

**WHITMAN COUNTY
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP MEETING
FEBRUARY 28, 2018
2:00 P.M.**

MEMBERS:

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

Audience: Mark Storey, WC Director/Engineer; Jenifer Boie, Palouse CD; Jodi Prout, Palouse CD; Jessica Self, Palouse CD; Dan Hardwood, Palouse Rock Lake CD; James Schierman, Palouse Rock Lake CD; Brad Johnson, Palouse CD; Brian Bell, Whitman CD; Elinor Huber, Clerk.

2:05 p.m. – Brad Johnson opened the meeting and introductions were held around the room. The draft agenda looks long and one of the things I want to visit about, I want to put on hold, we can definitely talk about it. Just after talking with Art and thinking about it, what was identified in the plan for the CD to pull together and do the reporting on, not that it wasn't something that it can be done and it will be done. There was some information brought to my attention by some of the people in the technical panel using some GIS layers that are free and we will gather more information on that and make sure that you are comfortable with that. We are not going to do anything on that. It was Art's concern that we were going to be looking at WDF and W's high resolution, that's not, that is completely separate.

This is a different process which is all googled-based information. It is all on the web. It is all free, but you got to get some layers up and be able to do that. I kind of jumped ahead and got excited about it and Art reined me in on that. So, we will get more information on it. We will be using it in Garfield County and see how it works in Stevens County. So, I hope I didn't get anybody all excited and upset about trying to switch something over. It was that the technical panel liked what Stevens County was doing. They approved this plan so we are fine with what we are doing here.

Was there anything, looking over the agenda, we want to give a chance at the beginning if there was any new and emerging issues or agenda items that need to be added? Is there anything you can think about that is going on in your district that relates to VSP? All the VSP plans that have been submitted have been approved. The Franklin plan took the longest and Ben actually worked on that and there was a lot of heartache that went in with the Franklin plan. I think they received it in November and just approved it so no plans have not been approved.

So then I will ask Jennifer and then we will go to Dan, James, and Brian and just talk about what is going in the districts what other programs that are going on that are paralleling VSP or we think fit into VSP.

Jennifer Boie –One of the great things about VSP and working across the county level is that it fits nicely with all the other work we are doing as partnerships. So, a lot of the work that is going on in Palouse CD, as being complimentary to what is happening with VSP in the other partnership programs.

A few things we are working on, you probably heard about the Regional Conservation Partnership program that is working at a watershed scale across the entire Palouse River Watershed. So, alongside are the other three CDs in WC and then an additional four CDs throughout WA and Idaho. So, we are actually tackling what is going on for national resources at that watershed scale. That has been really nice.

The focus of that is getting funding out for improving soil quality as well as reducing erosion, improving water quality and improving habitat across that entire basin. So, that money going out to landowners hopefully will capture those projects in the VSP reporting as well and will help feed into the VSP process and help voluntary conservation work on the ground. So, there is quite a bit of money in that in total of about 11 million dollars over the 5-year period. We are just over half way through. That is a great thing that is going on to complement VSP.

We are also doing watershed monitoring which is focusing on water, soil and habitat. That is the first time we tried to tackle monitoring efforts of that size at the watershed scale so that data information came into your VSP process.

Nancy Belsby – You said watershed monitoring how?

Jennifer Boie – They are looking at water quality and habitat and soil as related to implementing voluntary conservation practices. If this group would like to hear more about that we can have the monitoring team come and do a presentation. They just recently, last month we were invited to go over and present in the Lacy area to present to the executive leadership team for the Department of Ecology and their non-regulatory arm, the arm that helps with environmental assessment. So, we were able to present to them and we got some really positive feedback.

The whole message there, it was myself, we had Dave and Dan and Ryan Boiland who is the lead for the monitoring program. The whole message there was that voluntary conservation effort can make a difference and we really highlighted, we had testimonials from local landowners, farmers and producers who were saying to please keep monitoring. It showcases the good work we are doing and it shows that voluntary efforts can make a difference to conservation. That was a really wonderful meeting.

Dan Harwood – The group that we were speaking to was very helpful. These were the directors of anything from oil and air to nuclear energy and including finance and some of the best responses we got was from the folks in nuclear and finances. They kept looking at us and saying you're including us with people, the landowners are voluntary. Voluntary and (inaudible) based programs along with the partnerships and the district (inaudible) on the ground is what impressed them.

Jennifer Boie – Another thing that we stressed in that was funding from those agencies, whether they be federal or state, is really important for kinds of support local efforts, but state and federal agencies can provide support in whatever way, including money. But one thing they will never have is relationships and that is something that the CDs bring to the table.

Then working with landowners on the ground. That was great. That is another effort that that data and information can feed into your VSP reporting and monitoring as well. With the passing of the capital budget, which I am sure you are all aware of, there are a lot of other grants and support coming into WC and into the watershed including additional support for CREP programs, budgets get passed. Two new grants from the state conservation commission just at Palouse CD and there will be other grants and other local conservation districts to support landowner projects. Those are at \$50,000 a piece for landowner.

So, quite substantial support for folks that do voluntary work. Then three new DOE grants. One focused on converting from conventional tillage to direct seed, another focused on riparian vegetation and third focused on supporting continued monitoring effort. Those will be things that will help support voluntary work on the ground that will capture in VSP.

Other things have been a lot of education and outreach and I know we are going to talk about that today. But I see the VSP process as just having a lot to do with education outreach so we are hoping that everything we do at Palouse CD will complement what you are trying to do as far as getting the word out to landowners and producers.

We had an event last Friday. The Alternative Cropping Symposium focusing on cover crops, alternative crops in this area and that interface with livestock production. We had close to a hundred producers signed up and had an amazing turnout. That was a producer to producer venue where we had folks up there telling their story. Farmers telling their story and folks with livestock telling their story so that was great. We will have other upcoming outreach events that will compliment VSP as well.

We just wrote two new grants and submitted those on the last couple months that we hope will compliment what is going on at VSP. One is the Beginner Farmer/Rancher grant and the focus of that grant would be to increase outreach to go through just getting involved in farming and ranching. The folks who focused on writing those grants were Jodi and Jessica here, so we will have more detail on that if you want to pick their brains afterwards. But that will help reach a couple different audiences.

