical area, are you maintaining that?

John Small – Thanks, John. That reflects a question we had in reading the RCW and the intention of the benchmarks but the only benchmark that would be a standard for gaging the success of VSP on this slide would be that lower of maintaining equal or better acreage; or however we want to frame the no net loss discussion. The others are useful whether we call them benchmarks or something else I think becomes a bit more semantic and this is just adopting more of the standard conservation ecology adaptive management language. That may differ from what was in the RCW.

John Stuhlmiller – That is a great example, so if you take that increase that is certainly you have to come up also with benchmarks and goals that are really truly aspirational, only for enhancement, only through the voluntary measures. So you have one set, you have to ensure that you are protecting critical areas. You have to have a standard that shows that ag has not increased its impact on the critical area in question from July 2011. The next one up through voluntary measures, we encourage producers to do that but you try to get there but it is only through voluntary measures that you can accomplish any increase over the baseline.

Ben Floyd – So, I understand what you are saying but I am confused by the only through voluntary measures, the whole program is only through voluntary measures. Even for the minimum protection.

John Stuhlmiller – Non-voluntary you have to protect critical areas. That is the law, period. So you can't fail to protect critical areas in the area where ag is. In the aggregate it is not farm by farm we are talking about. It is in the, you pick your watershed whatever it is. In the aggregate ag has to be protected in July 2011 standards. So what was taking place at that time that has to be maintained? That is not optional, so it is not voluntary. When you do something different, that is voluntary. Does that make sense?

Ben Floyd – It does. I still think we need to think about some different language because it is a voluntary stewardship program. No one landowner has to participate, no all landowners are required to participate, so I understand the explanation. I might suggest some alternate terminology to include in our plan.

Art Swannack – As I understand it we have to have goals in this plan, small or big. It has to be more than what our 2011 is to enhance over time?

Ben Floyd – So, we have to have something that protects critical areas, just like he said, in terms of non-voluntary but you have to have the goal and benchmarks that maintain 2011 going forward. Then, there are the enhancement through voluntary measures participation that improve it in the more aspirational part of that, but not what we are going to measure the success of the program against.

But that can help if you had a bunch of restoration, for example, that occurred on the Palouse River that someone just wanted to do because they wanted to see a certain habitat condition or if they wanted to use it more for hunting or birds, or whatever happened that you can get credit for it.



In the Tri-Cities there is a harvest place called Barker Ranch. It is owned by a bunch of attorneys from Seattle and it is a prime bird hunting reserve. It is not a reserve; it is a managed farm but they have doubled the amount of wetlands on that property over the last 20 years for the purpose of hunting. It also has increased the ecological function of that area. That is something that wouldn't be required. It is not an ag activity affecting, the thing would have been whatever the farming was like in 2011 just maintain that. But that was built up in terms of ecological functions over time. You can get credit for that because it is still part of what happens under the program.

Joan Folwell – I have a very naive question. If you go to the slide before this one, the one with the goals listed, like water quality, protecting top soil. Now we are looking at something that is very specific. Are we supposed to look down to that specific level or are we going to decide on these philosophically more over reaching goals?

John Stuhlmiller – I think my recommendation would be to keep the goals fairly broad and build the benchmarks and the measurement standards around some more specific matrix. That typically, what I've seen this type of approach, you'll have a broad goal like protect terrestrial habitat and then that will be broken down into a couple sub goals based on what in this case a work group has identified or we have identified as the key terrestrial habitat.

So where there is an ag intersection. So, those likely are shrub steppe habitat or we may have a couple others and there may be riparian habitats which are by definition between aquatic and terrestrial. How we specifically frame these goals (inaudible) with detail is really important but that is where we can tailor it not only to the conditions to the ecology of Whitman County but also to the values of the community.

Ben Floyd – So, and you asked do we have to. This is open. There is flexibility in how we develop it. You saw the examples in Chelan County were pretty broad. Maybe kind of hard to measure. We may be taking it down a level of detail that maybe you are not comfortable with and you want to go back some and get specific in just a few areas and call it good. There is flexibility we are working this out together.

My thought though is we also have to balance what we come up with goals and benchmarks and measures with who is going to be on the ground tracking this? It has to be something that is trackable within like what we anticipate as resources are going to be available. So we don't want to build something that is going to cost a million dollars a year tracked. Right?

We want to build something that is going to be pretty easy to track and maybe more based upon, we had these additional measures happen and we know that that resulted in XY & Z. Therefore, XY & Z times 30 practices, boom, this is what we see as the increase and compared to things that have been degraded, it is only a small measure so we are in plus 80% over that what we were in 2011.

