

**WHITMAN COUNTY
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
Meeting
March 2, 2017
BOCC Chambers**

MEMBERS:

**Alan Thomson, (Absent)
Jon Jones
Nancy Belsby
David Swannack
Jeff Pittmann
Larry Cochran**

**Joan Folwell
Kim Weerts
David Lange
Tracy Eriksen
Art Swannack
John Pearson (Absent)**

Phone: Ben Floyd, Anchor QEA; Vivian Erickson, Anchor QEA; John Small, Anchor QEA; Jason Kunz, Fish & Wildlife.

Audience: Brian Bell, Whitman CD; Mark Storey, WC Director/Engineer; Elinor Huber, Clerk.

2:12 p.m. – Ben Floyd opened the meeting. Thank you for coming. We’re going to talk about the discussion we had last time specifically around implementation. We will go through the comments that we received from you and talk about goals, benchmarks, and tracking methods and then go into next steps.

Art Swannack – I would like to comment about what I am hearing at the Legislature about funding. Last week I was hearing some things on capital budget which is kind of the area of where this money comes from. Probably the scariest thing I heard was that the capital budget they have normally 2 billion dollars and about 1.2 or so is basically obligated for a project. They thought they had 800 million to make decisions on.

As of the elections this February with all the school construction bonds that are passed and the obligations of the State, they don’t think they have anything left in the capital budget available for discretionary spending. That is not the final word. They still have the session to go through but I’d keep that in mind when it comes to expectations for project funding. One of the other concerns the lobbyist, Mr. Potts, brought up was the commission is going for VSP funding for implementation but the funding they are searching for, they are trying to pull it out of the Public Works Trust Fund and there is no money available in the PW Trust Fund to get.

So I would sum this all up, my concern is we need to keep in mind this process is funded on a biennial basis and that biennial ends June 30th. If at all possible we need to focus on the goals and have this mostly wrapped up in that time frame. I would be concerned that money might be pulled or it might not be fully funded with all the McCleary and Hirst mental health decisions. Mark might have more to add.

Mark Storey – I would add on to that with the County’s struggles and budgets on top of that you cannot expect the County to come up with extra money if we aren’t quite done. This is a tight budget year and I don’t think the County can come up with anything to finish it if they take the State funding away.

Ben Floyd – The money that we have and the work that we are doing right now is ended on June 30th. We will have your draft plan. What we won't have is the plan that is reviewed by the technical panel. They have a 45-day review period and we can maybe have it ready to submit. But that review would probably come after June 30th. We will have Volume 1 done and we will have the technical appendices which is Volume 2 for you to approve by the end of June.

Art Swannack – I see a lot of things trying to pull money at the State level and I am concerned if we thought we were going to have extra money and expecting it to be extended.

Ben Floyd – It would be good to hear John Stuhlmiller's perspective on this, too. As of a week and a half ago, he was saying that it was still looking pretty promising. It is Public Works Trust Fund funding but we understood that there was money in the pot.

Art Swannack - There have been a lot of games played with that pot and part of the issue is that they have borrowed more money out of it than they have available for the obligations they have already incurred. That is the simplest way to describe it. It may look like it has money in it but when you start looking at the shifting around and borrowing around they are actually negative.

Ben Floyd - Is that going to leave the County in a bind if you don't have money to complete the plan, if the legislature doesn't fund it?

Art Swannack – The only thing I would say is I would like it done, because if it isn't funded and they don't fund it in the future for some reason, and we roll into Critical Area Ordinance implementation instead of VSP nobody is going to like it in WC. I would rather us try and get this done early and send in and hope. That's just my two cents.

Nancy Belsby – Who actually has to review it and how long does it take?

Ben Floyd – The State Technical Review Panel. So that is a representative from F&W, DOE, Department of Agriculture and the Conservation Commission and they have 45 days to review it. We could try to submit it by May 15th. One of the things we have heard that if they get three or four coming in they won't be able to do them at the same time. I think it is highly unlikely that we can get it to them, get it reviewed and get it updated and ready to go. If they review it and they say it is good with just a few tweaks, then we are almost there. As soon as we get money we could finish it up and in the meantime we go into a holding pattern.

Art Swannack – Maybe by the end of May if we submit it so that if they see something right away we will have time to fix it?

Mark Storey – We wrote our contracts with the State and with Anchor QEA based on available funding so the County doesn't have any liability as soon as it dries up we are done and they know we are done. So we just need to count on no money after the end of June.

Kim Weerts - If it is done and we sent it in and there is no money, do we just hold, or does it have to be approved and then we are in a holding pattern?

Ben Floyd – When we are done, when we run out of money wherever we are, we are in a holding pattern.

Kim Weerts – So we don't go back to critical areas?

Ben Floyd – I think if a long time went and no funding was done, it is like we have to decide if we are going to wrap that plan up and implement it or if we are going to go to a regulatory approach. But I think at least for the next biennium in the 17-19 period, if we go into a holding pattern for that period, supposedly there is some kind of coverage, according to John Stuhlmiller.

Mark Storey – Once you get into the zone that is not covered at all then I think that expectation is that we drop back to critical area ordinances.

Art Swannack – That's why I want to see this plan completed because if we have a plan on the shelf saying that is completed, we haven't necessarily got implementation or funding is coming in in little trickles through RCPP and we are working on it, I think we have a chance.

Kim Weerts - Is completed that we've done it or completed if we have done it and they signed off on it?

Art Swannack – Truly completed is we have done it, they reviewed it and their director signed off on it.

Ben Floyd – I think if they get it and have a chance to review it, we will be fortunate. They are reviewing Thurston, Chelan, and Grant. Although we thought Grant was going to submit and we're thinking they are going to delay a little bit. We are still having a discussion. Pacific is planning to submit, so maybe I think it is worth exploring. I like the idea of targeting to having this approved by you by the end of May.

Kim Weerts – Do they have a cut-off?

Ben Floyd – They have 45 days. Whether their money continues into July, I don't know.

Kim Weerts -Even if we get it in and they go past the 45 days review? What if they can't review it in that time?

John Small – They have 45 days or it would go to the Commission to approve it or reject it regardless of whether it meets, it is unclear what their criteria would be.

Ben Floyd – It goes to the State Advisory Panel and then gets back to us if the tech panel doesn't agree.

Larry Cochran – One of the stories going around in Olympia is the Farm Bureau says VSP doesn't need any more funding because the plans are all showing we are doing so well we don't need money to fix problems.

Ben Floyd – This is the State Legislature. This is where rumors fly and no one really knows until the ink is dry on the signature. Is there a general consensus that we want to try and wrap up our draft and have it approved by this group by the end of May? Okay.

Mark Storey – What are the odds that it goes to them and they just flatly check some of the things that we are trying to accomplish or say they want a complete rewrite of a major portion or something? Maybe they don't have an answer.

Ben Floyd – I am thinking if I want to respond like an attorney, or an altruist consultant, or as a prideful author. So we have to run a lot of these things that are in your work plan by the Technical Panel at a certain level. We have presented at two different meetings at the Technical Panel over in Lacey and try and get their feedback on our approach. We will go through today in more detail than you have seen before in the goals and benchmarks and how we come up with those.

So, I'm pretty optimistic that we have a solid plan. We've gotten a lot of good feedback from it but all informal. There are four different personalities on this tech panel and there is one in particular that I am concerned about so I don't know for sure but I think we are in good shape. We will probably get some comments but I think it will be tweets as opposed to fundamental issues.

Larry Cochran – Hearing about some of the other groups, ours looks pretty good, maybe they will just let it slide by.

Jason Kunz – With your conversations with the tech panel over there in Olympia, have they mentioned anything about the fact that drip dredging has to happen in a lot of areas like an ag activity and whether or not you should be trying to roll in some stuff where there is a table for protecting fish and wildlife habitat. There are some BMP's that could go into that table that talk about some of the dredging methods that we might see used to protect hydrology, and water quality.

