Mason County

Joint VSP TP/SAC Meeting Follow Up

June 5, 2025

1. **Can the work plan reference existing statues for baseline protection as far as critical area permitting and SMA are concerned?**

   Yes, VSP Counties can and are encouraged to incorporate other federal, state and local statues or regulatory backstops of Critical Area protection/enhancement into their Work Plan. CARA's & Geological hazardous areas might be easier to lean on regulatory backstop for Mason County VSP Work Plan.

2. **Could BMP's on non-ag activity parcels contribute to the watershed scale function and value. Does non-ag Critical Area loss count?**

   ***2A. Could BMP's on non-ag activity parcels contribute to the watershed scale function and value.***

   In general, BMP's on non-ag parcels do contribute towards watershed scale functions and values. However, this is not the intent of VSP and should not be included in goals and benchmarks of the work plan.

   Answering this question is also reliant on how Mason County VSP is defining agricultural activities.
   Agricultural Activities as defined by *RCW 90.58.065* *(p. 12-13) Application of guidelines and master programs to agricultural activities.*

   BMP's implemented on non-agricultural activity parcels may be reported on to help showcase or capture watershed scale health or resource concerns. However, BMP's on non-ag parcels need to be reported out as a separate category from BMP's implemented on agricultural activity parcels as it pertains to VSP. (A separate narrative section for reporting this distinction has been incorporated into the new 10 year reporting template).

   ***2B. Does non-ag Critical Area loss count?***

   No, but it may be reported on to help showcase or capture a larger picture of watershed scale health if desired.

3. **Non-ag activities contribute to watershed CA health, how to account for this in monitoring? At a watershed scale, how can I ensure my effectiveness monitoring data captures only ag activity? (bracketing?)**

   ***3A. Non-ag activities contribute to watershed CA health, how to account for this in monitoring?***

   This question would be better discussed via a virtual meeting. This is a difficult question to answer over email due to the high quantity of variables and parameters involved in developing a way to measure goals and benchmarks. It also depends on the monitoring tools used, what is being monitored, when and where. It is recognized that Mason County has a small percentage of zoned ag lands and Mason County's watersheds generally make up the lower half of drainage systems and therefore are susceptible to non-point source pollution(s) running off higher is the system.

   Example 1:
   It was stated that fecal coliform is present in Mason County watershed(s). One way to differentiate non-ag activities is to conduct genetic sampling to showcase if the bacteria is from humans, ruminants or other animals. If it is from human waste than it is likely non-point source pollution occurring from a non-ag related activity which can be reported on. If the genetic sampling showcases that the bacteria present in the watershed is likely from a ruminant animal than there is opportunity for water quality improvement from a variety of outreach, engagement and implementation activities.

   Example Two:
   The publicly available data to Mason County is not associated with ag-lands or their associated activities and therefore we decided to change our monitoring plan to showcase these (this measurable parameter) instead as it pertains to the Mason County VSP associated goals and benchmarks:
   - (Insert associated goals and/or benchmark) and how data of this parameter showcases that protection or enhancement.

   Example Three:
   There are 456,128 acres of land that make up Mason County and an approximate 7,633 acres of this land is used for agricultural/aquacultural activities.

Due to the less than 2% of land being used for agricultural it is ineffective to capture the environmental impacts of these activities at the watershed scale and therefore Mason County VSP's has chosen to focus their monitoring efforts on (Insert tangible and scalable monitoring parameters that can be measure against goals and benchmarks).

Example Five:
Water quality data being collected at its current monitoring locations is not a reliable indicator for reflecting the small amount of ag lands in Mason County. Therefore we have shifted are monitoring plans to include annual SVAP2's of the projects implemented and can report on parameters such as:

- Planting survival rate
- Increase in aquatic macro-invertebrate bio-diversity
- Etc.

***3B. At a watershed scale, how can I ensure my effectiveness monitoring data captures only ag activity? (bracketing?)***

The monitoring data collected should be correlated to ag lands and ag activities. What are some of the main ag activities occurring in Mason County and what are the main BMP's being implemented? Answer this question and then find ways to showcase their good work via data gathering.

A few (of many) recommendations that might be helpful:

- Scale down what is being monitored. Associate the parameters being monitored with the BMP's being implemented on VSP applicable ag-activity parcels.
  - Conducting annual SVAP2 for all projects being implemented.
- Showcase change in bio-diversity of riparian vegetation. What fish and wildlife species does that benefit and how?
- Is no-till being newly implemented? Speak to potential ecological uplift of sediment reduction during storm events.
- Are there any irrigation efficiencies being implemented?
- Fish screens?
- Heavy use protection areas? (or sacrifice areas)?
- All of these have monitoring parameters if appropriately defined and applied.

4. **On that, I cannot measure land I don't have access to skewing the data toward only what I can measure (landowner permissions and participation).**

Similar to above, there will be narrative boxes in the reporting template where you will be able to explain this to the TP and VSP staff.

If you have access constraints then report on it.
Additionally, you can see if the Project Manager or a Field Technician can conduct SVAP's while they are in the field on a project site and analyze that data to measure goals or benchmarks.