That is easy to lay out that simple framework to actually have something that you can measure and define. It may take a little more work. You are hearing John more from a science standpoint and I am more from an administration where we have to marry these ideas together. We are just starting in our thinking in this process and we are sharing it with you today for you to think about. We will dive into this more in detail at our next meeting.

Joan Folwell – I appreciate the example because it gives me direction but at the same time it was causing me to back pedal and say that are we going down to that level of specificity or are we just having our list of general goals and I do want to put a disclaimer in. I brought you information about shrub steppe I had no idea you were going to focus on it today.

Kim Weerts – We need to have that paragraph that you and John Stulhmiller succinctly talked in front of us with the recognition that there are two separate things we are dealing with here. We are dealing with where we were in July 2011, and that anything else that anyone wants to do is voluntarily, as opposed to when you explained it this time. I was nervous about the goals and the benchmarks we were going to have to have in the future and trying to reach all of those. But really what the program does it puts it in the hands of the individuals and there will be individuals that will go crazy doing more volunteer things and raise the bar, and there are some that just want to maintain 2011 and I think if it is explained the way you explained it, it is easier to understand.

Ben Floyd – So we will definitely include that description and maybe we need to, we will have a handout at the next meeting that frames the goals and benchmarks that captures that. I'm going to pick on Jeff a little bit. I just want to ask, do you have any thoughts, observations. I just want you to have the opportunity to share your thoughts.

Jeff Pittmann – Everything sounds good so far. I don't know if I like the increased species and diversity. I just think that is just nature. If we decrease or increase that is whatever happens. The part of increasing acreage on the shrub, I see where you are going with that; I know it is an example. I don't like the word, increased verbiage with, I know it is framed more for ditches for maintaining water quality, but at the same time you start putting that into buffer strips, and we are getting a lot of ground taken out and putting under concrete, asphalt year after year and farm ground is going away. So with more grass out of production, the more ground we can't produce on. That's my two cents worth.

Ben Floyd – Okay, maybe the focus is more increasing the habitat benefit of what we already have. We have rangeland, maybe through some practices we can both increase the cover the diversity habitat on rangeland for example, to improve grazing management practices.

There is a road that I drive by on the highway here and there is an area that I've seen three different times in the County and it is just heavily grazed. When you see that piece of shrub steppe and the shrub steppe next to it and the shrub steppe on the other side, you can tell there are too many cattle all the time on this property. I'm sure they are feeding with hay to supplement, but if there were a way to reduce the number and some of that is just going to happen, we know it but that's an example of where we could improve the habitat quality of that ground and really the forage quality. There's nothing to eat on that property any more.

Kim Weerts – That guy is not going to be in VSP.

Ben Floyd – You are probably right.

Art Swannack – The other question is did it look that way in 2011?

Ben Floyd – Probably. So it is already part of the baseline. I was just trying to give you an example. Then there are other properties I can tell that the grazing is pretty well managed where you can tell it gets used, the cattle are in there but not for long periods of time and they are moved around and the property looks pretty good.

You know there is wildlife in there and that is probably where you also see the deer and other animals. So there are lots of good examples and a few bad examples. That is the long way of saying that it's been more increasing function in some ways as opposed to trying to add more acres.

Jon Jones – One of the things wouldn't hurt. I know one of the conservations districts in particular has done a lot of work on it, the unfarmed eyebrows, not eligible for CRP or anything like that. Farmers have planted trees on it and that's increasing the, and that is good for everybody. It is good advertising for farmers, good for wildlife and good for water quality. We should look to the wind thing instead of the wind, maybe lose something. There is still a lot of those eyebrows left around.

Ben Floyd – I do want to spend a little time on outreach. We are going to put together a primer that characterizes the non-voluntary and voluntary and we are going to come up with more specific proposals related to what you have heard today about goals, benchmarks and standards based upon our understanding of Whitman County and the drainages in the County. We will be discussing that further at our next meeting. John, we have adaptive management here, can we wrap that into next month?

John Small – You want me to hit on it in 90 seconds? Okay, it helps with the understanding of how benchmarks might be used in addition to just the meaning of that RCW. I think of adaptive management as a tool that understands is your plan working and also how to make your plan better or address new things or changes. All of a sudden the producers are growing a lot more of a different crop and our plans have fallen out of the times. It is a tool to get it back, get the plan back on track in meeting the goals.

