

**WHITMAN COUNTY
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
Meeting
May 4, 2017**

MEMBERS:

Alan Thomson

Nancy Belsby

Joan Folwell

Jeff Pittmann

Larry Cochran (Absent)

Tracy Eriksen (Absent)

Jon Jones

Kim Weerts

David Swannack

Art Swannack

John Pearson (Absent)

David Lange (Absent)

Phone: Vivian Erickson, Anchor QEA; John Stuhlmiller, VSP Member.

Audience: John Small, Anchor QEA; Brian Bell, Whitman CD; Jason Kunz, WDFW, Elinor Huber, Clerk.

4:20 p.m. – John Small opened the meeting. Today we will do a quick recap from the last meeting. We will go through the outreach material, the basic material of VSP and then the checklist as well. We will probably spend most of the time going over the work plan and the appendices and get through any remaining issues in terms of the text.

Then there are a few items for discussion. One of the provisions of the VSP is to provide producer participation goals and we will talk about an approach to what means and how to implement that. Then we will talk about a program of WDFW high resolution change detection that they are using on the west side and how it may be applicable and also we will talk about the stream liner from DNR and how we might improve on that. Vivian Erickson is on the phone and she will be doing a re-cap from the last meeting.

Vivian Erickson – Just a reminder from our April meeting when we introduced the overview and checklist and FAQ document that would be an outreach item to producers, we have updated that. That review is about improving the definition of ag viability and adding text about farmed wetlands and key issues being exempt under the Critical Areas Ordinance. We received some information from the Farm Bureau with some examples of confidentiality statements that we added and then to the checklist version we have simplified what kind of practices are currently implemented. It would be a quick assessment and it would be easier for folks to provide information and then the number of participation goals we will talk about later.

In the overview documents you can see the overview pages are largely the same. We added some language in response to some of the comments we received from the group and then on page 5 we updated the definition of what does it mean to maintain ag viability to reflect what ag viability means in the County. We added definitions of what that means at the regional level being that ag viability is the regional support system sustaining production and providing the

services non-based condition and infrastructure for plans to succeed. This is also included in our ag viability section in our work plan. At the farm level the ag viability rests on the productivity of the land and the ability for operators to (inaudible) input costs with market conditions.

For the stewardship checklist portion, the pdf version I sent out last week is slightly different than the version for today. We removed some of the appendices from the first page of the checklist.

John Small – Page 7 is repeated in the checklist is the stand alone. The implementation people can just go around with the checklist without a lot of extra material, that version would be handy for complete coverage of the document. This is intended to be for a producer who has an interest in VSP and wants to learn more and spend more time. The checklist by itself would be if you were working with the CD staff or somebody else and you were asked to do a self-assessment.

Nancy Belsby - This is a shorter version of the one you gave us before.

John Small – That is the small version for the tech panel. The audience for that is whoever is implementing the program and then the tech panel for this thick version.

Nancy Belsby – This checklist is shorter.

John Small – We got some feedback from the other counties that literally a check box type format makes more sense. The contents are very similar so we condensed it to make it easy for someone to fill it out.

Kim Weerts – The one you sent in the email, the overview and the checklist draft had two sections.

John Small – Some of this was on both documents.

Vivian Erickson – The one that was sent in the email was the whole overview, the summary, the FAQ's and the checklist. As we were thinking about layout we noticed there were some redundancies because we had developed the checklist being a separate thing and then the overview being separate but there is an opportunity to combine them. So, what you have in the print out version is the combined version.

You can ignore the version that I sent in the email. It is largely similar but we are going to retain the version of the checklist I included in the email, because it can be a 3-4 page hand-out if someone the VSP coordinator or a tech provider wants to just have a checklist to go over with producers without all of the overview and introductory language. They are both handy tools, largely similar. The only difference in that checklist is that it has more introductory language on that first page. If it helps, I can send this layout version out after the meeting as well as what we could hand out as a stand-alone checklist after the meeting.

Kim Weerts – That would be good and then it would be the updated one and makes it clear that we are not going to use the other one.

John Small – It would be fairly living documents that might change as implementation moves on. We don't expect to have all the answers figured out for the next ten years. Those new technologies will get added into that. We wanted to have a set of materials that were a good communication tool for someone without a lot of context but interest in VSP versus somebody who just got spoken to in a producer meeting and now they want to look at it more thoroughly.

Art Swannack – On your back page here where you have the average units per year, acres, etc. I'd like to hear from the others whether that should be a percentage of farm or something. I wonder how people will respond to that. You have mulch till, reduced till, no till/direct seed, other. Do you want to say acres, or say that 20% of my farm is no till or other? I wonder whether people will feel excluded by that. If you ask me, people's privacy issues are not wanting to tell things. You might get more information by saying that X% of my farm is in this practice.

John Small – Ultimately there will be some meaning for tracking. This is just getting in the door. We don't ask for much.

Joan Folwell – I had a comment under "Chemical and Nutrient Management." In all the other categories there is a practice that have a particular conservation bent, but pest management, is it monitored pest management? You know you go into the fields and take your insect sample. It is not indiscriminate.

John Small – This is one of the areas where we are trying not to be (inaudible) to the NRCS definition of certain conservation practices. It may open the door a little too far because pest management could be that I shoot a coyote once in a while so I'm going to check it. It might be an extreme example but it is a pretty general term for something that I think was intended to be more integrated pest management or a specific NRCS conservation practice.

Joan Folwell – When you go down the rest of the list those are specific practices whether they are under NRCS descriptions or not.

Kim Weerts – You mean like insecticide spraying?

Art Swannack – That is the problem. If you want to list everything that fits that category in the broad categories, you will fill the whole page. Pests, we think of bugs, but then you have to list wheat management and predator management and everything else.

Joan Folwell – But if you use the term like, "monitored," rather than just that I'm used to spraying on the first of July, the first of August no matter what. I'm trying to think of a more specific term where you are actually monitoring and not just spraying because you don't know whether there is something really there.

Jon Jones – If you go out and sweep for weevils before you spray them.

John Small – We could say, “Integrated pest management or similar.” In that case, we have avoided using NRCS Code 2317 or similar in general. But in a particular case I can see maybe you are working with the Director of Extension and it is the NRCS version but it is somebody else that is maybe studying the Palouse.

Art Swannack – You can go into precision application and into all other sorts of other things. So that’s all under nutrient management or pest management. A divided boom sprayer or whatever.