I talked to Alan Thomson about how there is that need for periodic dredging in the different drainage channels in WC. Maybe this could cover a little better in the work plan. Because if there is some threat to protect hydrology, water quality and ground water, there are some threats there that should be identified. So the conservation measures, BMP's are what I call them, should possibly be lifted in the work plan.

Kim Weerts – I thought that any dredging had to be permitted.

Jason Kunz – A lot of times people go get permits.

Ben Floyd – That is an enforcement in education.

Art Swannack – The other part of it, I'm not sure that VSP gets into where you are talking actually digging in water bodies. VSP as I understood it was to dredge the water.

Ben Flood – It is an ag activity.

Jason Kunz – Dredging happens on a lot of ag land.

Art Swannack – What are you defining as "dredging?" When I hear that I'm thinking about the barge going down the channel. Are you talking about channel maintenance or ditch maintenance?

Jason Kunz – Sure, and when you do it, it depends on the time of year you do it. You could have your impacts depending on the method of doing the work. Sometimes people will over excavate and that will help water to suck out more often and stay in the channel. That changes the hydrology and habitat activity especially when it comes to fish bearing streams.

Often the best case scenario is that people that do have streams that are known to be fish bearing, they do come get their permit from F&W. We go through what they are proposing to do and review it and talk about they need to do it this time of year and they only stay between the original design of the channel. You don't over excavate or over steep in the channel. There are all these checkmarks that have to be met that basically help that this stream is not going to have any adverse impacts on the habitat.

Ben Floyd – I don't want to spend too much time on this particular topic because we have a lot of things to cover and this is something that is in the regulatory arena. If we want to beef up the discussion of if you plan to do a maintenance dredge you need to see F&W to get the permits and all that. We could maybe add something in part of the plan.

Kim Weerts – Having just done work we had to go to the County, had to be approved by F&W, it had to be approved by DOE and somebody else so I see it more as a regulatory issue. Unless you are ditching barrow pit or something, cleaning it out, I think everything else has to be permanent, doesn't it?

Jason Kunz – That is what I wanted to mention, are there any threats to VSP that we would like to cover? If there are threats out there.

Joan Folwell – I was just curious if you are applying this to the designated habitat of F&W or is this just making a blanket statement about any ditching in ag fields or any place outside of the mapping that your department has done.

Jason Kunz – I think that is one of the things that I brought up early on is that a lot of streams that have fish in there are mapped as unknown in WC. I know that I made a point that we have to recognize that there are fish in a lot of these drainages. There are fish that can handle warmer water and maybe does exist.

A Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation area which is one of the critical areas, would be in any of those streams that have fish in it and constitutes that being a critical area. I know you are going back to the 2011 baseline but if somebody were to go over board and not get their permit, I don't know how you would capture that with the plusses and minuses of making sure the VSP is balanced in protecting ag viability.

David Lange – I think this might be a subgroup for the VSP, because ditching in general you have to have a long term plan of how to handle these field ditches or county ditches. It is a deep discussion.

Ben Floyd – We are not trying to resolve Endangered species act compliance. We are not trying to resolve the Clean Water Act compliance, or HPA compliance in WC and all these things are in that that regulatory arena. We don't want to talk too much about regulatory because some people might think this is something different. The conservation district is now trying to push me to get more in compliance of regulations, etc. I think we need to be careful. Okay, enough on that.

Jon Jones – I want to point out there are a lot of wetlands that are farmed and are designated as farmed wetlands and in our plan we need to mention something about that.

Nancy Belsby – The definition of the wetlands included farmed wetlands in WC in the Shorelines Management Plan. Isn't that correct?

Jason Kunz – There is a statement in there on ditching with regards to the CAO and how they are considered exempt.

Ben Floyd – That is under the regulatory discussion. Alan wanted to make sure we put that in there. So, I'm not sure where we are going to go with the ditching discussion but let's go into follow up with the last work group meeting.

Okay, lead entity for implementation and outreach. So, lead organization or lead person. The upshot of that is that you said this is really the County's responsibility to figure out who is going to lead implementation of this program. The County has told us they don't expect they will do it. They don't have the capacity and the ability but they will receive the funding and they will select someone or an organization or a contract or select a private contractor.

They will take that responsibility to make sure that if money comes in that there is a person or organization that has been assigned all of the implementation responsibilities. That individual or organization or contractor will be responsible to this board as you serving as the Board of Directors. The County as an administrative agent handling the money, getting it set up making sure that that individual or organization is in place and that there is whatever agreements needed to make it happen.

Then they will conduct these responsibilities, the outreach, technical guidance, technical data, collection, working with technical assistance providers, working with Cattlemen's Association, Wheat Growers Association, CD's, private industry to collect information to track the progress, do the performance reporting, and report to you as the Board of Directors. We just want to confirm that we heard at the last meeting.

Art Swannack – The County is responsible for the money that comes to us and we have to follow State law requirements as to how we select somebody.

Ben Floyd – If you have an opinion on that on that happened, you now have a political process you can participate in to help.

Art Swannack – It's going to be, here is the criteria for the job, the qualifications, the people applying have to meet the qualifications, etc.

Mark Storey – It will be based on qualifications.

Jon Jones – So is it this group's responsibility to make a recommendation to the County?

Ben Floyd – They will tell you how it will happen and you will work with that individual.

Jon Jones – They are going to recommend us, is what is going to happen?

Mark Storey – The County will administer the money and the County may select someone from this committee or I don't see how it would be any different than the County selecting any other committee.

Art Swannack – The Commissioners will end up having to vote on who to award the contract to.

Ben Floyd – The work group got set up and then you got stuck with us. They selected and we make it work and I think we will have a similar process. So we are clear on that? Okay, so that is how we will make sure it is clear in the work plan. That it is going to be the County, organization to be selected, and here are their responsibilities. It will be selected shortly after the plan is approved by the State Conservation Commission and money is available to move forward.

Joan Folwell – Can we get copies of that? The directive of who decides the entities.

Ben Floyd – We are going to write it in that version of the work plan. So, comment tracking document. Vivian I'm going to hand this over to you to cover.

Vivian Erickson – At the last meeting we sent out the compiled list of comments we have received from you as well other comments from others. In that comment response it lays out what the documents we received. The comments might be a little shortened but as we are updating this portion we are taking all the comments and will address them.

We really only have two major ones for discussion today. One of them being a further discussion on soil health and what that means with the critical area function. Then the second one being how we want to reference the technical assistance providers who are available in the County to implement and conduct outreach on stewardship action for the VSP. To make sure we are covering those two questions and also any comments you wanted to discuss today.

Ben Floyd – So as you looked at the comment response matrix, and you see what we are saying? A lot of places we are just saying that we are revising it as you suggested. Some places it is just more that we noted that. Do they look appropriate?

Larry Cochran – I'm hung up on the technical service providers.

Ben Floyd – We will drill into them in more detail. Maybe other than soil heal and tech service providers, are there more comments?

Joan Folwell – Actually I sent an email to Vivian today regarding comment 19, I called it 20, but I have a rebuttal to that comment about Palouse Prairie. Vivian, do you have that?

Vivian Erickson – Is that okay if I pull up your email? Okay, I will read it. This is about the Palouse Prairie comment where we talked about pulling it out of the baseline and moving some of that text. The description talking about historic conditions in the County having the Palouse Prairie, and moving that discussion into Section 4 of the document where we talk about some of the stewardship activities that were happening in the County, and moving that into where the conservation district led stewardship action. Joan's comment was:

“This historical description of the Palouse Prairie that it is an ecosystem that defines the character of the County and it should be given special reference, in my opinion. The suggestion that the Palouse Prairie should be only referenced as a project within the Palouse CD is erroneous. It is referenced by DFW specifically as a priority habitat and species list. This document defines habitat determined to be priority based on defensible criteria and provides the information necessary to incorporate the needs to sustain these habitats and manage planning.

The DFW glorified action plan is a comp plan for conserving the State's resources and the Palouse Prairie specifically is mentioned in the ecological system of concern with less 1% (inaudible). The condition that any government entity that has an intercept in habitat conservation considerations will be able to use the information to implement actions that will align with their mission and goal. Therefore, the Palouse Prairie is not a narrow intersect of the Conservation District but has the agency recognition. The County has also previously recognized the Palouse Prairie in the Critical Areas Ordinances and there are also some state F&W funded grants involving the prairie where there are two in the process of being awarded this year."