So, adaptive management as described in the academic literature typically had five steps. What is your baseline conditions and in this case we have a very description one at least date. Maybe you have your plan, the work plan. The last three are the cycle of adaptive management so you can implement practices and, in this case, this is producers implementing management practices, through incentive practices, whatever.

At some level there is a monitoring of what is going on and the tracking of what is happening. As that monitoring data comes in and the tracking information (inaudible) before filling out the VSP checklist, we can start to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan, in protecting the conditions. If we see this plan is doing a robust job at protecting riparian habitat, stream functions, floodplain functions, it is really doing a great job, even up to recharge area, but we are noticing an issue.

I'm just going to pick on shrub steppe, and we see it as being less effective. Then as the plan is adjusted and evaluated, we know that's where we need to change the plan, provide producers more options that work better with the economics the conditions of the ground. If there are changes in the agronomy and the crops or the methods that the folks are using, if there are new techniques that come out that are even better than the ones we mentioned, we want to make sure we can adapt and include those in future updates to the plan.

So, some of these benchmarks that help us evaluate are we really effective, kind of effective, or just effective enough, are intended to fit more into the adaptive management side of the equation than the strict VSP meet the requirement of protection of 2011 conditions. That was more like 180 seconds.

Ben Floyd – Yes, time is up. So that is a component of the plan that we have to include. It will come in at a 5-year review and a 10-year review and whether we can demonstrate that we are meeting that.

So, outreach strategy. In the RCW it says, “Ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to the agricultural operators.” So, conservation districts are doing a lot of outreach. You are probably familiar with that, but with some of the activities that are happening, we asked conservation districts to come today and we had one who was here. Brad Johnson was not able to be here but they do a lot of outreach activities.

You know that private sector whether they are working with, all sorts of different ag productions, situations also provide technical support. We want to take advantage of those strategies and that things that are already in place take advantage of those. So if something is working, our thought is we want to include those. Include VSP in the communications that are already happening.

When we talked about outreach there is really two parts of this. One is outreach during the time we are building this plan. We’ve had a few members of the public that have come but it seems like we are getting a small representation of who could be coming who might be interested in this. Maybe it is too soon, we don’t have enough to share what this is all about yet.

I want to talk a little about how we can increase participation during the work plan development process and also what other strategies to include in the work plan. Again, this is just an introduction. We will cover this again in more detail at our next meeting. So let’s talk about ways to increase participation during the work plan development. How can we get more people involved?

Art Swannack – I think it is dry and you are kidding yourself that you are going to get any more people involved.

Ben Floyd – That is a dose of reality. Anyone else see it similarly?

Kim Weerts – Yes. Because you have people who are going to umpteen thousand meetings now and they don’t want to do another one. They just want to reserve their criticism until it comes out.

Ben Floyd – Okay.

Nancy Belsby – I’d like to see an article in the Whitman County Gazette. Also, to the Capital Press. I’d like them to include on that Chelan paper we have it as the goals but it missed the five areas that we have to address. How can we make this simple so this is what we are working on for Whitman County? We don’t have to discuss growth management. The VSP is about these 5 critical areas ordinance. We are having meetings to try and work out the plan so we need to make it simple.

Joan Folwell – I know the four conservation districts in this County are going to be intimately involved in the future. I know a lot of the districts are going to have listening programs or annual meetings where information about the progress of VSP, there are fact sheets that the State commission has already put them out. Those could be tools to make the public aware and make the request that people either write or get on a list for meeting announcements. You are not going to get a ton of respondents but even a couple of people would help.

Ben Floyd – The Palouse CD put out a newsletter and we gave them a blurb to put in there, but there are other opportunities to do that and we need to plan that continually during the process.

Nancy Belsby – Why don't you go down to the Edward R. Murrow Center and give a presentation and they can show it on channel 10?

Ben Floyd – Okay, why do I have to do that? You are the work group; it would be better to hear from their peers. We can help you to put the information together.

Nancy Belsby – Art or someone can do it but I think it would be a good idea to have it on PBS.

Ben Floyd – The ratings on that would probably go through the roof!

Jon Jones – This is really dry stuff. I think we all got that part but I did a TMDL on the Little Spokane River in Pend Oreille and Spokane Counties. It was a 5-year process and we couldn't get anybody to come to the public meetings. We had meetings every month for 5 years, a committee like this. We hammered out a TMDL and it was advertised in the paper, the conservation district put it in their newsletters, it was everywhere and nobody would show up.