Jon Jones – The responsibility is going to fall on the administrator of this. We can give some guidance but we might get into the weeds pretty deep on the guidance.

Joan Folwell – Everything else on the list is very (inaudible).

Kim Weerts – You want to keep it at a one-page thing.

Jon Jones – This can be a starting place.

Kim Weerts – This is a real cursory look and whoever the producer is working with they are going to notice that and go into much more detail. This just says that, yes, they do some kind of pest management and nutrient management and other.

John Small – I assume this is the ice breaker to start the conversation. At first the producer might think they are trying to get me to do something I’m not doing and this might lead a producer to say that he is already doing a lot of this stuff. We can start from the things we are doing. I think we might want to consider and look at some language like integrated pest management or similar precision application.

Art Swannack – I think where we are headed is more like a line that is almost organic and natural production. That is the one area that is not on here. If someone is doing organic production or natural production with no antibiotics or mineral antibiotics, that is another section.

Joan Folwell – Maybe there is something inherent in the word, “management.” Like nutrients, when you are talking about (inaudible) that is what I envision as real nutrient management. Not just making an application because your dad did it before you or, indiscriminately over the whole ground or whatever.

Kim Weerts – But everybody isn’t in precision ag. Nutrient management on our place would be do we go out and fertilize the hay pastures? Again, I think that is where whoever is helping the producer gets into the detail and directs them then if they are doing. They would say what kind of nutrient management and if they are doing those broad passes they would say have you thought about precision (inaudible) as opposed to, (inaudible)

Art Swannack – Pest management covers everything in that aspect too.

John Small – When you get into the implementation and basically some of the VSP accounting in the back end that goes to the measurable benchmarks, then it is a lot easier for the implementation person or team to say here is 1200 acres of X and 400 acres of Y and then these are appropriate scores. So nutrient management on one property that is livestock based means this set of parameters and you can score that way and then when it is a different application we score it appropriately for what actually happened on the ground.

Alan Thomson – The way I read this is that it is a general kind of pest management nutrient. If you look at mulch, reduced till, we are not judging how effective those things are. We are just listing, do we do this or do you not do this? We are not trying to determine the effectiveness of whatever one of these categories is because they all seem to fit into the same general terminology, do you do this? We are not asking right now, how effective is this if you do this?

Joan Folwell – If you think I was considering that, (inaudible) I was just trying to make a parallel listing.

Alan Thomson – When you mentioned someone doing that just on habitual time table versus more specific, like you go out there and do a sweep, so that suggests to me more specific and I don't think that is what this list is intended to accomplish. Is it just do you do it, yes or no? We need to determine the effectiveness at some point but I don't know this is the place to do that.

John Small – The more effective these are depends on how far east and west you are but information we are collecting is how far north you are. So, whoever is implementing this is going to need to add some of that county knowledge to these assessments. There could be very much a range of approaches to implementing conservation practices based on conditions from your land. We can't generalize that county-wide.

I think the intent here is to get the conversation started and then when you are talking an individual producer will understand what they have implemented since 2011 and how that has changed the landscape that they work and get a better understanding of the impacts to critical areas. I think that whole approach is pretty sound. We need to collect that information and then find a way to house that in the system that is transparent enough to review but anonymous enough so we can get that information. That will be the key to having a really solid implementation.

Kim Weerts – One of the things that I noticed in the email version is that you referred to “farm” a lot in here. Not that it is wrong but should we, I am concerned that a cattleman reading this might think this only pertains to farmers. Could we put producer in there instead of farms?

John Small – We need to think of a word for the land that you work. If we say your land and you work on a lot of leases, you may not include that.

Kim Weerts – A producer is going to work your land and any other leased land that they have.

John Small – We could change this heading to stewardship practices.

Kim Weerts – Are we going to go through this or should we just submit our comments? If we can give you the comments then changes can be made.

John Small – The comments that we have gotten so far are on stewardship practices so any comments that you think are worth a discussion with this group might be worthwhile to give out. Are there comments you want to bring up?

Kim Weerts – I don't know how much is used in this but one of the things was there were places all over we talked about stewardship strategies and practices and then all of a sudden you switched over to conservation practices and then sometimes we said stewardship practices without strategies. I think it would be better to say stewardship strategies and practices, because that is what we decided on. It also gives the availability of producers when they are working with an agency to not just give the practices but the reasoning behind it.

I think the way the strategies it helps people think, starts a conversation of why or why don't you do this? Then that leads to either an agreement or a disagreement between the producer and the agency. Maybe the agency has more knowledge of something new that is coming up that would help the producer with the strategy. It should be consistent.

John Small – It sounds like maybe it isn't throughout. When we are talking about actions generally and not necessarily something funded by federal dollars then I absolutely agree it should be stewardship strategies and practices. In the rare instances when we are talking about a specific NRCS practice, then we will use that vernacular. I am not surprised there are a few places where we blurred that line. We will fix that.

Vivian Erickson – I apologize. I thought I had gone through and caught them all but I must have missed a few. You are right and we agreed on that of consistently using that term at the last meeting.

Kim Weerts – I haven't read through this shortened version. My notes were going off of the email version.

Vivian Erickson – The content for that information is 99% correct.

Joan Folwell – Back to the stewardship practices. I'm going to advocate for under habitat management to add, "maintaining native vegetation." A lot of producers have small patches of prairies that they treasure for one reason or another or they just can't farm but those are very important habitat to preserve and are very specific. If there is space for one more.

Alan Thomson – Is that something that farmers can get credit for? Is that where we are going with that? Maintaining Palouse Prairie?

Joan Folwell – I think it is a perfect stewardship practice.

Nancy Belsby – It is not part of the farm field, it is part of the scablands, the pasture lands that you are talking about.

Joan Folwell – The patches that remain can be found across the County. The reason they are still there is because they are not farmable. But it is important that they be maintained and it certainly could add to a producers list of conservation practices. Whether it is intentional or not.

Jason Kunz – You mean habitat protection? Or native vegetation protection? You were saying maintaining native vegetation.

Joan Folwell – However you want to put it.

Alan Thomson – Joan, if you are thinking about Palouse Prairie, that is covered in the Critical Area Ordinance. It is actually a listed species so it is protected and we know about it so we intervene with the CAO on that one.