Joan Folwell – If anybody would like to see any of this documentation, I brought it with me. For both priority habitats species list and the WAF&W action plan. We are not dealing with historical conditions. I understand and the proponents of the Palouse Prairie is just an ecosystem that associated with the County and may deserve special attention just because of that. But not necessarily to be in the program. As far as it being just a concern of a particular conservation district,

Ben Floyd – That is the way we have it right now in the work plan is more of a context of a concern as opposed to a critical area designated by the County.

Joan Folwell – Not only by the County, but by F&W.

Kim Weerts – I made a comment and I would agree with everything you said. My problem was it was the only item here that had an historical context and mildly because of the CD's participation knowing that stuff has been going on since then, but I think why not put it as a separate designation. I don't know where to put it.

Ben Floyd – In the F&W Habitat Conservation Area. We do have a separate area and we have a discussion in there about Palouse Prairie and conservation practices that can benefit Palouse Prairie and other fish and wildlife habitat.

Kim Weerts – If it doesn't go under F&W have it go after it, but have it as just Palouse Prairie in its own heading.

Joan Folwell – If you want to do that, that is fine with me,

Ben Floyd - But I want to make sure that it is in the County's critical areas code and what they have designed as critical area.

Art Swannack – We have Palouse Prairie listed in critical area code. It is dealt with under priority habitat species, maybe but I don't know that it is listed.

Ben Floyd – I think we need to verify how it is listed specifically or if it is covered under a general category. Either way it is still work to call out. We have a call out box on it. We just need to make sure we put that in the right location and give it the proper context.

Joan Folwell – Right, and I agree with Kim to make a special little inset and bring attention to its historical significance doesn't really add to the document.

Ben Floyd – Right, so we should remove the reference regarding the historical significance. Except just to know there is a remnant of habitat that used to be more prevalent.

Kim Weerts – The other reason I put that in there was that there has been so much work done lately, I wanted that to contribute to what we've done since 2011. A lot of work has been done and it should go to the credit of those people.

Joan Folwell – Those were through USF&W grants and they out of the Spokane office are putting special emphasis on Palouse Prairie.

Ben Floyd – So then we want to highlight there are conservation practices in progress that have been made to protect and enhance. Okay. Vivian, how are your notes on this?

Vivian Erickson – I was a little bit distracted. We lost our internet connection. You might have to take up the presentation from your end.

Ben Floyd – We want to verify where Palouse Prairie is referenced or included in the Critical Areas code. We want to include it in the work plan in the appropriate context. We want to remove any reference to historic conditions but instead talk about that it was prevalent. Here is what we have left and there have been a lot of conservation practices in recent years to protect and preserve the remaining Palouse Prairie. So, those four things.

Art Swannack – How does that fit into this VSP?

Ben Floyd – It is an F&W Habitat Conservation area.

Art Swannack – So it would be a reference that these areas exist in the County and their basic, here's where they exist currently as of 2011 and we want to protect those prairies. But this isn't regulatory.

Ben Floyd – But it will protect through voluntary methods. We have to demonstrate we are protecting critical areas and functions and values, but we are doing it through a non-regulatory voluntary program.

Joan Folwell – Actually, these plans put out by State Fish and Game take that approach. Their recommendations for land planning entities to incorporate what efforts will fit with their goals. Actually they have stated what those measures can be.

Ben Floyd – Let's add, that's item 5 is to list, if you have some Palouse Prairie and you want to know how to protect and preserve it, here are some tools you can use and you can see a CD or somebody else to get information about those practices.

Joan Folwell – Or how land planning entity should look at something like the Palouse Prairie. Or any habitat that F&W are trying to maintain. Jason, you can help out on this too.

Jason Kunz – Yes, I'd like to. I've got guidelines.

Ben Floyd – So, let's quickly resolve the presentation display. We have taken care of the Palouse Prairie. Were there any other comments or responses that you want to cover?

First of all, when we think about soil health as defined, here is what we are thinking. It is the ecosystem function associated with soil and soil formation. So, resistance to erosion, storage and filtration of water,

storage and distribution of nutrients, development of structure. It is not PH on your farm or the land that you farm and in terms of productivity for input you need to produce crops. We are focused on these functions more related to soil health. What should be the terms that we should use and do these functions seem right? How are we going to characterize this? You talked about on-farmed and off-farmed. We are looking for guidance from you if there is a better term to use, like soil processes or soil movement or soil functions as opposed to soil health.

David Swannack - I don't see any reason to add any words beyond soil. Soil encompasses the whole everything.

Joan Folwell – What is the difference resistance to erosion and development of structure? To me, if you have the proper structure that is what is going to provide resistance to erosion.

Ben Floyd - They could in some ways be the same thing.

Tracy Eriksen – But not necessarily. The development of structure, the soil structure there is a lot of elements separate from the resistance to the erosion part. Most of the resistance to erosion deals with organic matter and the amount that you have.

Soil structure mostly depends on looseness of sub soils as well as it can be part of the organic matter. But it gets very complicated and there is a lot of different definitions of soil structure and a lot of different definitions of organic matter. Dave's suggestion of the possibility of limiting it to soils might be a better cover.

Ben Floyd – Okay,

Larry Cochran – I think you have the right sentence and that is the ecosystem function associated specifically with soil and soil formation. That's it. Leave and forget the rest of it.

Ben Floyd – You don't want this even for examples?

Larry Cochran – No.

David Swannack – If we over-speak it, it only takes 5 years for someone to re-interpret that and come down the hammer on that.

Larry Cochran – This shows how complicated this is and all our soils are a little different and we all handle it differently.

Ben Floyd – Okay, so the ecosystem function associated with specifically with soil and soil formation.

Joan Folwell – The word “ecosystem,” but you have ecosystem function,

Ben Floyd – So, it is the function, it could just be the function. Soil has an ag viability component when it is unfarmed? When you have a critical area on a farm, there is a soil health of, are we doing anything to the soil around a wetland that is either improving its ability to function or reducing its ability to function? In terms of farming. So farming practices that are affecting soil functions at that wetland or right around it where soil is moving into that wetland. Or the same thing for riparian area.

Art Swannack – The farmed wetland or prior converted croplands. One thing about David’s comment, that I think to keep it simple, because you can go negative in terms of how some people deal with soil structure as a positive to be able to keep farming. If we get too far into this, you will end up with interpretations that say that you negatively impacted that spot. I’m trying to make it so I can keep it viable for farming. But it is supposed to be a wetland. That is where I think you are going too many different directions.

Ben Floyd – Farmed wetlands are not critical areas. Drained farmed, the classifications that NRCS has for drained wetlands where they might have been historical wetlands but now it is farm ground. If it was farmed in 2011, it is farm ground and not a wetland. It is only those wetlands that still exist on the landscape in 2011 and going forward.

Art Swannack – You could have that 2011 standard of its being farmed at that point, and if you don’t continue doing what you are doing to make it farmable it could convert. I’ve got one little piece right now that was in CRP and now has cattails growing in it that never had when we were constantly farming it. But it is a wet spot that comes out of the hillside now because of the CRP. Mainly the neighbor that has 1300 acres of CRP next to my 45 acres, but that is basically what happens. So practices that sustain farming can be in opposition with creating wetland habitat. If somebody went out there right now they would say it is a wetland, but we ran tractors across it for years.

Kim Weerts – I’m listening to what they are saying I think that in that case the ecosystem word should be removed. To me, it is just about the function, and if we put ecosystem in there we run the risk of narrowing it down and someone could misinterpret what that word means specifically.

John Small – I think the words “critical areas” could replace ecosystem but that is the function that we need to use based on that necessary function that we are required by statutes in the draft. We could drop it and apply it as well, I understand the sensitivity. It would be interpreted in the critical area function, regardless.