One, younger farmers getting into farming and providing more support for them and then another part of this that we have been asked to play a role in is supporting women farmers. So, really focusing on women in agriculture as well. That reaches some of the VSP goals of getting new folks involved in what it going on.

The other grant that we just submitted is called the Water-Smart Grant and it is to provide continuous support to something that many of you probably have been involved in in the past because of the WRIA 34 planning process. So, the WRIA 34 planning process, Palouse CD was named to be the lead entity to keep things going into the future and keep that be a living process and document. But there has been no funding to do that. So, this grant would basically give us the funding to continue doing the role that we are supposed to be doing.

Nancy Belsby – Is this state or federal?

Jennifer Boie – This would be federal money coming in to support the WRIA 34 process to reconvene the work group to see who was on it before and still wants to stay on. Bring in any new members that want to join and update the detailed implementation plan. Which, I think is going to go right alongside with what you are doing with VSP. Looking at what has been accomplished already, what still needs to be accomplished that was already stated in that original plan and then setting the stage for the next five years. What are the goals?

What are we trying to accomplish is on this list already, and making sure we reconvene again, hopefully, on a 5-year schedule to keep this process alive. We should find out about both of those grants in the coming months and if funded kicks off this fall.

Nancy Belsby – The two new grants are with the state to Beginner Farmer/Rancher and the one, (inaudible)?

Jennifer Boie – That would be federally funded as well through the USDA.

Nancy Belsby – Are they both the Bureau of Reclamation?

Jennifer Boie – No, the Water-Smart is Bureau of Reclamation. The Beginner Farmer/Rancher is USDA. Then other efforts, Brad is involved in the Snake River Recovery Board. John is one of the citizen members of that, and Palouse CD and as other CDs play a lead in any role in that board, so those efforts will be closely tied in with what is happening with VSP. Then we also have several grants to continue our Palouse Prairie program which is focusing in identifying Palouse Prairie remnants, working with landowners who voluntarily wanted to protect or enhance those as well as helping with the Spaulding Catch Fly recovery program.

Brad Johnson – Obviously, we only have a small number of our work group members here but I was hoping that by hearing, and Jennifer is one of the three districts, if there is something that she brings up that we want a presentation on, we can do that. In our contract it says we are supposed to meet quarterly. That is the only really deliverable for the work group that we have in our plan but that doesn't mean that we can't meet more or get information out to you to understand what the districts are doing.

I think it is important to understand that even though it may be happening in Palouse and it is not in Pine Creek or Palouse Rock Lake there is a chance to cross boundaries. Dan and Jennifer and Raymond have done it for years where they have gotten a grant in Dan's district and it has benefitted the whole County.

I want to set the stage for this group to get a feel for what districts are doing and how much more you want to learn or get out to Cattlemen's or a Wheat Grower meeting. Jennifer has stated that what she is doing parallels the process you guys just finished. On top of it feeds back into it and it helps every program within the County.

Education and outreach is a huge component of VSP. That is what the state technical panel wants to know. How you are going to reach out and maintain the viability of ag in WC? We are really trying to take that head on. We don't understand fully yet how that is going to report back or what allows us to check the box to say we have done it. Do we have to make 50 contacts or do we make 5 contacts? We don't know yet what the full ramifications are whether or not we are on the top end or the bottom end of the reporting of that.

Jennifer Boie – Most of these things I just told you about are things that we are working in partnership with other CDs up to like 8 CDs, but we are also working with state agencies, federal agencies and then local organizations and non-profits, too. All of these things are collaborative and I think we are seeing the amount of conservation we can do really be amplified by those partnerships. It is a great way to meet other organizations that are doing similar work.

Lastly I just want to extend an invitation to everyone in the room and feel free to extend the invitation further. We have our listening sessions, our Palouse Conservation District next Tuesday, March 6th at 6:00 p.m. at Gladdish in Pullman. We will be sharing a dinner with whoever shows up and we will be asking for input from everyone on where we are going for the next 5 years. We are using this meeting to kick off

our long range planning process for the district. Please come and enjoy a meal and some good conversation and give us some feedback on where we should be going.

Brad Johnson – Okay, are there any questions for Jennifer?

Kim Weerts – At each of the events that you had, did you specifically cut out a chunk of time to talk about VSP?

Brad Johnson – We are going to. We have to. That way we can claim that we had 27 producers on this date to hear about VSP. That is kind of what we are trying to create, something we can track on the go. Jessica is going to show us some things as we get into it. Just making sure we track that. We would love to get in front of the cattlemen and the rest. We have a meeting set up where we are going to update the BOCC. We have VSP on the agenda.

Jennifer Boie – Jodi will also be working with Brad to help develop some outreach material that people can take away so when they are at an event they are trying to absorb and they have something they can take with them to follow up.

Brad Johnson – Jodi will be helping to make that for Pine Creek and Palouse Rock Lake and WC too. We really understand we have a bigger staff so whatever we can create and send out and if they have to tweak it for their areas, that is all that will have to happen. And make sure it is consistent.

Kim Weerts – Is the checklist available?

Brad Johnson – The checklist will definitely be available.

Jennifer Boie – That's a good point. So, as Palouse CDs we house several staff positions that work across all eight CDs. So they might be employed at Palouse CD but they work equally for and are available for Whitman, Palouse Rock Lake, Adams, Lincoln, Spokane, etc. Those are hired through the regional conservation partnership program. So, we have dedicated four to five plan workloads staff that actually work collaboratively across all those eight CDs. Everything we do, I think Dan claims the term, "Districts without boundaries," and we are working together.

Jon Jones – Are there plans to bring this to the high schools in the County?

Jennifer Boie – We haven't talked about it as it related to VSP specifically, but we do have high school programs including (inaudible) but we could certainly include some conversation at lunch time with a presentation of VSP. Great idea. Jodi had some other work issues on storm water education with eighth graders that we could feed that into. Jodi also delivers Wheat Week, but that is a younger audience with 5th grade.