Jon Jones – It is protected but a landowner needs to maintain it, too. When an invasive basic species comes in and you need to.

Art Swannack – Remember this is dealing with critical areas. What is the intersection between the two?

Alan Thomson – It is to protect the species. It is a plant species, versus an animal species. So that is under the critical area conservation component of the Critical Area Ordinance. Palouse Prairie is listed.

Joan Folwell – It is also a priority habitat.

Alan Thomson – It is one of the five CAOs.

Art Swannack – This is for ag critical areas.

Alan Thomson – Right, and what if this is on ag land, which it is.

Art Swannack – Then is it not covered by the CAO.

Alan Thomson – Yes it is, it is covered by the CAO as critical habitat if it is a listed species. If you had a bald eagles nest, same thing. Now we have a specific plant species that has been listed by

the state therefore it has to be protected by the CAO. You can't go plow it up. You can't put a building on it.

Jason Kunz – The broader thing about maintaining native vegetation, I don't know what conservation cover practices are so.

John Small – Maintaining native vegetation also would cover spot herbicide control for invasive species for instance. One thing we do need to stress is but this is July 22, 2011, forward so if you are protecting remnant Palouse Prairie that is not technically a new action since 2011 but if you go and controlled a few snap weed on error that doesn't mean it is activity. I think you should get as much credit for it as possible. That is the cleanest fit.

Alan Thomson – That makes sense because the CAO would not speak to that. So maintenance makes sense.

John Small – So we will add that and some clarity on pest and nutrient management.

Kim Weerts – On page 2 on the right-hand side it says, *“Failure of the Work Plan in meeting protection goals will trigger a regulatory approach to protecting critical areas.”* Then on page 7, under the VSP Checklist intends to do, the last bullet, I don't think that we should put in that last sentence. I certainly don't think it should be bolded.

John Small – Does anyone else disagree with that?

Joan Folwell – I thought it was emphasized several times in here.

Kim Weerts – We want them to participate, not scare them away. I think you can say it once and you know that the implementers, whoever they are, are going to repeat it because we don't want it to fail.

Jon Jones – I think we should say it once but it should be early in the document.

Kim Weerts – I like the first part because that explains it a little bit.

John Small – Are there any more comments on the overview and the checklist to discuss? This one was a little rushed. Parts and pieces that you see, I wanted to get this out because nobody is going to read this besides us. We wanted to spend the bulk of the time going through a few items in here. But I also wanted to make sure that we make this document as useful as possible and we will give Alan all the native copies so you guys can edit it and expand it as you need to.

Joan Folwell – I was just wondering how other people felt about the last page with the length of the (inaudible) dividers and the headings. (inaudible) put the whole list out without dividing them.

Art Swannack – I think this is more of the rough draft until we get to actually doing something then we will know who actually fits in those resources. That’s how I looked at it. There is a lot of contact info and website link, with CDs and other local resources.

John Small – I am looking to this group to add or subtract to those resources.

Art Swannack – Before you send this out, do we actually know there are these programs available through these agencies?

Kim Weerts – This is just going out as a precursor. So, if you list all these it is not necessarily everyone has a program, there are going to be people who want to do it themselves. You can talk to any of these agencies to learn more about this and they can direct you in a more succinct fashion.

John Small – Ultimately, it would be great to have a little bit of information about the Wheat Growers Association, the Cattlemen’s Association, etc. It is probably more obvious from the name but specific to, for instance, what services are they commonly providing in the County. I assume that they are for dry land wheat, cattle the different sectors of ag portfolio and it would be great to be more explicit. If I have peas and wheat these are the resources that make sense.

Alan Thomson – So, this one that was on the email, at the end, does that information box on page 1, which one are we using? The one that was just sent to us or the previous one? The information at the bottom of the box is different. On the one that was sent to us today, it talks about prior converted crop lands and farmed wetlands. On the previous one it was language that I gave you, *“Critical areas on agricultural lands do not include any structures or agricultural ditching in regulated floodplains.”* To me, it is much more relevant to have the aforementioned one, *“The critical areas and floodplains,”* than, *“Prior converted croplands and wetlands,”* which seem to fall into a black hole. But it is very pertinent that you can’t ditch a floodplain without a permit and that goes through the Critical Area Ordinance.

Vivian Erickson – I had made this provision from the last draft in response to a comment that we received at the last meeting. So, if that was a mistake I can change that back, but this was a comment we had at the last meeting that it is possible that I misinterpreted it.

Alan Thomson – We did talk about prior converted and farmed wetlands but basically they are not covered by either Critical Area Ordinance or VSP. The other agencies, F&W, Ecology and Army Corps that are going to deal with those.

Nancy Belsby – Somewhere in here I read that you could maintain the ditches on the farmed wetlands.

Alan Thomson – If it is not a floodplain. A floodplain is the critical part. So, you can have a wetland on a non-floodplain. You can have a drainage that is not a floodplain but there could be

a wetland there. That's not covered under the Critical Area Ordinance, but as soon as you introduce a FEMA mapped floodplain you are under the Critical Area Ordinance.

Jason Kunz – There are streams out there that are flowing and have scoured banks and that is not a wetland per say. So there is a gray area.

Alan Thomson – Ditching is the instrument that is initiating this. As soon as the farmer comes to me and says he wants to ditch a drainage through his land, I have to figure out what that fits into. Is there a critical area or a floodplain there? That is the main question. And then to NRCS, is this a farmed wetland or a prior converted cropland? That directs me as to how I tell what I tell that landowner. If it is a floodplain, then it is an automatic Floodplain Development permit and a SEPA and the agencies get involved in that.

Art Swannack – In order for them to maintain the ditch versus put in a new ditch.

Alan Thomson – New ditches are entirely different. So the previous one would be more pertinent that talks about ditching.

Jon Jones – Ditching and tile lines are interchangeable?

Alan Thomson – Usually if there are tile lines there that implies it used to be a wetland, so it could be farmed wetland or prior converted cropland.

Jon Jones – From your perspective you would treat them the same?

Alan Thomson – If it is not a floodplain and there are a number of ditches out there they are not floodplains. It is the floodplain that is the difference.

John Small – So we will switch back to the language that was in the email version. Did that include the discussion of farmed wetlands, as well?

Alan Thomson – It doesn't say anything about farmed wetlands. I'm not sure that farmed wetlands is that critical to mention.

