



WATERSHED WORK GROUP

Meeting Minutes

April 25, 2017

Opened: 6:00 pm - Adjourned: 8:00 pm

ATTENDANCE

Members: Michael Beyer, Larry Boltz, Allan Borden, Carmen Echeverria, Laurie Hagar, Michelle McCallum, Jeanne Rehwaldt, Myrn Stewart and William Short

Mason Conservation District Staff: John Bolender, Barbara Adkins*

Facilitator: John Kliem, Creative Community Solutions, Inc.

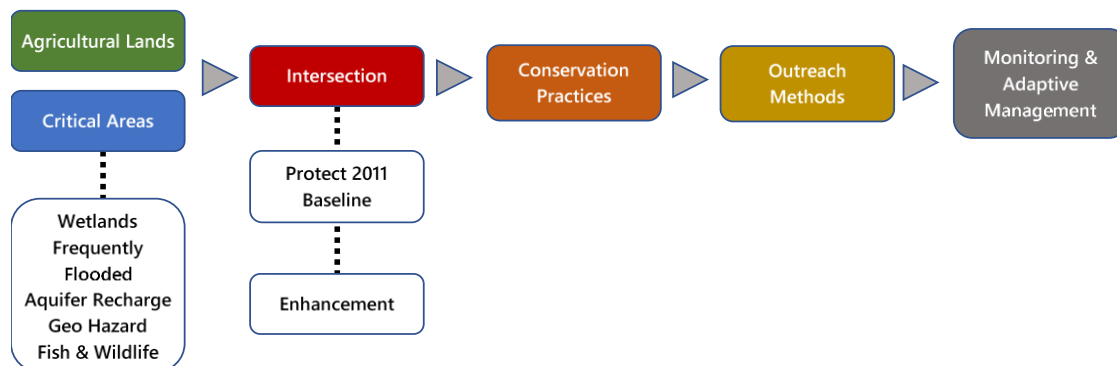
AGENDA

1. Conceptual Framework
2. Introduction to Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas
3. New Business

MINUTES

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Conceptual Model

The Conceptual Framework provided to the group for this meeting is merely a skeleton, or foundation, from which the group can begin to build the plan. It basically breaks down the Work Plan into four separate tracks, keeping the overall document implementable, now and in the future. The Conceptual Model outlines the steps, or pieces, of the Work Plan in a simplistic approach. While each of these pieces will be challenging on their own, breaking the Plan into understandable sections will make the task less daunting and ultimately create a complete document that is more comprehensible to a larger audience.

The Framework, or skeleton, of the Work Plan is designed to assist the Work Group in constructing a Plan that is simple and manageable. Foremost, the Plan needs to ensure agricultural viability – if



participating agricultural operations are not finding success, then the Plan itself is not successful. The Plan should also strongly encourage and especially highlight volunteerism; and be structured as to empower members and citizens in its application.

It is important to revisit the three main goals of the Voluntary Stewardship Program frequently to make sure the Group and the process remains on a consistent path toward Plan compliance. The Framework has been developed to keep to those goals.

Mason County VSP Goals

1. *Ensure the viability of agriculture and reduce the conversion of farmland to other uses*
 2. *Protect baseline conditions for critical areas measured on a watershed scale as of July 2011*
 3. *Enhance critical areas measured on a watershed scale through voluntary actions*
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Agriculture, in terms of the VSP is defined using the Shoreline Management Act instead of the Growth Management Act, where the actual legislation was codified. Utilizing the Shoreline Management Act, or SMA, under RCW 90.58.065, the VSP adopted the following definitions:

RCW 90.58.065 Application of guidelines and master programs to agricultural activities.

(2)(a) "Agricultural activities" means agricultural uses and practices including, but not limited to: Producing, breeding, or increasing agricultural products; rotating and changing agricultural crops; allowing land used for agricultural activities to lie fallow in which it is plowed and tilled but left unseeded; allowing land used for agricultural activities to lie dormant as a result of adverse agricultural market conditions; allowing land used for agricultural activities to lie dormant because the land is enrolled in a local, state, or federal conservation program, or the land is subject to a conservation easement; conducting agricultural operations; maintaining, repairing, and replacing agricultural equipment; maintaining, repairing, and replacing agricultural facilities, provided that the replacement facility is no closer to the shoreline than the original facility; and maintaining agricultural lands under production or cultivation;

(b) "Agricultural products" includes but is not limited to horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, vegetable, fruit, berry, grain, hops, hay, straw, turf, sod, seed, and apiary products; feed or forage for livestock; Christmas trees; hybrid cottonwood and similar hardwood trees grown as crops and harvested within twenty years of planting; and livestock including both the animals themselves and animal products including but not limited to meat, upland finfish, poultry and poultry products, and dairy products;

(c) "Agricultural equipment" and "agricultural facilities" includes, but is not limited to: (i) The following used in agricultural operations: Equipment; machinery; constructed shelters, buildings, and ponds; fences; upland finfish rearing facilities; water diversion, withdrawal, conveyance, and use equipment and facilities including but not limited to pumps, pipes, tapes, canals, ditches, and drains; (ii) corridors and facilities for transporting personnel, livestock, and equipment to, from, and within agricultural lands; (iii) farm residences and associated equipment, lands, and facilities; and (iv) roadside stands and on-farm markets for marketing fruit or vegetables; and



(d) "Agricultural land" means those specific land areas on which agriculture activities are conducted.