We also have a conservation photography grant that we were just meeting on this morning to try to get into the high schools and college level on themed photography. Whether it is ag or soil or wild habitat to use it as an outreach so they can take photos, submit them and then get that out. So VSP is certainly something we could wrap into any of those youth outreach.

Brad Johnson – I think we just need to think about it a little more.

Mark Storey – I was just curious about what the goal is to try and re-energize the WRIA 34 work group. It is kind of a side issue. Many of us had a very negative experience with Ecology in the tail end of that process.

Jennifer Boie – The goal from, I haven't talked to Ecology about this yet, but my goal is that I have been in my position since 2010 and I inherited this responsibility and I feel like PCD has not fulfilled its responsibility that it is tasked with to keep this a living document. So that is one goal. I hate to not do things I am supposed to do.

But beyond that, a role that we were given, (inaudible) is I think, we have all this work that happened, the RCPP work, the collective work with all the districts and all the other organizations and the VSP, that we can really use that process and use some of the funding to reconvene that group to help with the recording for VSP and say that look at all the work that has happened since 2009 and we are going to talk about these different time periods that we are collecting information on. But I feel it will provide additional funding to go out there and collect all that information.

What have we done on the last check in on the WRIA 34-35 plan, what have we done in 10 years? I think that we will be impressed by the amount of work that has been accomplished. Then use that for planning purposes now that we are working collectively. What should we be setting our sites on to accomplish the next goal? There is also to keep getting funding to do voluntary conservation work we have to show that we have a plan of action on how we are going to work to (inaudible). We can't do that with an outdated plan.

Mark Storey – You made me feel better when you said Ecology wasn't part of this. They were trying to force things that the group had not actually approved. That's where I get nervous about, especially with instream flows and some of the others.

Brad Johnson – We are seeing some funding sources ask where we are at with our detailed implementation plans specifically. It is outdated so we are not eligible for some funding too, so that is another reason why you see the detailed implementation side of that. We are hoping that this group that did VSP, she said we are going to look to see who wants to be on that.

We are hoping that with the VSP group we can develop the relationships we have around the table and just work on that. So that when we do have to sit back down at the table because water resources with the state that whole bunch of money and we are thinking that WRIsAs are going to be brought back to some degree with some of that money. They are focusing on the west side now.

But we are going to turn on them and say that if you are going to do this, we want to have a chance at making it right for Eastern Washington, if this is what this group wants or with the WRIA 34 group. It is a parallel process but we are hoping some of the gifts of momentum that we have gained with this group that we can keep it going. That's why we are bombarding you with a lot of information today. We want to make sure you understand what the districts are doing.

Mark Storey – There are certain parts in that and I'll be watching and I'm sure a few others will too. If we start going down the wrong path with creating new regulations as opposed to voluntary actions.

Jennifer Boie - Here is the one who didn't go through the WRIA 34 process. I know many of you did. I come in and say, "Hey let's do this," and everyone is like, "Do you really want to open up that can of

worms?” I say that we are supposed to and CD is supposed to be leading the staff part and we have not been able to because the funding wasn’t there.

Ecology funded that initial work. This is why we are going out for other additional funding to reconvene, the watershed planning group is not going to, through this effort, be Ecology funded. Maybe they will want to kick in some funds and that group can decide what they want to do.

All of the original members will be invited. I’m sure Ecology will want to be at the table but they have a choice to be there or not, but they are not funding the effort at this point. This is through a different source of money. Regulatory-wise, I know there were some concerns about is this going to be setting in-stream flow and all that, and I think the timing was just by coincidence (inaudible) by submitting this grant, it was just like total coincidence. We are here for voluntary, we need a plan so we can keep working collectively. What are we going to do together, how are we going to move our money most effectively?

Mark Storey – Just be careful, Certain individuals, I won’t even say Ecology, because that is not fair but certain individuals were pushing instream flows and we hadn’t even approved or disapproved them and claiming they were ours. I’m not going to name names but it was a crummy process and that is right about when the whole process died because people were tired of getting pushed. Just be aware of that.

Brad Johnson – Thanks. We appreciate that.

Kim Weerts – Going back to going into high schools and different groups and things like that, you talked about PCD is the lead entity but your work is in all four districts. So, are you going to, are the viewed (inaudible) materials going to be VSP only and the different CDs will do with that what they want to or are they going to be coming out of a specific CD?

Brad Johnson – So, we talked about the implementation of VSP staying within each district. So, let’s frame it from that position right there. This is a county process but led by the Palouse CD, so when we develop something, just use Brian as an example. If he doesn’t have time to develop it and he is not getting enough money to do all this development, we will develop something and we want him to put his local district stamp on it. We will try to have the district boundaries and actually we should probably talk about some other things here. We will try and develop it for the developer’s district but it will be county-wide.

Kim Weerts – Yes, so what you are saying to me is that information that comes out of a district will have the district, it will look like a district sponsored, not VSP individually. That’s my question.

Brad Johnson – I think it would have to, Kim. The County is broken up into the four districts and we want it to be that district’s individual information for that district.

Jessica Self - It could be in conjunction, like a brochure comes out and on the back it says, “Sponsored by Whitman County VSP and Whitman Conservation District.” Something on there that identifies that it is coming out of the VSP process.

Kim Weerts – My concern is with some producers as always, don’t they get nervous being tied to a CD, so I’m saying a CD as opposed to stand alone VSP.

Brad Johnson – You want it to be “Stand alone VSP” then?

Kim Weerts – It makes more sense to have it “Stand alone VSP,” because then there doesn’t have to be so much printing involved. Everything is VSP but every CD can target their particular group. Because that goes into then when we are talking about going to producer groups and going into schools. All of a sudden we have four CDs and so does that mean that Brian can only do the tools in his conservation district boundary line?

Jessica Self – The answer on that might be different than like the printing. We often will trade events at the district level. Like PCD will do events on Palouse Rock Lake soil judging, Whitman does the Fair. So we just rotate those responsibilities so one person doesn’t carry the burden. There might be some trading in the background. If you do this, we’ll do this. I like your idea of just having on the outreach materials just WC VSP and then down below for more information contact, whatever the contacts are at the districts.