When we came out with the document, we had a room this big full of people saying they never knew about it. But you know, they didn't like any part of it, but I think the message I got from that was that it is easier to get people involved if you have a document to say that here is what we are proposing and we will talk about it at the next meeting.

Ben Floyd – What about featuring different growers, producers in the County coming to our meetings and adding another 20 minutes or so and just have people present what they are doing in terms of conservation measures on their ground? You think about your neighbors, John Pearson did something similar to that, but think of people you could invite to share information. Maybe people don't want it, it's their property and that is fine.

I'm just trying to think of ways we can ramp up because VSP won't work unless we have some level of participation. We can come up with a great plan and if it doesn't get implemented and we don't really even meet the basic goals, you are going to be in the regulatory arena. So, it is something to think about.

Alan Thomson – I think Jon Jones is right. You've got to have something to present. That is when people come to the show. When they can read something and they know it will affect their property they will be sitting in the audience. No matter how good you try and advertise something, it doesn't work. They will show up and say, "I never heard of this."

Art Swannack – Alan, how many people showed up for the Critical Area Ordinance update?

Alan Thomson – Zero.

Art Swannack – That affected every business and city in the County which has a lot more concentrated potential cash loss than what ag does.

Alan Thomson – You need to have something to show people and then they can read it and figure out whether it affects them or not.

Ben Floyd – Okay, so don't get too anxious right now if we've got limited participation, we've got who we need here and we will build something and then take it on the road.

Art Swannack – That would make it really sensational if there was something out now.

Mark Storey – Maybe you could put out a summary; you wouldn't have to have all the details. Put something out to get a response.

Kim Weerts – I think after the plan is done you'll find that you'll get a lot of participation. I don't worry about participants in the program as it goes forward.

Ben Floyd – Great, I'm going to put my confidence in that statement.

Alan Thomson – With the critical areas, with the shorelines update, Ecology is all about public participation as a big component of that. We got a couple of comments at the end; that was it, and from Nancy. We had very little participation and we made such effort to get the word out to the public but nobody showed up.

Ben Floyd – So, I think there are a lot of suggestions and guidance in there for the work plan development process. I think we will cover at the November meeting more of the outreach for the plan implementation side of this. I do think we need to have a little more fun while we are holding these meetings. How about a potluck at the end of next month's meeting? Bring a side dish, main dish, dessert.

Kim Weerts – You can't have food in here, can you?

Ben Floyd – We won't be meeting in here.

Art Swannack – Actually, if you are meeting in our building, you can't have food in there either.

Alan Thomson – We cannot meet here next month. There is some remodeling going on and Superior Court is going to be housed in here for the next month and a half. So we have to go to the Commissioner's Chambers for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Kim Weerts – We could probably walk across the street afterwards to Pearson Farm and Fence and use their conference room.

Ben Floyd – Are you interested? I'm not trying to push a dinner together on you, but I'm just throwing it out there. I'm willing to make a couple items and bring them. I don't think we necessarily need to plan a menu, just throw some things together and everybody bring an item if you want to. So, thumbs up, thumbs down. Is that something you are interested in?

Mark Storey – I won't be here.

Ben Floyd – I'm not getting a lot of interest, so let's take that as an idea in the future. We are not going to meet in December but at the next meeting in November we will talk about protection and enhancement, grower participation goals.

A little bit of information about monitoring but we will go through the work plan outline. So we will go through the executive summary brochure, Volume I, and II and we will show you what we are thinking about for each of those. Then if you say that you like this or that and then we will actually go and draft the thing for about a 45-day period including taking the time for that December meeting, if that is okay.

And, try and knock this out so when we get back together in January, you will have a document that is complete that takes all of these ideas and requirements and everything and gives you our best effort at what the work plan would look like. There may be some holes, but at least we will have something concrete to start looking at.

We are proposing a meeting in January but I wanted to talk about whether January 5<sup>th</sup> was the best time to do that. Does that date still work for you?

Alan Thomson – Don't look to me to help with that. I will be in Scotland until the end of the month. I will be out of touch until December 29th. Katrin, the assistant planner can put things on the website for you.

Ben Floyd – We can work with that. After our meeting in November we will be working on the draft plan, get it out ahead of the January meeting so you will have some time to look at it. We will then spend 2-3 months walking through the plan. We will give you more of the work plan for those meetings as we get closer to it. Anything else for those on the phone? Okay, anything else? We will see you on November 3, 2016, in the Commissioner's Chambers.

**Adjourned - 5:09 p.m.**