As touched on earlier in the presentation; the Framework broaches the VSP goals using four basic tracks:

1. Individual Stewardship Plans
2. VSP Work Plan Outreach
3. Monitoring VSP Progress
4. Program Maintenance

INDIVIDUAL STEWARDSHIP PLANS – ISP

The ISP is the core of the program as they are designed to work with each Agricultural Operator to assist with protection and enhancement. This is achieved through technical assistance, generally provided by the Conservation District ("CD"), to those operators voluntarily seeking guidance. A CD representative can, if invited, visit an operation and suggest a variety of Best Management Practices (BMPs) depending on the issues or concerns and even recommend funding programs. An ISP can be created that the operator may or may not choose to implement; and the information contained in it is confidential.

There are two Counties – Thurston and Chelan – with approved Work Plans. Both of these plans contain checklists intended to act as a template for Stewardship Plans by asking a series of questions. This may be an option for Mason County, if the right amount education and outreach precedes it.

OUTREACH

The Work Group is and will be the face of the VSP in Mason County. Getting the word out and getting operators involved will be fundamental to the program's overall success. Part of the Work Plan will include a section on outreach; this will be the Group's strategy for disseminating information to the Community through a variety of means. Local events or meetings such as OysterFest, Allyn Days and Grange groups, or farm supply stores are excellent opportunities to provide information about VSP.

Suggestions: Veteran's Programs, Tax Incentives, Farm to School Programs, Streamlined Open Space process, South Sound Food System

MONITOR PROGRESS

Monitoring the program's success, or failure, incrementally over the next 10 years will determine if changes, or adaptations, will need to be made. The monitoring strategy, similar to outreach, will be a compilation of methods as determined by the Work Group to be the most effective way to measure results. Ultimately, the data collected from operators and ISPs will be rolled up into a larger scale analysis at the watershed level. If the information shows patterns of failure or an increase in impacts to critical areas, then the Work Group will reconvene to determine possible problems and solutions.

It is important to operator participation in this program that individual farm information is not shared. The Washington Conservation Commission has given an opinion that Stewardship Plans fall under the same protection as Farm Plans in the sense that they are not subject to public disclosure; however, until the laws are changed to specifically include the term "Stewardship" or the confidentiality of a Stewardship Plan is challenged in a court having jurisdiction, there is no indisputable answer.



PROGRAM MAINTENANCE

A successfully completed and adopted Work Plan is only part of this Group’s journey. Over the following ten years, the Group then puts into practice the carefully crafted strategies contained in the Plan. Considering the substantial time commitment of such an undertaking, making a “plan for the future” is also part of the Plan. Maintaining the Work Group, and the Work Plan, over time will require consideration of how to preserve the group’s institutional knowledge, to assign member roles in the future, to continue active and open recruitment, and to potentially partner with other Counties to exchange information and spark new ideas.

CRITICAL AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS (CARAs)

CARA’s are defined under the Growth Management Act as

...areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, including areas where an aquifer that is a source of drinking water is vulnerable to contamination that would affect the potability of the water, or is susceptible to reduced recharge.

Potability, or potable, simply means a liquid that is safe to drink. In this case, water. The County sits atop an abundance of aquifers; however, those specific areas where safe drinking water is available are protected through the management of potential groundwater contaminants. There are 185,705 acres of CARAs mapped in the County; of those, 3,700 acres contain some sort of agricultural activity. Maintaining clean drinking water is crucial for human and animal consumption, domestic water systems, and healthy stream and lake habitat. Agricultural activities are not the sole contributor of negative impacts to the CARAs, however often high levels of nitrates in groundwater can be attributed to fertilizer storage, feedlots, irrigation sites, and manure pits.

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A list of some more commonly used Best Management Practices has been previously provided to the Group; a few specifically designed for the protection of CARAs include:


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|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Agricultural handling facility | Irrigation improvements |
| Cover crop | Manure transfer |
| Irrigation water management | Prescribed grazing |
| Pest management | Residue and tillage |
| Water storage facility | Waste treatment |
| Waste utilization | Water well |
| Conservation crop rotation | |

NEW BUSINESS

No new business

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be on **May 23, 2017 at 6:00 PM** in Conference Room A, Mason County Public Works, 100 West Public Works Drive in Shelton.

***Barbara Adkins, AICP**  **VSP Contact**
SPECIAL PROGRAMS MANAGER
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