John Small – Are there comments on overview and the checklist? Let's move on to the work plan itself and where we are at. Vivian do you want to walk through the updates?

Vivian Erickson – The last draft was the December draft and if there was some updated information for that. This latest draft from last week has been updated to include all the work group comments that as well as from F&W and some of the CDs. We have included in this draft some additional technical information to support tech panel review. That way we can discuss the work plan submitted prior to the end of the biennium.

We focused on that tech information to support the review. This draft also includes some of the updated protection and enhancement benchmarks values. One that I wanted to add the benchmark values that we looked at the last meeting has been updated to incorporate the recording of practices in acreages from (inaudible) projects. The benchmark values have been modified that we are considering the numbers from both NRCS reported projects as well as CD (inaudible) reported projects.

Then we also have the technical appendices that we loaded to the website and this includes more details than some of the ones we have on our previous versions. Then the appendices includes the baseline condition summary where we go into the methods and (inaudible) for assembling the baseline conditions analysis when we include description of watersheds to include the rock watershed and the Snake watershed or maybe not watershed but we also include a summary of the (inaudible) of designations.

Ag viability summaries and a list of water quality parameters that have been identified since 2016 data in the County with parameters that could potentially (inaudible) to ag. Appendix C include our methods for establishing benchmarks and the CPTD scoring that we talked about. Appendix D is the summary of existing plants, programs and regulations that are applicable to the County.

A lot of the content you will see on the updated work plan is going to be the same from what you have seen in the previous version. Language cleaned up and working on things to make sure they are capturing critical areas functions and how similar stewardship strategies and practices are tied to functional affects to critical areas. A lot of the changes will be in Section 5 where we go into more detail on our goals and objectives in relationship to existing plans that are out there already and our benchmark values as well as adaptive management plan.

John Small - We prefaced that at the last meeting. We were listening as Thurston County went through the informal reviews with the tech panel. We tried to learn from their suffering and make sure that Section 5 had the bulk of the information that is required under the law in a way that the tech panel can interpret it and go through their checklist. It is not very easy to read, but we tried to put everything more than in one place because with some of the earlier work plans that have gone through the technical review, we just saw that the tech panel was having trouble finding all the parts buried in appendences and we looked at our organizational structure. Let's put it as much as possible in one place to make it readable.

Art Swannack – Is that a document that has been sent to us?

John Small – It was sent about a week ago.

Alan Thomson – It is on the website because it is a big document.

Jason Kunz – Vivian sent it out on April 27th.

John Small – That is the small version of the work plan, about 70 pages plus the appendices. So, there are a few items that we still wanted to spend time on discussing within this draft. As you are reading through we can talk about next steps in getting your comments on this draft integrated before June 1st.

One of the provisions of the law is that we develop rules for participation by agriculture operators conducting commercial and non-commercial agricultural activities in the watershed necessary to meet the benchmarks. We started to talk about what constitutes producer participation and how to measure that within WC. Here is that word, “Farms,” again.

We need to decide what that participation goal is, how will we measure participation? Is it going to be in terms of the number of farms and ranches, operators or acres, which again, gives us a more precise understanding of the County as a whole and what impact changes in ag are having?

What we worried about in terms of ranches, operators, is that it is difficult to quantify how that is affecting the environmental conditions and the ag landscape as a whole. You could have 50% of the producers participating but they only operate on 20% of the land base. I would say looking at producer participation in terms of acreage, providing the most certainty but the least anonymous. What are you comfortable with, what is the best way to look at participation?

What we propose is that we take a measure and look at a reasonable rate of increase of participation in VSP over time. This isn't something that I envision in 2018 that you are going to get this VSP coordinator and they will sign up everyone in the County. Conservation practices that are going on and checking back with those people every 5-10 years to see what stewardship strategies and practices they have implemented since the last time you talked to them.

We were thinking more of 3% a year as a goal. You could raise or lower that depending on what seems realistic based on your successes with VSP going forward. I think the primary question is how do we measure that? In acres, or people, businesses?

Jason Kunz – This is something that the RCW says you have to have covered in the work plan. So you have gleaned it all from Thurston or Chelan?

John Small – I think Chelan is in acres and I'm not sure about Thurston.

Vivian Erickson – I think it is a general goal as in there is no bio or percentage, it gets increased.

Jason Kunz – I was wondering if it was something the tech panel keys in on knowing that you are going to get in the participation in order to see the conservation part of this program work.

John Small – This is one of the 12 or so items that they keyed in on.

Alan Thomson – So, is this one of the items if we fail we can get bumped off because of lack of participation? Because we don't meet the benchmarks?

Art Swannack – You can get in trouble if you don't meet your goals and you have to reset your goals.

John Small – You have to re-evaluate your goals. I'm not sure that VSP would be failing if you were still meeting your protection benchmarks, but not the participation goals.

Kim Weerts – I think it is the protection not the participation.

John Small – I think it is the protection benchmark. I think the question would be if you are not meeting your participation goal, is your goal really high and what you are doing is adequate or is what the VSP implementation team doing not adequate to continue to protect? The commission might say that you need to pay attention to this. We are concerned you might fall out of compliance in the future. Ultimately compliance is the only protection benchmark.

John Stuhlmiller – The participation goals and benchmarks are really tricky and both Thurston and Chelan really labored over these. I would encourage you to stay fuzzy on it and not get bound up on it because the true test is, are you protecting critical areas? That is where it is hard to say X percent. In Thurston I think we had numbers of contacts were made by the tech assistance provider and things like that as opposed to 3% growth per year or whatever.

Alan Thomson – I'm not good on numbers. I don't think that is a good idea to hold you to because what if we don't meet that 3%?

Art Swannack – When I looked at the 3%, you have 400-600 people producing and 3% is 12-18 people per year you will add, but it depends on how you look at that number. Someone could say you are going to progressively add 3% of what is left.

John Small – At some point you are reaching a saturation point where you have reached out to the 60% of the County that will play ball and the other 40% you have to wait.

Jason Kunz – You've got people that are not in the program and maybe they will sign up but they are still conservation going out there that can be from a non-member.

Kim Weerts – Thurston and Chelan have both been approved? Can we go and see what they did?

John Small - We will review that and what I am hearing is you'd like to keep the producer participation goals as clear as possible without a numeric standard.

Alan Thomson – Clear as possible doesn't sound the same as fuzzy. I like fuzzy better.