Ben Floyd – Remember we have four functions, and we have taken the five critical areas and boiled it down to four functions associated with soil. It still is embedded in critical areas. It is not always an ecosystem question but ecosystem is a broad term that is used in critical areas.

Joan Folwell – So, I guess we haven’t decided what the main headers are going to be whether it will be soil processes, soil, etc.

Ben Floyd – What I heard is soil and the critical area function associated specifically with soil and soil formation.

David Swannack – If we can keep the ecosystem from being reinterpreted you’re right. Ecosystem is a better broad term. We don’t want to define it. As soon as you start defining,

Kim Weerts – Isn’t it already implied if it is under critical areas heading? So why does it have to be repeated? If it needs to be repeated, then it should say, “critical areas,” not “ecosystem,” because now you are switching out words.

Art Swannack – I agree with you on that.

Ben Floyd – So the critical area function associated with soil and soil formation.

Art Swannack – There is a side comment that came in to me that said, “VSP is not intended to replace dredging and active creeks and drainages. If they are active they are not being farmed.” Ditching or dredging on farm ground not a stream does not require a permit. We had a previous discussion about when we get into ditching. Those are two different types of areas. VSP doesn’t cover active creeks or drainages because the water is moving in there and that’s when we start running into critical area rules.

Back to the comment, if they are active they are not being farmed. So if there is actively running water all the time, it is not being farmed. Some counties have requirements for permits for any type of dirt movement anywhere. We do not have permits for dirt moving any place. If you are in a wetland or in a creek, you need a permit. On the farm if you want to push dirt from point A to point B, we don’t require a permit.

Larry Cochran – One of the things seems to the main stream you might want to make sure you get a permit.

Art Swannack – I’ve been dealing with this Oakesdale thing lately, and it gets all sorts of interesting things as soon as you start having it main, and then it starts possibly getting into federal rules.

Ben Floyd – I think we have soil and the description by what we mean by that and John, do you feel like that is clear enough for you to provide guidance on updating the draft work plan?

John Small – Yes, in terms of the (inaudible) around soil and also the later discussion about regulatory underpinnings of VSP with the State Hydraulic Code and the Clean Water Act that get triggered as you move from ag land into streams and wetlands. By wetlands, I mean wetlands that are not farmed.

Vivian Erickson – Technical Service Providers. We received a comment regarding making sure our providers that we highlight and the technical writers aren’t necessarily just limited to FSA, NRCS and CD’s but extending that to the other agencies, entities to provide those technical assistance services.

Ben Floyd – Could you just tell the folks, WCCA, etc.

Vivian Erickson – We have included the Whitman County Cattlemen’s Association, Whitman County Farm Bureau, and the Whitman County Wheat Growers Association and also make sure to discuss the other local state and federal programs that are available to the work group. I’m not sure if we want to discuss individual private industry or maybe make a reference that there are other entities out there.

Ben Floyd – Does that list look better in terms of technical service providers?

Larry Cochran – That is where I get hung up because technical service providers are different than Cattlemen Association, Wheat Growers, and Farm Bureaus. To me, if we are talking about true technical service providers, then I want to put the word “certified” technical service providers in there. Wheat growers might have expertise but you need that piece of paper that says you are certified as a VSP.

Tracy Eriksen – What I see is there are only three of those are that really have a lot of information necessary to do this job. That is the FSA, NRCS and CD’s and a lot of that is restricted information. Not open to the public. So if you get away from those three, I think you got a problem.

Larry Cochran – I would say extensions would be considered a,

Tracy Eriksen - They would have expertise but they don't have,

Art Swannack – I was trying to figure out if they don't have the information. The technical provider to implement VSP on the ground would be anybody the farmer chose that had the qualifications to be funded to do the work. Primarily your CD's have that expertise, I am assuming the private consultants around that would have expertise. They don't have to have access to the data base at NRCS and those guys have if the farmers will provide the information.

Joan Folwell – Is there another term besides, "goal providers," like information? A broader designation that doesn't signify that the entity is certified or whatever. The reason for providing this information is to give producers something to go for information. Right? No matter how regulated or how substantial the BMP's are whatever it is to give them the broad range of entities that are out there where they can get the information they need.

Kim Weerts – I would agree with both Art and Joan. I think the key for the success of VSP is to get the information out there and the farm plans or whatever they are called. They don't have specifics, they don't have to have it done by a certified planner and people can pick and choose what they want to do. They know the agency that has the maps so they can always go and get that information. We want the information out there and we want as many producers as possible to be as comfortable as possible working with the entities that they are comfortable with to put stuff on the ground and get it done.

Ben Floyd – It would be technical and other information providers or something like that?

Art Swannack –In order for a person if they want to choose to receive funding for a practice, whoever is helping them receive the funding, is going to have to be qualified. They will have to meet whatever the state or federal government says you have to be qualified in order to provide us the information to say this person is qualified to receive the money and to do the paperwork.

The County will have the same thing when we are looking at it. It is not a free for all. The Wheat Growers could go out and conduct workshops and tell about VSP. Here is where the program is at, and here is how it goes out. Maybe there is some kind of a communications function that can fit in there. Unless there is an individual employed by the Wheat Growers with the qualifications to receive and disperse that money or that expertise, they are not going to be part of the actual implementation of the activity on the farm.

Kim Weerts – So, what if we put information providers, and then a separate one and all those can be listed in there and then we could put funding parameters. Most producers know that if they go into FSA to get funding they know they have to do all the stuff for FSA and NRCS. But to make it clearer those first three could be not only under information providers but also under funding providers and so could DOE.

David Swannack – We also as farmers realize that we are going to go in and talk to the FSA to get information. You go into the NRCS and get a little information and go the CD's and start putting information together.

Larry Cochran – We have two issues. We have information and planners. We have two categories. Your information could be any of these and the planners would be qualified, certified VSP's for specific programs.

Jon Jones – If a farmer goes into any of these organizations and they don't have funding, they are going to refer them to a funding source. Maybe just leave it out. There could be several funding sources under each one of those. Probably the CD's, maybe we should put CD's first. They are the ones who should know where the funding sources are.

David Lange – Would we include McGregor's and Wilber Ellis and Helena and CPS?

Ben Floyd – We will try to name them all if you want to name them all.

David Lange – The professionals in the field can come up with a technical advisor.

Jon Jones – But they wouldn't be able to come up with a funding source, maybe.

Ben Floyd – Don't forget, we are not just looking at funding sources. We are looking at self-funded.

David Swannack – We need to call it technical on our information resources.

David Lange – Ten years down the road and we are into nutrient reduction then it would be the chemical companies that would use the soil samples, use the technology to see where the fertilizer is located and how the different soil zones compare. The farmers would have to give permission to use those soil samples but the fertilizer companies are right there and they might as well earn some of this (inaudible) too.

Ben Floyd – We are talking about all of these folks.

Kim Weerts – I think the more entities we can, I'm not sure about private industry, if a producer has a particular company they want to work with they will go to them. It should be a list where people can go and all these entities listed would have information on VSP. That is the point of this. It is not funding or non-funding. Those are your choices where you go and who you work with, but we have to get the information out there to encourage producers to participate. I think that after this work plan is all done is that there would be workshops and presentations where all the entities would be represented there for people to know.

Art Swannack – Some of that we won't flush out because it won't occur in terms of a VSP implementation. You've got implementation funding and you have a structure started other than we have a hands-on what our structure is. If you are a private industry you can sit there and those certified crop advisors as in some of those guys are those ones that are able to check off on a nutrient plan and agree with it.

Jon Jones – That's what I was thinking of. Some of them are left out.

Kim Weerts – To list all those entities those people who don't want funding could, let's say cattlemen. You could go to the cattlemen and they will have the information on VSP and be able to give it to them. We are all bright enough to figure out if we want to talk to any of these entities to check on the funding. But again, it is the decimation of information.

Ben Floyd – When I've heard about information, you can get information about a lot of different things, including what I've just listed and I'm trying to understand how to wrap this discussion up into a direction that we can use to update the work plan.