Kim Weerts – That makes more sense. Then if you are at the Fair and you guys are there then it’s all VSP then you are talking to are PCD personnel.

Jessica Self – I think the answer to that is it can be whatever you guys want. Materials and stuff coming out of this. It will be a collaboration of the different staff and the different CDs working on it.

Brad Johnson – This is your program. That is what we want is for you to tell us that you don’t want it district centered. You want it county centered and we will do that. We work together with every one of these CDs in the room and work together. The question comes in, is if there is a producer in Pine Creek that wants to work with us, I think that is just that an MOU has to be written up or something at that level. But as far as VSP. this is a county program.

So, Jennifer has talked about our program. Dan, do you want to change the talk?

Dan Harwood – There’s not much for me to say. One thing that is very important to the VSP process is, in my opinion, is how the districts interact with each other. We are true partnerships. We do have districts without borders. There are four districts but my programs will work in Palouse, Pine Creek and Whitman, when we write grants whether it is to Ecology, to the Commission or NRCS, any program like that. To be realistic to get the points that we need, you need to include all the partners that you can possibly gain.

The RCPP is a prime example. If I’m not mistaken, I believe we have 18 partners in that program. So, you look at it and the VSP, the voluntary incentive base programs is what generates every conservation district and every program. It is like what Jennifer and I told Ecology a few weeks ago. We are the ones who know the landowners and have the one-on-one meetings with them. We have the relationship with them and can get conservation on the ground.

The VSP program fits. We have monitoring, and grants, we have CREP. Not only do districts give program contacts, we walk and talk and prove that we survive the CREP project. We did one-on-one on our farm as well. So, it is not just we talk the talk, but we deliver and so we feel sometimes the pain that landowners complain about and it is very bad.

We are here to make sure everyone knows the outreach with the VSP. Following Jennifer is not an easy task in case you guys haven’t noticed. But the key to it is the programs that they have at PCD all the time are intertwined. They have a fantastic program there. Thank you.

James Schierman – I really don't have anything to say. Dan and Jennifer said all of it. I'm still kind of in the learning stage.

Brad Johnson – We don't have Raymond here today but I want to bring up a few things. We sat down as a group before this meeting just to try to look, first of all at a really good meeting with Mark and Alan and then the districts sat down and talked about the deliverables that came out of the VSP work plan.

One thing I want the work group, and this comes from Raymond. We came up with the idea of some before and after pictures and some landowner testimonials and Raymond came up with a producer project spotlight. So I want you to be thinking when we give our 2-year report at the end of this year, think of a producer or a project that you would like to have a spotlight on.

Obviously we might, all the districts are going to think about this for their own are, but be thinking about a producer or a project spotlight that you know about. All it is basically going to be is a page or a page and a half of nice colored pictures and what result and the project was. I am looking forward to working with Brian, Dan, Raymond and James and our staff too, Jessica, Jodi and Jennifer on this. Does anybody else have anything they want to say?

Alan Thomson – On these projects you were talking about I thought anonymity was a big deal about not being identified.

Brad Johnson – We talked about that. A producer's spotlight, if a producer is involved, obviously there is no anonymity and that person would have to agree to participate. A project, if you just show a project, you wouldn't give a location or name, just direct seed, or 10,000 acres of direct seed in this watershed and talk about it. Then you don't have a location.

Alan Thomson – I think Kim would be in front for that one.

Brad Johnson – She has done some pretty neat stabilizations. Have they held up?

Kim Weerts – It is a little early for this year.

Alan Thomson – Can you say ice flow?

Kim Weerts – That was last year. That was only two-thirds of the project.

Brad Johnson – I am going to turn it over to Jodi. We both brought some pictures and we are presenting to you to get what Kim gave us on VSP being county-wide.

Jodi Prout – The ag edition will be coming in the Gazette on March 22nd so it is a great opportunity for us to tell more about VSP. This is our current ad that represents the four conservation districts. We have talked about creating a half page ad that would be VSP specific. Something like the implementation and check list.

We wanted to present that to you to see if it would be something you would be interested in. There would be a cost involved. Color option for a half page would be around \$375. Black and white is a little bit cheaper. That would be something that we would be taking this ad, removing VSP general language,

creating something specific to the work plan and then putting it in addition to the descriptions of the conservation districts.

We are also running an RCPP, Regional Conservation Partnership Program ad along with that, so it would be a nice compliment to the two programs we are highlighting. If that is something that you are interested in, I would be happy to put that together, send it out for you to approve for any suggestions you might have. I talked to the Gazette and they need it by March 12th, so we have about a week to finish that up. Do you have any questions?

Alan Thomson – Would this be a one-time publish?

Jodi Prout – Yes. This would create a standard for a publication that we could put into another media outlet or use it for outreach material.

Jon Jones – It sounds like it is affordable and we will reach some people. So, what is the downside? I don't see much downside.

Jodi Prout – Absolutely. Great.

Joan Folwell – Whoever is putting the ag edition together, is it too early for them to include an article? Because it is for the whole County so I don't know what the timing should be until we are doing an outreach program.

Brad Johnson – Are you thinking about an article of someone who has put in a project and just to highlight it?

Joan Folwell – No, just more explanation and introduction.

Kim Weerts – Nobody knows about it yet.

Alan Thomson – The Gazette is always looking for stories.

Jon Jones – A story would be somebody who has done it.

Brad Johnson – Do you want an article and then wait to do something on VSP where we have to pay? Or do you want them both?

Kim Weerts – I think you should talk to the Gazette. Dusty has an article and Lacrosse has and I think it would, I approached them one time to have the Cattlemen's have an article in there every once in a while and not really a charged thing. But just an on-going, maybe once every couple months or something when they need something. Have VSP write an article, the first one could be an introduction, and then showcase people.

Joan Folwell – I would furnish them with all the information they need to write the article. People may not look at an ad but if there is a headline and an article,

Brad Johnson – I think that is a great idea to have an article.