John Small – I want to make sure that there is a participation goal in there and it is not all fuzz. We will find a happy medium in there that the program is active and contacts are being made. My interpretation is to make sure that the program doesn't die on the vine and another 10 years have gone past and nobody has done anything. That would be difficult to defend as meeting any

kind of participation goal. I think we can provide some language that is a little fuzzier. That is we are making these efforts, we are continuing on and the outreach is continuing.

We had a couple of things we wanted to bring up from WDFW that might be of use going forward. One is the high resolution change detection program and this is something that some of the counties are looking at as a way to monitor changes on the county-wide scale using satellite imagery and change detection software. That is not currently planned for East of the Cascades but the (inaudible) is waiting for some assistance.

Nancy Belsby – Is this in here somewhere?

Vivian Erickson – I sent the link in the email last week.

Kim Weerts – I went to the site and it was very confusing. It didn't give me, it was just an introduction and I couldn't find anywhere where it was telling you what it was going to monitor. It just said it existed and the history. Is there a way to see a demonstration of it?

John Small – I will try not to be too biased. It is excellent in detecting changes in the conventional tillage to mulched tillage to direct seed. I don't think it is going (inaudible) that is not what it is set up to do. So, ditching in floodplains, certain development it may work for the bulk of what we are discussing as stewardship, strategies and practices. I don't think you are going to see that change in a satellite imagery. You would have to talk to the producer and find out what equipment they are using, what are they spraying with, what are they not spraying with anymore?

Kim Weerts – That is the old fashioned way but I look at this and I see producers running away because this is somebody spying on me. You can't even get farmers to tell you how many acres they own. Their answer is enough. If work gets out that VSP is spying on producers, everybody is going to leave.

John Small – I see it as a very applicable to areas with more development and WC for the most part the development pressure is in incorporated areas, not as much in unincorporated and ag land.

Jason Kunz – I did talk to Ken Pierce and asked him how sensitive and detailed can it get and he said that you are able to detect vegetation changes along the riparian area. You would be able to tell if it is growing. If you wanted to use it to map the improvement of the riparian area.

David Swannack – The pictures in the timeline, in mulched till might show up and the direct seed would definitely going to show.

John Small – Can you tell in July-August?

David Swannack – That would be more difficult.

John Small – It might be worth looking into as technology develops I think that Kim has a good point. If it is scaring people off it will work against you.

Kim Weerts – If you are doing things like direct seed or no-till or doing projects in the riparian, wouldn't they be already working with a CD or something? In which case, we will get that information every year from them so wouldn't this be redundant?

Jon Jones – This goes to your point that the aerial fly overs for a long time, I would imagine when they started those in the 30's that there was some push back on that, too. It was real easy to see what was in crop and what wasn't. That was used by the soil conservation service and other people to see how many crop acres we had. This goes a little farther and it will go farther from where we are at now.

There will be imagery that is going to be able to tell us how much residue is on the surface on the ground. Maybe what kind of herbicide was sprayed? That stuff is coming.

Jason Kunz – There is a lot of erosion concerns, so there is a lot of potential erosion risk associated with the landscape. Looking at aerial photos, it is going to show up whether you do a change detection model or just do it from what the Farm Bureau puts out every 5 years. I got the six-inch four fold where I can see things pretty clearly and you can pick out trees.

Kim Weerts – I don't think we're trying to micro-manage this. Anything that we would want to see you could get on Google Earth. I don't think we want to be big brother and we can get enough information from the agencies and the people that are participating and then get other people who were doing it themselves through their normal contacts, the group that they are with.

Jason Kunz - On a landscape level the effectiveness of the conservation practice when he comes in to put in those filter strips and you see how that erosion is stopped, 35 feet or whatever away from the creek and you get to see it on oracle imagery that is a good way of doing your margins. So, it is a tool if you got to prove that your conservation practice is working.

Kim Weerts – There is nothing that says we have to monitor. We have to have benchmarks. We have to have individual monitoring.

Art Swannack – No, that is the discussion onto what this program requires, which is to how much detail do we need to answer the question are we making progress? When we start talking six inch oracle rectified maps, those aren't going to be taking by WC every year. Those were \$150,000.

Brian Bell – It is already being done. The imagery is all publicly available.

Art Swannack – We have the one layer we did for WC. We probably are not going to do another for quite a while because it did cost \$125-150,000 to do. I know that is the going concern but that's dollars.

John Small – I don't think we should sign the county up or anybody else up for that cost. We as a group made the decision in WC we are going to lift up the use and participation and measure, who is putting in those conservation practices over and over again. Stewardship strategies and practices.

John Small – The tech panel has been on board with this. Measure where you can control. The group producers can control our producers too. We can see big changes in global wheat prices that affect what is on the ground and shows up in change detection. We can see big changes in weather patterns, things that you have no control over. I don't want to have the success of VSP be tied to those types of changes because that is something that is outside of producer control. I think the method that we come forward with as a group at talking to people, understanding what folks are doing on the property and keeping track of that is a better approach.

Looking at physical conditions, the water and the soil habitat is really part of our monitoring program and in Chapter 5 we have to have some kind of reality check that either the resources are being protected or not being protected completely but it has nothing to do with agriculture. It is due to other influences if we continue that. I think what we will find a 100% of the time is that agriculture's contribution is making those resources healthier and supporting the functions and values because that is the direction that ag has been.

It is the trajectory the industry has been on the last 20 years or more and it seems to be continuing. I don't have a lot of concern that we will get indications the other way. It is a risk but if there are indicators that streamed off as declining it is probably going to have more to do with precipitation patterns or potential irrigation but not in WC so much. It is not going to be something that is tied to cracks sitting on the ground.

Alan Thomson – Is this change detection program related to what Ben proposed to Mark Storey and me just recently? The critical area mapping, updated data set, tracking and reporting tool?

John Small – It is a similar approach. This is more robust approach to that. I think what Ben was suggesting was a little more of basic mapping exercise building off of the Shoreline Master Program work that was done including other critical areas outside the shoreline.

Alan Thomson – We discussed this because it is not within the current budget and we nixed the idea.

John Small – This is a separate program from WDFW now looking for organizations that might be interested in participating as part of their VSP program.

Alan Thomson – Whose dime would that be on?

John Small – It would come probably out of the State VSP budget.