Joan Folwell – I was thinking of other things technical providers, information for VSP in WC and then you can list the entities that you wanted to highlight who can provide funding for what you want to do, list the agencies that can, include F&W and just say funding opportunities and list the ones that have funding opportunities and all the other ones. If a person comes in who wants cost share, any one of those other organizations that doesn't offer it will direct them. I think there will be a natural flow where a person is really serious in getting to what they want to do.

Ben Floyd – Flow charts. Okay, I've got notes. We will update this and bring it back to you. Goals and Measureable Benchmarks. We have critical areas. They provide functions and values and we have to protect. We are saying that conversation practices and tracking of conservation practices, where they are implemented, how many acres are affected, how many feet of fence, those practices help protect those functions and values. The practices are really what we are focused in terms of goals and measurable benchmarks.

It is very difficult to say that you increased soil structure with this practice. How much? We know we did this practice for this many acres in this area and it is right next to a stream or around a wetland. So, we are using practices to get what the correct layer of protections or enhancements that come from those practices. Maybe that wasn't very clear.

We don't have the resources except for maybe what is going on on the North Fork of the Palouse already to track every function that might be affected by ag practices that would either enhance or protect critical areas. We just don't have the money to do that so we are going to use practices as a surrogate for those improvements or protections and track practices. This is the heart of what the State Technical Review Panel is going to be looking for when we present the work plan to them if we submit it by early June.

We have draft goals in there and we are in the process of refining the goals, related to water quality functions, hydrology, soil, and habitat and also related to ag viability. Those goals get translated into specific objectives about how we want to protect critical area functions through conservation practices.

Then the measurable benchmark is how we measure how well we are doing in meeting the goals, objectives and we are doing it based on practices, conservation practices, stewardship strategies and practices. We have our protection goal, enhancement goal, protection is what we have to do to meet to be able to keep this program viable. Enhancement is tied to money and if you get money for your enhancement goal, you meet it, you don't get the money, you get something less than that enhancement goal and you adjust your enhancement goal, based upon funding.

Then we also know that there are practices that are going to discontinue over time so we have to account for those. If someone has a wildlife planting riparian protection and then they say they need to take that out and start grazing that area again, and cultivating, then that is a net hit to our overall protection goal.

Art Swannack – I get thinking about CRP because that has been a discussion in here. Just because CRP was taken out of CRP and put back into production, to me doesn't necessarily mean it is a detriment. If we can figure how to measure that. It is an increase in ag viability in the community because you have more crop being produced and more jobs. So how we reasonably account for the changes in CRP without just saying that CRP comes out it is a net negative?

David Lange – What about an enhancement for society? CRP comes out and the trickle down increase in commerce throughout the community?

Kim Weerts – Wouldn't that be ag viability?

Art Swannack – We have always talked about it as a negative when we started talking about this. It doesn't have to be. It could be taken out. It won't erode the first two years and if properly implemented you could have practices that say this is pretty much the same except we increased ag viability. That might be a little conversation we need to put in the plan.

Kim Weerts – If you bring Steve Van Fleet in here he will tell you that CRP is a detriment, not a positive because you end up growing a monoculture.

Art Swannack – I can tell you it is not a monoculture when it is out. I've got some acres that were grazed. That is what I'm saying, you can say it is no longer CRP but it is being used for purposes being managed properly. It doesn't have to be a 100% negative hit.

John Small – Just a suggestion the benefit of putting land into CRP may not be the same as the detriment of taking it out of CRP. This is true of a lot of the conservation practices. Once it is implemented whether or not funding continues or the program being done and it doesn't necessarily mean that the actions of the landscape are back to where they were at the beginning.

In general a lot of times things are better than they were. If you have just ended a program or ended a lease or a different person using the land and using different techniques. The benefit to the landscape hasn't completely diminished. I think it is a point well made that we can't just say if it is plus one if an area is in CRP and a minus one if it comes back out.

Joan Folwell – I agree there should be a discussion about just exactly what you described. In reality, you are looking towards your goals and benchmarks and having to have values representing those things. You have to put the CRP take-out into the equation.

Art Swannack – It needs to be registered as an event. What the value of the event to your total plan is the question. Especially if it is CRP that has been there a long time as a monoculture, effectively is no habitat for birds or anything because it is all open.

Ben Floyd – I think there are ways we can account for that. It can be resolved in a range of potential effects on the baseline from no change. Maybe it was highly cultivated CRP and then it goes to conservation tillage and direct seeding. From the erosion standpoint you probably can't tell the difference. According to some of the data from the Spokane County Conservation District and what they call "Farmed Smart," there is some data that is there.

So it may be a very small negative or holding line and then it could be way back to full cultivation and in a few years you are back to what it was before CRP. So we have that range of potential impact. The VSP coordinator gets to figure out what really happens to the baseline.

Jon Jones – I really wonder if we should even address this. Shouldn't that be up to the coordinators?

Art Swannack – My only thought was not to get into the specifics of how you are going to do it but to put that policy statement that says that just because CRP comes out doesn't mean, if the plus one going in it doesn't mean an automatically a negative one.

Jon Jones – The coordinator is going to need some guide lines and we can give that to them.

Ben Floyd – This is not the only issue that is going to have to be worked through. When we come to the work plan we won't think of everything nor will we have the time to figure out everyone. It is often so site specific that you want to leave some leeway but you are the policy group that you come back and wrestle with these issues as you implement.

Jon Jones – Talk about recidivism.

Ben Floyd – We don't talk about recidivism. It is a discontinuation of practices. That is only for those repeat offenders.

Tracy Eriksen – Between the two lines between the protection and enhancement, how does that track? Is it only through cost sharing or is that how that is tracked?

Ben Floyd – What I am saying is that there is some specific language in the RCW that says that when you set your enhancement goal, if you are not meeting it you have to look at the funding. Do you have the funding to meet it? If you do then you adjust your program and adjust your enhancement goal. What we are taking that to mean is that we want to be able to tie the enhancement goal to money. You may blow the enhancement goal away.

So let's say we tie it to the RCPP money and other projected money in place that we know it is going to be funding practices at a certain level for the next 10 years. The enhancement goal is focused around just those practices, not including anything that gets self-funded. Not including anything that comes through a different program that we didn't account for. Then we hope that really the enhancement benchmark might be just right here, just barely above whatever is funded and we hope that we really achieve this goal way up here.

Tracy Eriksen – Is there any way to track the stuff that is not funded that is an enhancement?

Ben Floyd – So the self-funded we talked about on the assessment check list, people can fill that out. That's where the Cattlemen's Association, Wheat Growers Association, CD's, we want it and the VSP coordinator is trying to collect all that information of everything that is going on. It will require people to share the information.

Art Swannack – The reason to tie it to the money is to control the responsibility and expectation placed upon the County and the VSP group for what it has done. It is not saying that you can't do stuff external to the money and get it accounted for. If the State government says that you have to do this, they have to provide you the dollars to get to there. If they don't provide the dollars, then you are not in a position of being penalized with the County and not making that goal.

Kim Weerts – To me it is the easiest way to get to the benchmark. You could do so much more but this is the easier way than trying to record everything done.

Ben Floyd – With that in mind, when we shared specific goals with you we are going to tie it to the RCPP practices and any other conservation district or NRCS, or FSA funding that we know about going forward. So, don't get mad at us or think that we are trying to push people into those programs. We are not trying to do that. We are so that we are trying to say that this is what the goal is based upon and that existing money that we know about that is going to be implemented for enhancement.

David Swannack – People like me who don't want funding because I don't want the government coming in and telling me what to do, we really can't be counted on this.

Ben Floyd – I would say this is all we are doing so the unofficial enhancement goal is here. This is everything, everybody, self-funded, government funded, whatever. But for measuring performance and under promising and hopefully over delivering, all we are going to do is tie it to something that is here that we already have money that we know that we do practices for.

This is the goal we want to achieve. The one that we are going to state in the plan as our official goal that we get measured by the State, is this less more predictable one. That is what I am suggesting. It is not trying to make a value judgment on for a disincentive for someone to participate or not participate. It is just saying we are going to base it on something we know we can measure.