Jodi Prout – You might consider if you are going to write an article and include that, and if they are not willing to put additional graphic stuff in there, maybe you could actually put the VSP checklist in there, rather than just general information.

Brad Johnson – And then give the contact information to the VSP website, everybody else’s website. I think Jon was right. I don’t think there is anything wrong with paying but I think first of all get a few articles out there.

Kim Weerts – You didn’t pay for the information for the article that talked about the programs, the new programs.

Jodi Prout – That was on the front page of the Moscow-Pullman Daily. That was them calling us and interviewing.

Kim Weerts – Those papers can be the same thing for VSP.

Alan Thomson – It could be part of an ongoing story as well. You’ve got a progression here. Other successes. So somewhere down the line, news flash folks, it is sinking. Going down like the Titanic.

Joan Folwell – You would think that their circulation trying to get a newsletter out for, I’m sure you will have success in bringing people to meetings, but this is sort of a broad overview and gets people accustomed to knowing what VSP is.

Dan Harwood – A lot of absentee landowners do still get the Gazette. That’s part of the message that has to be put out, not only to the tenants and local landowners but to the absentee landowners.

Jodi Prout – Do we know if the ag edition gets a larger readership than their general? That would be the only reason I think we might want to try to get something right away. If you want the checklist in the ag edition rather than the general.

Jon Jones – I know a lot of people keep the ag edition for a long time.

Kim Weerts – What you might do is you could do a press release a couple of weeks before and reference, “See more in the Ag edition.”

Brad Johnson – We’ve talked about the VSP stewardship plan, we need to use that and document it, track projects especially new producers. Right now, Jessica has some information just to show the work group but also to show Dan, James and Brian.

Jessica Self – This is an overview of the project. We will just pull up our project management sheet. Here are the objectives that we stated that we would complete over the next year and a half. Then over here is a timeline of how it is following out. So Objective One is focusing on education outreach and technical assistance which we have started. Also, focused on Objective Two with the districts’ work, which is the monitoring, reporting and active management.

Over the past year at the Palouse Conservation District, we have been gathering historical data to create a foundation for what we have done, within our district in WC. Basically in order to collect all of this information and report on it to see how well VSP has worked, we need to say that. I can pull up the spread

sheet so you can see the information we are trying to capture. Obviously, on the data analysis side of things we are wanting as much data as possible to get the big picture of what is going on.

But mainly we are focused on projects and what watershed these projects are located on. Within our district we have around 200 projects that we have logged in, historical projects dating up to now. We are trying to gather watershed, the dates when the project took place. So, the biggest thing here that we are focusing on these projects are usually multiple years. The baseline is July 1, 2011.

Where we were running onto some issues with how we were going to capture our data is that some of these projects start in 2009 and don't end until 2011-12 so how are we going to capture this data? We decided within our districts and in talking with the other districts that we need to focus on 10 days of these projects so if there is an in date post of July 1, 2011, we will put it into the post baseline date.

Over here we have activity for each project. Here is the big thing that we are looking at is the quantitative activity, so, stream length, number of plants, total acreage, fencing, all of these quantitative numbers we can use to analyze reporting and comparing what was done after that baseline date. Then also critical areas. Fish & Wildlife, aquifer recharge, (inaudible) areas. Right now we are working with the other districts to gather their historical data. So when we have it all compiled we can move forward.

Brian Bell – Are you manually entering those projects?

Jessica Self – Yes, I mean we are putting some of the, it has been quite a process. We have put in a lot of hours gathering our data and making sure it is accurate as possible moving forward. We actually had some interns work on this last year but unfortunately just because they don't have that historical knowledge, some of that information wasn't correct. We are going through and doing a quality check with all of our data. We are having to pull out every single project and really looking to see how we can capture the quantitative data as accurately as possible.

Dan Harwood – One more thing. The way we did it when we had a project, we only entered the first year's acreage. Most of our projects are multi- year, 3-year. So a person starts out in year one we report 200 acres, and they end up completing 600 acres on that project. So that is how we've done that. It is up to you guys how you want it reported.

Brad Johnson – Direct seed is the one, usually if you are doing a critical area plantings unless you have to go in and reseed it you should only reseed it once. But direct seed, if you've got 100 acres and you are doing five years, the producers only get 100 acres but over five years it was 500 acres but really we should only report 100 of it because it depends on how the question is asked.

Raymond has some really good comments. If it is over the five years, you did 500 acres but you really want to say that each landowner, there were five landowners and the each did 100, which is the total of 500 but it is really a total of 1,000. Do you double report, triple report it?

Jon Jones – I don't know if it makes a lot of difference as long as it is consistent. The end matches up with the beginning so you don't double load at the end and half load at the beginning. I would suggest making some kind of a little appendix to say that this is the way we calculated it. So, the next people in your position if you are not there can refer back so we don't get caught short.

Dan Harwood – We have done the same 15,000 acres in contract (inaudible). You take that times your three years you have 45,000 acres. Do you want to look it as 45,000 acres of conservation on the ground or 15,000 acres for the project?

Joan Folwell – Doesn't it depend on how you (inaudible). If your proposal is for 100,000 acres, you are,

Brad Johnson – We can't say there are 100,000 acres of crop land and then say we direct seeded 300,000 acres. Or direct seeded 150,000. So when we are talking about critical areas we need to identify how many acres of critical areas there are. The ag intercept in those critical areas is where we are addressing a project and that is why we are trying to bring it back from whatever the watershed project type, how many acres by a critical area.

We will bring this to you to see and make sure, you guys have to be able to understand it too. When we do the report at the end of this year, we've got a 2-year report that is due the end of this year. Brian is right. I don't expect Brian to spend as much time on it as Jennifer has made our staff work on it outside of VSP funding.

We just started VSP funding a month ago so this will be our second month so we did a lot of that work with some VSP money that we got with our first when Ben was the consultant. But we didn't get \$5,000 or \$8,000 but Jennifer identified how important this is, not only even if we weren't doing VSP, just to be able to show what we have done over the years with the district.

Alan Thomson – I am just starting to form in my head right now about ag ditching. That is definitely a part of VSP and it is important to the landowners to understand this that there could be critical areas in these ditches and they are exempt from the Critical Area Ordinance.