Alan Thomson – That would be future funding, not current funding. So, we are interested in that for the future but the question mark is, is there any money in the future? No one has been able to answer that one yet.

Art Swannack – That depends on whether the capital budget gets approved or not. Which depends on if the Hirst decision gets fixed or not.

Nancy Belsby – This high resolution change detection program, it reminds me of (inaudible). Once you put the WDFW out there they are in control and you basically lost control, if you are going to give them this kind of authority.

Art Swannack – I don't know if we are giving them authority. My suspicion is that they are trying to look for a core group of people to put together so they can afford to operate. Currently, I think we just go forward with what we planned on, we keep it in our file bin of something that might be useful in the future if we see a reason to do it but in the meantime we don't mess with it.

John Small – Each one of these automated (inaudible) based techniques there is a huge economy of scale. You do different techniques for a couple of counties and then you can start to replicate it pretty effectively. I think they will be building this program if successful. This will not be the last year but they will be back. I want to make sure between Kim and Alan, this work group is clear that we are not interested at this time but could be in the future?

Alan Thomson – Mark Storey and I agree and Art, too, that this would be a useful tool for the future budget but for getting ours finished right now for this biennium, no, we don't have the money to do that.

John Small – This is certainly not going to happen before July.

Art Swannack – What are the assumptions behind it, what is the basis for the decision to use it, how ground truth is it for what your action versus a critical area ordinance or a habitat decision? There are a lot of questions there.

John Small – Every time I come here I look in the streams along the highway, exist or don't exist depending on when I come. This is a particularly fuzzy issue in WC. A lot of these streams even by the State definitions the extent of stream, defined bed and bank, evidence of scour and erosion, changes pretty radically from season to season, year to year and that is reflected in the mapping. We have tons of thousands of miles of unknown mapped streams.

Alan Thomson – That would be a handy tool to have. It would certainly help me to figure out what is a fish bearing stream up front.

Jason Kunz – You said you need to do some mapping and updating of your critical area maps. F&W, we are supposed to have a routine cycle of updating PHS, (Priority, Habitat, and Species)

ourselves and that got reduced in importance and people's jobs shifted so it never became a high priority and it is still there and still a useful tool. It is like shrub steppe.

Alan Thomson – So whenever we have an application for a short plat, for instance, we have to notify F&W database and find out if there is any priority habitat anywhere close.

Jon Jones – Are we talking, “unknown” instead of a word for “unnamed?” People know the stream is there that just maybe not have a name.

John Small – This is getting back to our map and early on we had a map of all the streams in the County and it was this map but it covered the whole County. I think this version is not accurate. It is somewhere in between.

Jason Kunz – A map is only as good as the information that was used to make it and everything needs to be ground truthed. I think when we first started this process that map that you are using to reference, was done on a model created by the DNR and they touted that it was 90% accurate when it is more or less 10% accurate.

So you have streams that were designated as unknown or non-fish bearing or fish bearing and you could have streams that are fish bearing that are non-fish, streams that are non-fish that are fish, etc. It is a sad tool but it is a starting point, and an unknown stream means the model didn't kick it out. I think we know that the USGS 1974 Quadra Angle map that has main streams on it like Thorn Creek, Willow Creek, Paradise Valley Creek, Union Flat Creek, Cottonwood Creek, they all have fish in it. Historic distribution and present distribution in WC which I mentioned up front, was that unfortunately for you guys, there are fish everywhere.

I was just on Dry Creek, talking to a landowner a mile and a half up the road from SR195 and I asked if he saw fish around there. He said he couldn't believe they can live in this, even when it goes dry. That is the crux. There a definition of streams in the WAC and like you were bringing up, three feet or wider active channel with less than 60% gradient and the water has a defined above that connects to a higher order stream, that means that stream has the potential to have fish life in it and it comes out as being Type F until you prove otherwise.

So, these unknowns mean that everyone is supposed to go out and ground truth and whatever you see on the ground is what you go with. We were going to talk about some of these streams that do have fish, wildlife habitat conservations areas associated with them, which in the definition of fish, wildlife habitat conservation area, one of the criteria is, is it waters of the state? Any stream that's met and is named that is a creek and it has been known to flow for years so those you know right away that is a steam and it likely to have fish in it.

Now does it have some sort of habitat connectivity to it, is where I think we need to take that layer of what we want to constitute as a critical area and maybe throw it into your calculations of what is out there. I looked at Willow Creek when it drains down to the Palouse and when it gets all the way to Meeker Road, I think the highway is 26, there is total trees and shrubs. You

can see where the old beaver ponds are and you can just look at a map, look at an aerial and see that it has habitat functions and values. So that is a place to start. There is a way to get in there and it's about 7,000 feet of channel, a mile and a half.

I was talking to Vivian on the phone and we were trying to determine what is fish bearing? As an agency we have had to issue an HPA, Hydraulic Project Approval permit for years and we have a data base which shows a point on every one that we have done. The only reason we issue an HPA is for the protection of fish life. So that will tell you right there that there are fish in there.

That is one thing, and there is also the fish passage. There is a data base for fish passage and diversion stream inventory where it has been done by our agency that it has been hired to do for the transportation department. So, our agency has driven all of the state routes and have looked at every single crossing. I have a dot on the map of everywhere there is a crossing.

That is another thing you can use as differentiating fish or no fish. I think the biggest thing that the USGS map has is the main streams and you look on an aerial photo and you can tell the connections. This is just a starting point. Obviously, I need to talk to Vivian more and determine what we want to do, what level of layers of what we do to produce what constitutes a fish bearing stream and get it mapped as a critical area.

John Small – So, before everybody panics, as we learn more and understand baseline conditions just understanding this 2011 condition, we are not adding new issues that VSP has to overcome or deal with. This would just be improving our understanding of where VSP applies and how it applies, where stewardship strategies and practices have direct impacts because there is a critical area right there as opposed to indirect impact that we might assume that there is a stream somewhere downstream but not on this property.

Now we are saying there is a stream and there are fish in there so it is having a greater impact. But we are changing the zero point as much as we are anything else. We are looking at having a better understanding of the geography of WC as it existed in 2011 as today. I bring that up because of the nuance of VSP, we have this defined baseline condition.

Just because we say as it turns out there are fish in more streams than we thought it doesn't automatically mean that VSP is not providing adequate protection. It just means that is where we started from. Anything that we do up in those watersheds that have fish in them could have a direct affect if it is stewardship actions, a direct benefit of those species.