David Swannack – Kim deals with the livestock producers, (inaudible) FSA, they are very strong this direction. Leave me alone I'm doing it. There is not a record of that financially for the new goal. I'm not alone out there in wheat country I don't want somebody stepping on me. I'll get the information and I go. There is no financial record.

Kim Weerts – I think the reason that they are tying to the money is that, to me it is the easiest the way to appease the powers that be that we are performing.

David Swannack – I understand that but what I am afraid of is that we are going to end up with instead of the number of being 20% increase, we will have the 2% increase.

Art Swannack – So your concern is not getting all the information to the people that are making the reports saying that,

David Swannack – We haven't met the new benchmark because money is the side that doesn't tell us. It is a lie. Yet, we haven't met the benchmark so we have failed.

Larry Cochran – A lot of us have surpassed the benchmark.

John Small – The enhancement is voluntary.

Ben Floyd – We will meet the protection benchmark. There is a focus on making sure we meet the protection benchmark. We are just saying that in terms of the enhancement benchmark, you could try to predict how many other self-funded things you're going to capture. But if this is the level of funding and I'm showing a line above the protection benchmark, this is the level of funding and set of practices associated with that, that we have a high certainty that you will be implementing.

But we really think we are going to get this. Trying to figure out what is in between here and here. Do you accept the line here, or here? If you go super high, you have to go back through an adaptive management process and look at the funding and adjust it anyway based upon funding down the road. We are saying, let's just set it initially based upon funding and we hope we blow it out of the water. That you just go way past that with the other improvements but that goal is based upon that money.

Kim Weerts – I'm thinking we will blow it out of the water with the self-funding. Because that is the crux of this that those people who self-fund practices need to be recognized and counted. Now they may not

want to be by May. But to me, that is the whole point of this because they never get the credit and they need to get the credit because they do a lot out there without government funding.

Ben Floyd – We can be explicit here that says we think this enhancement goal is an under achievement. We think we are going to do much better than that but this is what we could tie to funding and all these self-funded improvements. So you could create a story around it. It's not like we are saying we are tying that to being a real aggressive goal. We can say we are understating that we recognize that.

Jeff Pittmann – I agree with whatever everyone is saying. I don't have a problem one way or another.

Kim Weerts – I am hoping that when you come through with concrete examples of the benchmarks the actual numbers and the kind of definitions, if it is going to be miles of riparian areas established or no till.

Ben Floyd – It is going to create those values. Do you remember the table that showed how many practices had been implemented since 2011? It was in values of conservation tillage, direct seeding so many acres. Grazing management, so many acres and fencing? It is going to be those values it will be focused on. We don't have the data to do habitat acreage increases or decreases. The State is working on some remote sensing things we might be able to use down the road.

But we don't have that right now and we don't have any idea if it is going to be coming in the future for sure. So we have to use practices. If practices discontinue then we use it as a surrogate to get to, there will be some kind of an affect. It could be a little bit, or a lot. We don't know for sure. We have to evaluate that. We have to account for that in our goal. The amount that we track as far as the practices have to overcome that discontinuation first and then everything on top of that is enhancement.

Jon Jones - We shouldn't limit ourselves into a particular methodology for measuring success. We should leave that open, because there could be satellite imagery or something like that that is going to better serve our purposes. Just don't limit ourselves.

Ben Floyd – So we have our goals and benchmarks based on practices but then we have indicators. All of that gets factored in and is a verification.

Jon Jones – A lot of that has to go back to whoever is collecting the data.

Art Swannack – We need to state in here just like we have done with CRP; there needs to be outreach to account for the self-funded improvements.

Brian Bell – Are you expecting producers to keep records of what they have been doing since 2011? David, how much money have you spent in improving your pasture? Or Kim?

Jon Jones – You're on the wrong side because you are counting money.

Art Swannack – I'm saying that Dave Swannack has gone to no-till on two-thirds of his farm acreage and he has consistently applied that practices. You can take an FSA aerial photo and look at it and see his tractor stuck on the hillside with a no-till drill behind it. You can do some of that but we are not going to get down into the nitty-gritty details because we already said we don't have the money to do that.

Larry Cochran – It is going to save landowners in this area (inaudible).

Ben Floyd – All we have to do is demonstrate the protection benchmark is being made which is accounting for whatever we think is a discontinuation of practices. Then we account for that with whatever we have real data on and then on top of that we have more qualitative information that is above that we want to take credit for.

Joan Folwell – Jason are you still on the line? So, F&W has some program like safe acres. Don't you have a program for developing a game habitat in ALEA (Aquatic Land Enhancement Account), too?

Jason Kunz – We do ALEA but we also are involved with the RCPP.

Joan Folwell – So, all those increases as providing habitat can be documented and added to the totals?

Jason Kunz – Yes. I can bring you to the ALEA Grant one and talk to, my private land file will probably, someone else that is in the wildlife program I can talk to them for what they have for records that can be reviewed.

Ben Floyd – If we had information on practices that have been implemented since 2011 in ALEA or any other F&W program, we want to include that because that is something we should take credit for. Things that have already been done.

Kim Weerts – I think when we say we are tying it to the money, it is not going to be in there that it is tied to the money. It is just tied to practices that we know of as far as providing the benchmark.

Ben Floyd – It has to have some kind of funding for enhancement.

Kim Weerts – For enhancement, also but I don't see, I would assume we wouldn't have to say it is tied to the money in the plan. You said it is tied to practices. The practices that are easily known are those practices that have been tied to funding because you can go to those individual entities and find out which practices have been done.

To me, that gives you part of it and then the entities are responsible and producers and supporters are responsible for getting those. The people who have done it themselves and helping them and us, state the practices that we've done without money. I don't like tying it to the money. Tying it to the practices that can be easily recognized through the agencies is the easiest way to get to a certain benchmark.

Jason Kunz – There are a lot of projects that are done with good intentions and they turn out to return back out to weeds or riparian enhancement and everything dies. So, is that something? I just want to throw that out there.

Ben Floyd – So it becomes a documentation thing. If you implement a project and it doesn't go then it is resulted as a no change.

John Small – Ultimately, it will be important to understand whether that rate of (inaudible) for each type of practice that there are risks. When we took the approach of developing the enhancement goal based on funding levels because we felt that the chance of success was a bit higher and certainly as others have noted it is clear that we will be able to document those.

We get receipts for the money and we can tie it back to work that has been done. So we don't get into a discussion of whether or not there is really 16,000 acres of irrigation management that the federal government paid for and they know where they are. If we have to go that route we can easily do that.

At the risk of getting us off topic, I want to point out a very odd aspect of VSP and the ag viability. Variable land in production gets taken out of production and put into a private function of habitat. It actually comes out of VSP. It comes out of the baseline, as well. So, I don't know, my experience with ALEA grants would be on private programs actually coming out of ag production. I'm not saying that is a requirement. I'm just saying some of those grants may be associated with conversion of ag land to non-ag uses and at that point seem to be required of VSP. It doesn't give producers as much credit as they deserve.

Ben Floyd – I think we should still take credit for it. These guys all agree with me.

Art Swannack – Under county code it goes from current use to conservation use. We just had the piece of the Kammerzell mitigations, but it still is considered ag lands of the County under zoning. It is a specific category under open space use. There are three categories. It is like conservation farm lands. That might not be quite the right title. There is a shift in that and then the valuation changes and usually ends up being taxed higher because it gets taxed by the ground next to it instead of its actual use. But it is still considered ag land in WC. It is not considered something different. That is reaching as far as a commissioner should go into the assessor's job.

Ben Floyd – I think we should take credit for it. It was ag land and now it is a net increase.

John Small – (Inaudible) maybe being used for acquisition and then it becomes public lands or farmed trust or something.

Ben Floyd – If it becomes public land that is different but if it is like a conservation easement or something where the ownership is private, then we should take credit for it. Okay, so we are going to go Tracking approach.

How do we track practices and relate that to goals and benchmarks? This is an overview for what we are going to share with you in more detail with specific goals in our April meeting. Measurable benchmarks. We apply methods that say conservation practices result in certain benefits to critical areas functions and values.