So I can't ask for a wetland report for instance, but if there are wetlands in there or it is being flooded and that is the reason you want to ditch, that adds to your farming, because you are saving some crop land. Then if there are some critical areas in there, some wetlands, if you avoid them that needs to be documented.

That is a positive rather than totally trashing the drainage and taking everything. Maybe there are some areas there you can protect, avoid and still maintain the ditching. I don't think that was brought up before. This is something the landowners can document and preserving the drainage.

Kim Weerts – If I remember correctly we had a somewhat comprehensive list of things that had been done since 2011. All the CDs did it and NRCS did it.

Brad Johnson – The workgroup paid to have Harold give some information.

Kim Weerts – Okay, so are we going to go back and make sure that that is as comprehensive as possible because you are only going to hit the people in the program. So, what are your plans to find out what projects have been done since 2011 until present for people who are not in programs?

Brad Johnson – We have not come up with that yet. That would be in the work plan but I have not,

Brian Bell – It is on the check list. I have started handing the check list out and people can start filling it out. Whether or not they fill it out, that's up to them.

Kim Weerts – I understand that. How are we going to capture as much as we can. I can see people doing the check list if they want to do it. I understand that, but what I can't see is if I pick up this check list I'm not going to know that I can go back to 2011. So there needs to be some outreach to people who are not in programs in particular to capture those projects.

I went on a tour with DOE and I don't think any of those guys that did projects took money. We need to capture those because they have done money. This is great for the future. We need to reach people who have done projects since 2011.

Brad Johnson – So the article that we write, and when we've got to pull that out in there, do you think coming and talking to a cattlemen's meeting would help? Would there be anybody that would be willing to fill that check list out?

Kim Weerts – I think it should be all through. I think you should bombard all the groups. I'd like to see you as the coordinator be talking to the heads of all these different groups and trying to get to their meetings. Even working with the heads to get out information.

Whether it is emails or letters or something. Because if you are working with the heads of the those organizations it won't cost VSP anything for those groups to send out, and to not apply pressure, but to expose the information so that we can continue to capture what happened since 2011.

Brad Johnson – I agree. One of my challenges was going to be to those who made it today was to fill out the VSP work plan. Those of you that are in VSP and farm, just so we can capture that from at least the people that are in VSP. The self-funded projects that you have done like some of the things that Alan was mentioning. I'd be more than happy to reach out. All those email addresses that are on the back, Ben has all of those, so I'll be working with you at the Cattlemen's? Okay, do you know when your next meeting is?

Kim Weerts – Next Wednesday, 6:00 p.m. at the PFF.

Brad Johnson – John said that we can hold meetings there, too.

Jennifer Boie – In the conversations we've been talking about VSP it seems like the biggest piece of VSP is going to be the outreach component, to get the word out. Especially the folks who haven't been in programs and capturing that. Really, VSP is the producers program. The VSP support staff is really just being there to help tell the producers story. That is the angle we have been trying to talk around.

How can we be useful to help ag tell their story of why they are being successful and in keeping farming sustainable for themselves and their operations as well as protecting critical areas? That's the lens we are looking at it, in agriculture's best interest for VSP to be successful so we don't have to go to a regulatory framework. How can we help ag tell their story?

Joan Folwell – I was just wondering on your documentation. Is it important or not to have a column for success? Did this really work out? Or I was just thinking back to our conversations with Anchor. I can't remember the term they used.

Brad Johnson – People leaving a program?

Joan Folwell – But I would think if you are going to this trouble making reference to begin with that this would behoove you to have a column for that. Just for your own information. Even if you don't use it in relation to VSP.

Brad Johnson – In the plan I think they talked about a 3% for some and a 7% for others and I would have to ask the folks that have been with the PCD longer. Dan, when someone enters a direct seed program, have you had them ever pull out?

Dan Harwood – Sure. They don't pull out during contracts just because they are in a contract, they complete the contract. The goal is for them to continue the project on their own, and some do and some don't. The majority of them is how we teach direct seed is all (inaudible). By the time they get to that 3rd-4th year, you are on your own and running.

Joan Folwell – That is an example I didn't think about. I was thinking about like riparian restoration where either the weather or nature deep sixes it or maybe through negligence because the producer has to keep on top of things in order to make it. There are not going to be people come and do all the maintenance that is necessary at the time, depending on contract. I know that the historical evidence projects that were over 4-5 years ago you're never going to.

Brad Johnson – If they backed out or fold up for some reason to document that.

Alan Thomson - That is a good thing to do but you need to keep in mind that the overall goal here is the watershed and it helps with the watershed. So, some producers may not be participating. We don't know about them in the watershed. If the watershed is healthy, then it is no skin off our nose. But if it is not healthy, then potentially we have someone we need to target and get on board. Your operation is causing this watershed to fail.

Joan Folwell – I guess I wasn't thinking of it as a punitive thing. Just as informational thing. If you have decisions to make in the future about what to do and what not to do, what is successful, what isn't, what needs improvement. The CDs themselves could use that information.

Alan Thomson – I think that is important but also for those non-participants. If this watershed could fail what is the result? The result could end up in regulatory which affects everybody including that person who is not involved themselves. So it is not, I'm not going to use the word "punitive," I'm going to use the word "incentive." Let's get you involved here because we either all sink or we swim.

Brad Johnson – I understand what you are getting at and Alan's point is well taken. It was something they wanted us to track from the state side. Not that it isn't valid. It is a range of a figure and some practices don't have any and some have some. In the grand scheme of things if your watershed is still healthy, what does it matter if two people back out because seven people got into it? So, we will see if we can figure out a way to crack that. With new projects, yes, with old projects, we can't go back. It would be just on new ones.

Kim Weerts - Going back a little bit to outreach. Are we going to have a local VSP website?

Brad Johnson – The County has a VSP website.

Alan Thomson – I wouldn't exactly say it was a website. We have a VSP program on a webpage. It is not anything more than, here is the work plan. It is not a website. It is a webpage.