Alan Thomson – Then what kind of negative impact could farming practices since the 2011 date have on fish bearing streams?

John Small – I would guess it is sediment input.

Alan Thomson – So, since 2011, you’ve been farming all the way up to a ditch, you can continue doing that and you can have deposits of dirt going into that stream. Potentially that is what is already happening. So the VSP program can’t intervene here. So what are we trying to protect?

Art Swannack – This base layer says this was already occurring at this point in time and that is a condition we had.

John Small – Somebody else takes over working that land and dedicates a riparian buffer and goes to direct seed and other things, then we can call that a win with direct impacts to critical areas.

Alan Thomson – That would be very much under the voluntary program.

John Small – If we don’t know that that system is fish bearing, we don’t know that that is a direct impact and a direct benefit. We will assume that everything is indirect but if we don’t know otherwise this would give us more information and it would possibly make Alan’s job easier on the development side to know where fish bearing streams are.

Alan Thomson – I always point that one to Jason, anyway.

Art Swannack – My question is we are in May 4th, how long would it take to create this? I don’t see that it is an overnight thing that is going to happen prior to VSP plan submittal.

John Small – No, so this would be something that could be part of implementation is to update this information. You guys were overwhelmingly supportive of the last hi-tech idea we threw out there. I will say the other side of the mountain, wild fish conservancy has been working on with you in another university in the state to develop total cost DNA techniques and I don’t know if they have all the species covered here.

It is a low cost watershed based DNA, so you take a gallon of water and you look for fish DNA and apparently they can very accurately tell the upstream extent of fish use. I don’t know that much about it but I know that costs are coming down and it is becoming pretty public and easy and that might be something to look into in implementation phase.

Jason Kunz – It would be used for something different but Alan makes a good point that practices have been going on since 2011 and the farming is right up to the, there is no buffer and once you start doing some stewardship effort and you make an improvement then you get credit. I don’t think there is any way to go backwards when it comes to accurately identifying where fish are on the landscape. I don’t know if it makes much difference if we document an extra, out of those 3,000 miles of stream that you have in the work plan that are unknown, sure probably 1,000 of those miles will be fish bearing. Does that make a difference for your goals and benchmarks?

John Small – Yes, because our goals and benchmarks are producer participation based so stewardship practices that we are keeping track of. We are looking at other indicators to make

sure that participation stewardship is adequate. We are very intentionally not trying to say that there is 1,000 less miles of fish habitat now so that is a bad thing. We can't chase that. We recognize that and we will stick with producers and what they are doing.

Alan Thomson – Producers could get credit though if we know that this is a fish bearing stream and that is the key right there. Do we know it is a fish bearing stream? We used to farm right up to the bank of it and we are getting sluffing off of it so we back off a few feet and get credit for that. So, we need to know if it is a fish bearing stream.

Jason Kunz – I think a lot of ag producers, they look at their creek when they cross over it and they are doing some work along the bank they are seeing those fish in there.

Alan Thomson – So, we need to verify that it is fish bearing and maybe it just needs the coordinator looking at it and saying yes, there are fish in there.

Art Swannack – I want to know if it is warm or cold water. The value of this would be in the implementation phase and it would be in the, what program does the producer qualify for? That would be where your main gains I can see from the producer and VSP operations. If it is fish bearing it is up what they are willing to fund versus non fish bearing.

Jason Kunz – There is going to be tributaries that come into that main stem. I've gone along Union Flat Creek and you go to where the tributaries are and that are spring fed and where do you think all those fish are hanging out? In that clean cool water where the tributaries are coming in, just up from that main channel and they are hanging out in the better habitat. So I would say that through the evolution of VSP there will be ways to find those locations, write them up as being critical habitats and get people to protect those and then you get credit.

Jon Jones – I think what you are saying is maybe an education outreach opportunity. I am pretty sure farmers see some of the streams like Cottonwood Creek as a ditch because it runs adjacent to the highway and it is a ditch but it is also a stream and there are fish in it.

Art Swannack – But it is not relevant in terms of the plan right now.

Jason Kunz – It is more of a reason for water quality type stewardship practices.

Alan Thomson – It is relevant right now because once we get this work plan together and the producers are looking for getting credit, if we know there is a fish bearing stream there and they back off a couple of feet, they will get credit.

Art Swannack – It is relevant during the implementation. What I'm saying right now in terms of writing this plan out, where do you put it? Once the implementation is funded and starts, this could be one of the things that aids implementation being successful.

Alan Thomson – When we get the coordinator figured out, who is that, we don't know. That coordinator on his or her job could just go out there and confirm whether there is fish or just call up Jason. What does the PHS database say and then that brings it into focus. Now we have a fish bearing stream and we can watch the practices and then that landowner can get credit for that. That won't take much money; we are already funded.

Jason Kunz – I'll get with you after this to talk about updating your CAO maps.

John Small – What I am hearing is the focus on fish bearing, non-fish bearing as opposed to issues where we are just trying to figure out if it is a stream or not. I think that is where we could spend a lot of time without a lot of benefit because of the geography where you have streams running up some of the draws you might see today but not in July. That just to me seems like it will get hard.

Jason Kunz – You stop it at the point when you start seeing habitat functions and values and that stream is unknown from there on. It is completely farmed if it is actively ag production going on and there is no green ribbon per say and there is no tree clumps, no connectivity then you cut it off. Once connectivity is over then you cut it off as unknown. This is something that has to be further discussed in my agency and come up with the parameters.

John Small – But again, it is part of the adaptive management section but the framework that we have designed and as that baseline changes the goal posts move with it. It doesn't make it harder for VSP to be successful just because there is suddenly more streams. I just want to keep coming back to that. It actually makes it easier for VSP to be successful because of the stewardship strategies and practices are being implemented and are going to count for more benefit.

Jason Kunz – If you've got in the plan 3,000 miles of unknown stream, and if we were to do a quick exercise and we find 1,000 miles of that unknown stream is fish bearing, would that, you are saying that would not have any affect in where your goals and benchmarks are?

John Small –No, because our goals, our measurable benchmarks are in producer participation matrix, not in stream mile protection matrix. So, it wouldn't affect our baseline conditions section which is what we have said this is what we think is going on and what we tried to quantify the state of the County in 2011 and if you move where the stream ends all those governs would change and it would just give us more places where there is opportunity to show direct impact and benefits.