We account for practices that are implemented, ongoing practices, continuing practices, and practices discontinued. Each of those have a plus one, minus one, plus two, minus two, zero, no effect in our tracking system. We also track implementation and maintenance practices. So, did it perform like we thought it would? We do that only where we have the performance system in place to track it.

For example, there is a conservation practice physical effect tool that the NRCS put together. It takes every practice that has ever been conceived within the federal program. It also has all of these different parameters about effects to different functions. Including as specific as Colorado River salinity in the water. So think about a bunch of roads in a spreadsheet that lists all these practices and then across the top, hundreds of columns that list different specific functions for water, soil, habitat, etc.

We have taken this big tool and pared it down. We used the practices that typically are implemented in WC based on our tool box. Then we took all these functions and got rid of the ones that don't make any

sense for this area, and narrowed that down until we have practices and effects for functions on a continuum in this spread sheet model that we developed. Scores can be beneficial, negative or no effect as this shows in the middle.

For example, conservation cover is a practice. It addresses food, shelter, space, and habitat fragmentation in some positive ways. This is taking the practice, its CPPE scores for different functions and it is showing you that over all that if you take conservation cover it is down in this range. It has quite a bit of beneficial effect.

David Lange – What is your definition of conservation cover? Is stubble standing conservation cover or is it CRP?

Ben Floyd – It is the NRCS conservation.

John Small – It is a range of feed mixes that (inaudible)

Ben Floyd – So this is the NRCS method. If you did a conservation cover that didn't meet the NRCS benefit definition, we might discount it. But it would still be, if it was cultivated and now it is conservation cover, there is an increase so there would be a judgment based upon whatever it is. Maybe it's not a one or a five but this tool can allow you to do that. This is for your VSP coordinator. He gets to track all of this and convert practices to these values. We have developed a tool that they can use as a starting point.

Art Swannack – I don't see ag viability.

Ben Floyd – Ag viability is actually a column that we didn't show but it is included. It does have an ag viability component. Every one of these practices has some ag viability component and some scoring associated with it.

Art Swannack – Does it go into economics?

Ben Floyd – So, here are a bunch of measures. Here are four different function areas, some nutrient management has a little effect on habitat. Not really an effect on hydrology. A larger benefit on water quality and small benefit for soil. Then you can see pest management, residue and tillage management all these other functions. This is to show you these high medium slide benefits, there are numbers to back this up.

This is how we are converting every practice into a critical area affect. We want you to be familiar with this method because this is what we are proposing to the tech panel and this is the basis for our goals and benchmarks. Habitat management has the high habitat affect and kind of neutral on the rest potentially. Cover crop, habitat hydrology has some benefit to all of those. Prescribed grazing has benefits. Residue and tillage management. Any questions on this?

Here is an example, let's say this function was habitat and you counted all the practices that were implemented in the County that were related to habitat over a time period. And you accounted for some discontinuation of practices, you would still have this net increase based upon all these practices that have been implemented for this habitat function. You would do the same thing for all the other functions.

Each bar represents what was implemented in 11, or 12 or 17 or 21 and then there is the cumulative increase over time assuming we have more practices that are implemented through time, then there is an increased benefit.

We've already talked about practices, there are practices done formally, practices that are self-funded. We want to try and capture all of that and assign a value to what those are for the different functions. If you have certain practices, they affect these functions. So like F&W habitat, that is the hydrology or soil and that also leads to the protection of aquifer recharge areas. You have different practices that affect geologic hazards and the functions associated with that.

There are some practices that are really directly tied to critical area and there are some practices that are more indirectly going to benefit a critical area. Think about farming on an upland with just cultivated fields for miles and miles and some drainage areas. That upland practice may have a very limited and indirect on a stream or wetland way down the gradient. But there is still some benefit over time. There is also recharge and other things that occur.

So you have direct effects, indirect effects. Easy examples to think about for direct affects are riparian planting by definition happens in a critical area. It is a riparian planting. Wetland restoration happens on our wetland. So it is pretty easy for some practices to say we know these are direct effects. Then others that are indirect effects. We want to account for both because you want to get credit for both. Both have benefits.

So, here is an example of direct and indirect. You have a critical area here and you've got an area around it. Anything that happens in that cross hatched area that is a conservation practice that has a benefit towards that critical area, we call that a direct effect. Then everything around it that also happens is an indirect effect. We want to account for both in our program.

This is a bunch of maps that show where you have the critical aquifer recharge areas. Practices that happen within that area we want to get direct credit for, same with wetlands and the practices associated with wetlands. F&W habitat conservation area and the practice associated with protecting those. We want to account for out discontinuation.

We went through this last time and we will also look at indicators data to demonstrate, in addition to the practices where we have other data sources we can look to, like North Fork Palouse work that is ongoing as well as other data sources that will allow us to further substantiate our claims about benefits from practices, based upon using the conservation practices, physical effects tool.

I'm going over this quick. I can see you guys are glazing over and so am I just talking about it. I wanted you to understand it because this is the overall framework. Next month we will come and share goals and you are going to see goals in term of acres and fencing, and whatever units of measure associated with practices for both protection and enhancement goals. We want you to know when we show you a 2.3 as a CPB score you will wonder where it came from. It came from that table with the practices and the functions and we used the map.

We are happy to share all of our spreadsheets with you if you want them. Sometime those spreadsheets will need to be trued up and make sure they are applicable. We hope the conservation districts or other tech service providers that are interested in working with us, to make sure they are accurate will do that. We think they are a pretty close approximation but there is always tweaking that can be done. Maybe

something that we are saying is a 3.4 and it should be a 2.1 or something like that. But it is still positive versus negative.

Joan Folwell – You're going to bring benchmarks next time. These are benchmarks for how long a period?

Ben Floyd – For ten years.

Joan Folwell – So, you say 50 miles of riparian restoration that is over the total ten-year period.

Ben Floyd – Yes, that is the enhancement. We are going to use this table with the discontinuation rates to come up with the protection number based upon what we have seen from the data that we have and how much discontinuation happens.

Joan Folwell – And how much critical areas of that you've given (inaudible)

Ben Floyd – Practices that discontinue, that we are projected to discontinue, based upon an assumed rate, which we will pull out of the sky. We will use this methodology where you have either a high or a low, a zero or maybe 10% discontinuation rate. We had 20% in your plan and you told us that was too high so we are going to adjust it down. It might be 10% just because we want to be conservative on discontinuation. Make sure since we can't track it, we may want to over predict it as long as we can demonstrate that we can still overcome that affect.

Joan Folwell – Say, for example, in the riparian restoration category you're going to look at the total acreage or whatever unit you are using and saying for a 10-year benchmark we want to increase habitat on 50 miles of it.

Ben Floyd – It will be more like habitat function. It won't be tied to a specific practice. It will be an accumulation of practices that we roll up to that function and then tied to the specific critical areas. It is probably not clear because it is just the general framework. When we go through the numbers it will, we may not have the numbers right so you will challenge us on that and we will go back and forth on that.

But this is really the heart of the plan. If you look at what do we really have to nail down by the time we submit the end of May, it is what are our numbers for protection, enhancement, what is the basis for it and how do we arrive at them. Do you understand the logic, are you comfortable with it, can we explain it to the tech panel?

Jon Jones – The other thing you haven't talked about is a realistic maximum. It might be a reference point. It is a discussion point for the next meeting.

Ben Floyd – Okay, realistic maximum. Could you define that?

Jon Jones – Saturation point. What you realistically expect for improvement over the long term while maintaining a viable ag economy.

Ben Floyd – What is a ceiling?

Joan Folwell – You are going to reach a plateau.

Ben Floyd – Right, it is not going to just go on and on. Actually, all we need to do is show we are above 2011.

Art Swannack – I just think that would be a good comment to have in there. We don't expect this to be a continual increase over the long term. We expect an increase to a certain point that works in our county that is above the baseline.

Ben Floyd – We are going to reach a point of diminishing return. So, we know we are using a two-volume approach. Are there pieces of this work plan that you have in front of you that you think are maybe still too detailed for the producer and need to go into the tech appendix? Like maybe half of what you have in Volume 1?