Kim Weerts – Are we going to have a specific one for WC? The second question would be, are you going to do a special page on things like Facebook, there is some relative information on there. It is a way to capture more people and get the information out and I think if they look for things like that even though they seem insignificant it brings it to people's attention, especially locally.

Brad Johnson – If the work group wants it, let's do it. We need to have a website page that talks about it and it is one of the things that we are asked when we give our quarterly reports. They talk about, is your information being disseminated? And that's on your website. Those VSP tabs.

Alan Thomson – Just for clarification, who is responsible, who is responsible for this website? You are calling it Whitman County. So is it the County or is it going to be PCD?

Kim Weerts – PCD. It's the VSP specific.

Alan Thomson – I just wanted to be clear there. I don't think the County can put any,

Kim Weerts – The VSP stuff on the County I would think would just be the minutes and the plan.

Mark Storey – It is a decision of this group and then there is a cost that should go to pay for people to maintain it to whatever it is you want. Do you want something that you can pull information to pull off of instead of just static lengths of data? That takes more effort. Websites are not free.

Brad Johnson – Would you want a VSP website built by the (inaudible) and it be interactive, what we are talking here?

Jennifer Boie – We could certainly propose and it could be someplace where folks could download and print them. Checklist, or we could make an interactive page where they could actually submit the checklist right there if they want and we could capture that to feed into locations.

Kim Weerts – It would make sense to me because the whole thing is to get the information out and that is what this first two years is supposed to be mainly is for education and outreach.

Brad Johnson – It leads us into we identify some money that right now is just sitting out to the side for projects. I would say a VSP website is a project, would you want us to come up with a cost to subtract out of that money so that we can get a website up and running? Or do you want to wait awhile? I forget what the dollar amount is in that, is it \$70,000?

Mark Storey – I think it is \$70,000 and you haven't spent any of it yet.

Brad Johnson – We haven't spent any money yet.

Kim Weerts – I think it is worth looking at the cost of it. I know that websites cost some but they don't cost that much. It is the time that someone takes to do stuff. If you have most of it set up initially then you can also, if we want to add a blog to it to keep recurring and then people who subscribe to it will start to get more information and reminders.

Joan Folwell – The PCD has the most resources and I presume you would set up the website and that would be considered the home but there can be a link from the County and other places.

Brad Johnson – Absolutely. What I was getting at is right now in any of the budgets that we are looking at we didn't have anything to set up a website in so we would have to have permission. First of all we would get some quotes. We don't have to go big to start with, we just want it up and running. There is a ton of information from other areas that once we got it up and running we can house it ourselves.

Jennifer Boie – Yes, and we might even have the capacity in house to have staff design that.

Mark Storey – One of the worst things you can do is set up a website and not keep it current. That is where most organizations get in trouble. So, if you start this, which I am very much for, know that you are going to want to have a critical amount of money going to this for a long time.

Alan Thomson – It seems like the appropriate time for this would be now.

Jennifer Boie – I think we might talk about it a little bit with some of the recording forms that people submit some of the data but it would be very easy to create a form that is a voluntary checklist and that data could feed into the data base of projects and we could use the same tools.

Alan Thomson – So there are eight members from the work group here right now. Do we need to give them a yes or no to getting the price on this? So a quorum is seven.

MOTION by Alan Thomson and seconded by Joan Folwell to give the okay to the PCD to look into the cost for a webpage for the VSP and get back to us. Roll call vote. Motion passed.

Jeff Pittmann – Yes

Jon Jones – Yes.

Tracy Eriksen – Yes.

David Swannack – Yes.

Nancy Belsby – Yes.

Joan Folwell – Yes.

Kim Weerts – Yes.

Alan Thomson – Yes.

Kim Weerts – I just happened to notice that Franklin County sent out a postcard with VSP information on it to 1100 producers, so a blanket coverage. They have had over 40 individual meetings and they have lined up calls for a bunch more. Maybe we should think about something like that. I don't know what it would cost. It seems like they were successful in that. I can probably get a copy of the card.

Brad Johnson – If you get a copy send it to me and I can call them. Do we have an MOU with Franklin County?

Jennifer Boie – Not for VSP but for other projects.

Brad Johnson – Each month there are three deliverables that are listed in our contract. When they send it back to us we put it together and then get the quarterly reports done. This is a new smart sheet program that Jessica is working on. It is pretty simple. Just a one page goes out.

Jennifer Boie – Basically, a smart sheet is a powerful tool for managing big projects and budgeting and things like that. Another thing that it does it can create a web forms, so they are easy to put together. So every month I will be sending these out to you, all the districts as well as the internal staff at the CDs, to allow to basically state how many hours they worked with each task. (Inaudible) services if they spent any money and what they were, mileage, and then at the end attaching all receipts and mileage logs. Once they push the (inaudible) it just shows up right in our spread sheet. Then they are streamlined with our budget that we created on the smart sheet. We have a more complex form that has every line item of money spent but we haven't updated this, (inaudible).

Brad Johnson – Once we get everything from everyone we send it to Evon, and she sends it off to the Commission.

Alan Thomson – We have a budget so the County pays that up front and then we bill the Commission.

Jennifer Boie – So, then going back to the website, if we go that way we do have a web form we can create here in the smart sheet and we can make a link within the page and then someone can click on it, fill out the information, push the (inaudible) and we will automatically have it in the file.

Alan Thomson – Brad you have the schedule for the quarterly reports?

Brad Johnson – We just put it in. The first one she pulled up. So the end of March, by April 10th we have to have the first quarterly report due.

Alan Thomson – Are they still asking for a monthly report?

Brad Johnson – You have to give your monthly descriptions and then the quarterly report. Yes, we sent the monthly report to Evon. So, Jessica will send me a reminder on April 1st to have it done by April 10th.

Jennifer Boie – Brad will provide data from this grant tracking spread sheet on the (inaudible) path as needed as part of that reporting and it will streamline all that has started, what is remained, what has been accomplished, etc.

Brad Johnson – That's all I have. I appreciate Jennifer, Dan, Brian and James, and Jodi's input but I've gotten a lot. I'm excited to get out and get to know people. So, do I need to contact you? I don't want Dan, Brian, or James or Raymond to feel that I'm, I want to invite them so they are involved In this because this is a co-project.