Jason Kunz – With this work group are you looking to just set this down until we go into implementation or do you want something that is quick and definite?

Kim Weerts – We are supposed to turn this in on June 1st. I think that complicates it before we get this thing passed.

Alan Thomson – That is for the time, Jason, in the implementation.

Jason Kunz – I just wanted to double check and have concrete understanding when I walk away that I don't have to do any mapping exercise.

John Small – That is a good Segway. I know this group is interested in getting a plan reviewed in June. I have reached out to Bill Eller, we would need to be ready to submit on June 1st and I know there are a lot of counties that are interested in submitting but if there is some interest on the part of the work group in looking at WC, so I'm hopeful we can have it reviewed in June with the tech panel. That brings up questions about co-ordinations with this group.

Nancy Belsby – Thurston County and Chelan County were the pilot counties for VSP. Are they the only two that are ahead of us at this point in time?

John Small – They are the only two that are approved that I know of. John may know if there are more counties that are under review.

John Stuhlmiller- So, no other counties have submitted right now.

John Small – There will be an avalanche of plans hitting their desk all at once.

Kim Weerts – Is that our problem?

Alan Thomson – The problem arises on timing and the budget. We discussed this with Ben. We want to make sure we can get through the whole process of approval before the money runs out.

Kim Weerts – But if we submit on June 1st, even if there are other people who submit at the same time, how can they say that they will only take the first five?

Art Swannack – They have 45 days on each plan to review it. That is July 15th.

Kim Weerts – But is there a provision in there to only accept a certain number? Then they will have to take the stack.

John Small – I have reached out to Bill Eller and we intend to submit and if we get your comments by May 19th, the only question is whether you need to meet again to go over those comments or a final submittal draft prior to submission on June 1st.

Art Swannack – Our next meeting is scheduled for June 1st.

Alan Thomson – How about we just get feedback to you before that timeframe?

John Small – I think if the comments are ones we can handle or don't require a lot of discussion and this group wants to use that time on June 1st to approve this to submit, we can let the work group know it is on its way, that would be great.

Kim Weerts – If we are going to give comments by May 19th you can look at it and if there is anything substantial that seems like it is not just minor then you could email us and we could have a meeting before then.

Alan Thomson – We could have a phone call.

Vivian Erickson – Is there any time in the schedule for the June 1st meeting if we want to an earlier time to help ensure that information is correct?

John Small – Does the work group have to vote on the submittal?

Alan Thomson – I think we do.

John Small – We would have to have a quorum. Yes, we can have a quorum in a phone meeting.

Joan Folwell – I thought we had talked about a meeting before the deadline.

John Small – We will keep that option open unless we want to set a time the last week of, earlier in that same week. That is Memorial Day, the 30th or the 31st would be appropriate.

Alan Thomson – I think a phone call would be the better way to do that. We won't know for certain until you get all the comments, digest them and then send out the supposed final document and then we'll see what happens there.

John Small – I would expect that you will hear a lot from Vivian with email on the week of the 15th to remind you about the 19th and based on those comments the following Monday, we will send out a meeting request. We could probably do the phone meeting regardless on the 30, 31 so that we can approve it. If we need to be here for more discussion we can work that into the plan.

John Stuhlmiller – I'm sharing this message universally to the 25 remaining groups but just to be sure that you know that there is a 90-95% chance that there will be more dollars for planning that follow in this budget that there isn't, I'm not sure the urgencies that proceed. Having been through Chelan and Thurston on the ground level, the last minute tend to get a hurry up and get it done. My caution is you won't run out of dollars.

Whitman won't be out of dollars as of June 30th. You don't have to have your plan done as June 30th. You are an 18 plan and I can't remember the date that the plan is due. So there is time so just encourage you to not rush to the tech panel but be ready. We've got some edits we want to send in and one of the questions related to that is the format for the actual work plan to make it easier to get in line. That question related to urgency and it is to your advantage to use your full time to get completely ready so you don't get jammed like Thurston did.

Alan Thomson – The contract with Anchor QEA states that they are on the hook for this budget until it is through the tech panel’s review. Even though we passed the deadline and the money is gone, Anchor QEA still has to fulfill that part of the contract and get it approved. There is not a big urgency. I think we need to get it right but we still have a time frame.

John Small – Some of the other times we are using that time for public process starting implementation but also vetting their plans. There are different approaches to this deadline. What we have heard from you is be ready to submit in June.

Art Swannack – They want it by June 1st but there is no reason we can’t submit prior to the end of June.

John Small – If the comments are minor and the editorial in nature, we can get through those quickly.

Art Swannack – What happens if we need a meeting and look at it and we need another draft and we are going to submit the last part of June?

Alan Thomson – We can still do that.

John Small – You can submit and I don’t know how much back and forth there has been between the tech panel and whoever is helping with the work plan, but we can do that. We’re not going to be making changes on the work plan based on what the tech panel tells us to do. We will be bringing that back to you.

Art Swannack – I have a question for John Stuhlmiller. What happens if they don’t approve a capital budget? Do we go into pause mode?

John Small – I think he signed off. I think we go into pause mode.

Art Swannack – I was serious about that Hirst, this is funded as I understand it through capital budget and Senator Honeyford said that if they do not fix the Hirst water decision he is not going to allow a capital budget out this year out of the senate, which means there won’t be a capital budget.

John Small – The clock still ticks but you have into 2018, so hopefully,

Art Swannack – That is one of the reasons for wanting to get it done in June and get it submitted, at least we have done that part of our job and we are waiting on the State to get back to us.

John Small – I think at some point the State may ask nicely to not submit until August because we are overloaded but I think that again it sounds like a lot and it says 45 days. They are aware of that and they are aware that their ability is maxed out at two a month.

Joan Folwell – So, do we keep the June 1st meeting?

John Small – I think we will leave it on the calendar for now but my sense is that it will get replaced by a May 30th call.

Art Swannack – Just make sure it is in the afternoon because we have BOCC stuff in the morning.

Kim Weerts – So keep it on the calendar and we will wait to hear from you.

Vivian Erickson – Yes.

John Small – We may push that up for a call.

Vivian Erickson – The same time for the June meeting?

Art Swannack – The room is booked for 2-6 p.m. on June 1st.

John Small – That is all we have for this meeting. Thank you everyone.

Adjourned - 6:21 p.m.