We are getting that feedback from others too. This is great in helping us to see the big picture but the producer only cares about a third of what you have in here. So are you, I'm getting a lot of agreement on that. Are you okay with this as we reformat this so that you will have a shorter version of the work Volume 1 with the self-assessment check list and then everything else that doesn't make the cut in Volume 1 gets put in Volume 2, plus the other stuff.

Tracy Eriksen – What I've seen that works is you better have the first page with all the important stuff on the first page and the rest of it you can put in your appendix.

Ben Floyd – What about a general member in the County or a third party group that is wanting to see what is happening on protecting critical areas by agriculture in WC? Get them to the detail and we want this to be more than one page, right? But maybe 10-20 pages? Two? We may have a hard time.

Tracy Eriksen – If you want the producers to get to it you have to get the information up front real quick. Have the appendix have all of this stuff and so those do want to can get to it.

David Swannack – The producer wants to know what is up front and how quickly can we get to it and get going? The person that is getting into it from curiosity, they will dig into it a little ways here and there.

Larry Cochran – I would think a lot of producers if they really want to work on this, they will read that first page and then go to somebody and ask what they need to do.

Ben Floyd – I was thinking a trimmed down, maybe 20-page but what I am hearing is maybe a 3-pager, a 20-page document but the first three pages with all the detail and then some appendices in that 20-pager or some additional reference materials behind that but still keep it short and everything else in Volume 2.

Art Swannack – An executive summary at the start followed by your Reader's Digest version followed by the (inaudible)

Ben Floyd – Broken into separate documents so if someone doesn't want to take something that is that big, they can just grab a few pages or just the check list.

Nancy Belsby – I'm impressed with all the comments that we got. I thought that was really excellent. Do you get this from other groups, too?

Ben Floyd – Yes, but not quite as good as WC. So what are you going to see in Volume 2 plus whatever doesn't get in Volume 1? We have our summary of existing conditions, the goals, benchmarks and measurements that whole discussion about CPDE, everything that you just saw in the power point. You've got 15 pages of how that all works. Analysis unit profiles which is just the watersheds and how we are looking at the watersheds. Outreach and implementation plan and Jason, that's where the discussion about dredging can go in existing plans and regulations.

Art Swannack – That is a very good point, because existing plans and regulations, your VSP ground that has a creek running through it, understand there is a different set here.

Ben Floyd – Everything is not done, there are still regulations that apply.

Joan Folwell – You talk about a checklist. Have you written that up?

Ben Floyd – We have a draft.

Kim Weerts – Have you looked at the DOE self-assessment check list and have you looked at tips (inaudible.)

Ben Floyd – Yes, we looked at both of them. Vivian did you have any questions about Volume 1?

Vivian Erickson – We will have the checklist ready for you next time. I think in the summary we will do a one page Volume 1 in 6.5 font. I think that makes sense we were trying to achieve that FAQ section right into the beginning. The first question that the producers would have, but I really like the feedback on doing an executive summary. I think that is a great idea. I think that having that content following but making that shorter to the 20 pages. We bolded a couple of key sections that we might highlight in that shortened version of Volume 1 with the executive summary. That way we will still have an opportunity to tell the entire VSP story in a little bit more depth.

Ben Floyd – I knew there was something about the bold but couldn't remember what I was supposed to say about it. So where do we go from here? We've gotten some photos of practices, we would like more. We've got some pretty pictures of certain parts of the County but we don't have everything represented. We don't have any about the scab lands, Rock Lake, that whole area so if you have pictures. Otherwise, I'm willing to ride my motorcycle up there sometime and get some pictures.

The next meeting we will go over the work plan. Stewardship Check list and goals and benchmark values. We already covered the work to be completed before and after June 30th. We will try and get ready to submit by the end of May. When are we going to be ready for outreach? If we go by the end of May we won't have much time for outreach but some between now and then.

What do you want to do related to outreach? How do we start sharing the word with VSP? You don't have to do anything. Do you want to have people aware of this and ready to go? Do you want to wait and see what the state tech panel says coming back to us, how the money comes in and go from there? You've got different ways to approach it. What do you say?

Jeff Pittmann – We need to wait until it gets approved and get the money before we do anything.

Tracy Eriksen – I agree. If you bring any more people in we will get sidetracked.

Ben Floyd – Okay, do you think producers will like what we have come up with?

Art Swannack – I think at the end of May the producers won't care because they will all be trying to catch up because of the spring rain.

Ben Floyd – So even if we tried to do outreach no one would be available to be involved. How if we plan outreach and we will put this in your implementation plan for fall of this next year.

Art Swannack – Every one of these meeting is advertised on the agenda and how many people are showing up? Brian is here, but in terms of other public showing an interest. I guess I wouldn't get carried away with the outreach at this point until you see implementation plans show up and then that will be part of implementation.

Joan Folwell – The things that we have been doing we talk about at the Cattlemen's Association, I think it is going to be by word of mouth.

Ben Floyd – Right. We have made presentations at several other producer meetings around Eastern Washington, Adams County, Lincoln County, Grant County and Franklin County I just did the Wheat Growers Association at the grange in Kahlotus yesterday. There were about 45 people there and we had 20 sign up on the interested party list.

That is another thing if you get us email lists. When we submit a draft or when it comes back and ready to approve we can blast this out to different groups. So, I'm getting consensus we can hold on outreach. The next meeting is April 6th. We started at 2 today. What time do you want to start on April 6th and May 4th? Shall we start at 2:00 or 1:00?

Art Swannack – Two o'clock is what we currently booked in here with Maribeth. I don't know what she has on the schedule.

Ben Floyd – Okay, 2:00 still works and maybe we will make it tentative. We also may have to schedule another meeting in May or maybe the middle of May for another one. I don't have a plan for that. We will come back to you with a plan.

Tracy Eriksen – If there was a chance to have another meeting soon, I wouldn't wait until May. Once we hit the later part of April, it will be difficult to get us here.

Ben Floyd – How about this. We have technology and when it works and I know you don't want to necessarily do this, it wasn't your first preference but if we needed to do another meeting we could also do something like at 8:00 at night and cover business and do it by phone with a presentation. Some of you may go to a few locations or you can still have it here if you want.

Art Swannack – These are public meetings so you still have to have minutes.

Ben Floyd – We will know in April. So, thank you, we got done a little early.

Joan Folwell – You said you attended two tech panels. Was there any major response?

Ben Floyd – They told us there needs to be a clear logic trail between practices to functions to critical areas. That is what we have tried to do. These functions they relate to these critical areas, this figure here, practices the functions to the critical areas. This is a schematic but we have narrative in the appropriate part that goes along with this that describes it.

Then we have also added that direct and indirect based upon that feedback as well. So if something happens right next to, or within a critical area versus things around it and those affects. They didn't tell us direct and indirect but based upon their feedback we said it would be helpful if they could describe where these things are happening and if there is a direct nexus with the critical area or if it is removed or expecting some long term benefit down the road.

Joan Folwell – Could you give an example as an indirect?

Ben Floyd – Conservation tillage is a good example, so reduces erosion. When you have soil that moves off and it used to be moving off at this rate, and now it is at a lower rate so that soil making its way downstream it is less, it takes longer to get there and there are more events that have to happen. That is more of an indirect effect on habitat. There might be a direct effect on aquifer recharge if it is happening within an aquifer recharge area because now you've got more water moving into the soil and less is running off.

Larry Cochran – If some of these groups are wanting to do away with Roundup and they succeed, conservation tillage is going to go out the window. Unless there is a replacement for Roundup which there is not at this time.

Ben Floyd – There is some nifty equipment that is pretty strategic about how roundup gets applied. I know it's not the cheapest stuff, right?

Joan Folwell – You better get your certification right away.

Ben Floyd – That is an adaptive management consideration. We are assuming that Roundup is going to be used, recognizing that if something changes that is where we have to set aside that part of the plan.

Adjourned – 4:37 p.m. Okay, thanks. You are a fun group to work with. See you on **April 6th at 2:00 p.m.**