This is partnerships for the Palouse. I'm going to try to be at that meeting next Wednesday with the conservation districts. I'll put together a short presentation, and bring some VSP stewardship check lists and talk about the planning process and where we are with implementation.

Kim Weerts – Are we going to go on to the rest or are we going to bag it? You said Task #2 which is you are talking CPPE.

Brad Johnson – That was right off the get go when I came here.

Kim Weerts – The aerial and CPPE we are tabling for now.

Brad Johnson – Yes, if that was okay.

Mark Storey – I can read Art's email if you want.

Brad Johnson – Sure.

Mark Storey – Art looked at it and his response, he says, *“Since I attended the WDFW high resolution vegetation change detection presentation in Spokane a few months ago, the software doesn't work well in non-forested areas and isn't yet available to the tech changes in ground usage conventional tillage for direct seeding (inaudible). It looks like DFW is trying to find ways to fund HRCD with sales to VSP plans, (everybody is talking!) but I didn't see where it would work for most of our county.”*

Then it goes on and talks about the approved plan and how he thought that was the better way to at least start. That was his input and that is why Brad's saying that we need to back up and look at it a little more.

Kim Weerts – I think that is good.

Brad Johnson – Do you like the idea of the districts giving a short presentation for this group here? I've never worked with you guys. We need to meet quarterly. We are thinking about another meeting in the next month and a half before we get into spring work and things like that.

I don't want to waste your time. I think there are some things, Alan got a vote on the website. You've given us some dialog, Kim, I appreciated it to make sure we are headed in the right direction. The next meeting, how do you want to see it? Was this format fine?

Kim Weerts – I don't necessarily think that all the CDs need to come every time and report. At least in the beginning what I see is just a cumulative effort report on what kind of education has been done, what kind of outreach, because we can't move forward in any other avenue until we get the word out. That is what I see as the most important thing.

Joan Folwell – I don't know how the other members feel about seeing what the outreach material is going to be beforehand.

Brad Johnson – The outreach material is going to go out to the work group before it is sent out to anybody. We are going to send it out to you. We will put a feeler out to see if things seem okay. A lot of that information and education outreach components is either going to be coming from the commission or from another area that has already developed it and is further on down the line from us.

That information will go out to the full work group. If I'm not getting responses back on email, I will be calling and asking if you got a chance to look at this? If there is enough who want to have a meeting, then we will get a meeting set up. Hopefully, some of this stuff can be done by email or go to a website to see what was developed. We are not going to do anything, this whole group wants to ensure that we are doing what you want.

Tracy Eriksen – I'd say move ahead on the webpage. Get it up and going.

Mark Storey – We have to have a proposal and some details. Just a thought, because the VSP workers may have a falling out with the CD in the future, it has to be something that is affordable, too. I also think about your protocol about how you write your emails for things that you distribute. How you are going to ask for people's permission to put things out?

If you get one response that says maybe, you're not going to call everybody. So, just think about how you put things together that you either get responses or move forward without all the responses. Otherwise, you will have lots of meetings and bugging a lot of people.

Brad Johnson – I appreciate that and once we get a chance to meet with the different groups, get to understand how they like information.

Alan Thomson – How about if we are not in a meeting like this, and we need to take a vote on something, like he gives us a budget for the webpage, do we have to have a meeting in order to do that or could we do that via telephone?

Mark Storey – Do you have by-laws?

Alan Thomson – No we don't. We have to have a meeting to make a decision.

Brad Johnson – With that in mind, there might be a meeting within the next week or two weeks, depending on how quick we can pull some stuff together on a web page.

Jennifer Boie – Something you might want to consider is setting up a threshold in the budget that you are relying on Brad to make budget decisions up to a certain amount.

Brad Johnson – What would the County threshold be? Anything under \$2,000, under \$1500?

Mark Storey – You guys need to discuss it instead of just throwing out numbers. I know what we as an agency get to do, \$5,000. I assume you guys are subject to the same state laws as we are. Under \$5,000 we have a lot of leeway, over \$5,000 we don't. But you need to think about what you are comfortable with.

Alan Thomson – Can't we also have a conference call?

Mark Storey – Here is another way of doing it. Maybe you guys want to pre-approve something below a certain amount for the webpage now instead of having another meeting.

Jennifer Boie – Just a global sense of Brad to move forward coordinating the effort. It would be good for him to know what level he can make the decisions at.

Joan Folwell – So, \$2,000 would be enough?

Mark Storey – I would suggest you think about global of \$2,000 for the website, probably be a little more than \$2,000 if you add it all up.

Kim Weerts – I don't mind doing the website but globally I'd like to wait a while and see. We are just getting started and I think we want to make sure it goes in a good direction.

Jon Jones – A conference call might get into a public meeting disclosure.

Alan Thomson – We can do phone meetings when we are dealing with the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment. That is legal. We are not advertising this, are we?

Jon Jones – We should be.

Brad Johnson – We sent it out to the work group. We will get it on the County website.

Kim Weerts – If you notice on the County website that as an example we will have a conference call and a vote,

Jon Jones – But everybody has to be able to call in.

Kim Weerts – You just set up the call-in number, and then can we get by with them posting it saying this is what was decided?

Mark Storey – You still have to provide access to the public to at least one conference phone location. You can't exclude them. It has to be a physical location people can come to and listen to what is being discussed.

Alan Thomson – Only one person necessarily should be here with the phone and that could be me with the phone, but enough people on the phone to make a quorum to make a decision.

Kim Weerts – Did you volunteer?

Alan Thomson – Since I am already here. Do you want to give a number for the website right now, and vote on that? What number are we thinking?

Jon Jones – I'll throw out \$3,000.

MOTION by Jon Jones and seconded by David Swannack to set the limit at \$3,000 to allow PCD to make a decision on a webpage if it comes under that. Roll Call vote. Everyone voted yes. Motion passed.

Brad Johnson – We will be working with all of them on that so you won't be caught off guard.

3:45 p.m. – Adjourned.