

MEETING MINUTES

VSP WATERSHED WORK GROUP

May 23, 2017 | 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Mason Conservation District
450 West Business Park Road * Shelton, WA

ATTENDANCE

Members: Michael Beyer, Tom Bloomfield, Larry Boltz, Allan Borden, Carmen Echeverria, Laurie Hager, Alann Krivor, Michael McCallum, Jeanne Rehwaldt, William Short, Myrn Stewart, and Socorro Villeda

Mason Conservation District Staff: John Bolender, Jennifer Holderman, Barbara Adkins*

Facilitator: John Kliem, Creative Community Solutions, Inc.

AGENDA

CRITICAL AREAS – WRAP UP

- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas
- Frequently Flooded Areas
- Geologically Hazardous Areas
 - Seismic Areas
 - Erosion Areas
 - Landslide Areas
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

WORK PLAN

- Drafting the Document
- Next Steps

MINUTES

DRAFT MASON COUNTY WORK PLAN GOALS, BENCHMARKS, STRATEGIES, CONSERVATION PRACTICES, AND VIABILITY ACTIONS – HAND OUT

This framework is designed to take the three VSP goals further by creating a series of five benchmarks together with performance measures to achieve and evaluate the program's overall success. Although the Program is a watershed based action plan, the use of individual stewardship plans will be necessary to incrementally achieve the overarching goals. Toward that end, the framework contains strategies designed to address critical area protection and agricultural viability at the individual farm level.

The VSP Goals as outlined in the Framework are:

- **Ensure the viability of agriculture and reduce the conversion of farmland to other uses**
- **~~Prevent the degradation of~~ Maintain or enhance critical area functions and values on agricultural lands at a watershed scale as they existed as of July 22, 2011**

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- **Encourage the implementation of voluntary actions that enhance critical areas on agricultural lands**

The change noted in the second bullet was made during the meeting to better align the goal with the actual VSP legislative directive. The five benchmarks listed in the Framework, will require outreach efforts to farm operators working on or near critical areas to encourage proactive stewardship planning.

1. Preparation of Individual Stewardship Plans that identify ag viability actions and voluntary conservation practices for enhancing critical areas and ag viability
2. Confidential technical assistance to agricultural operators
3. Implementation of ag viability actions and voluntary conservation practices
4. Implementation of conservation practices on ag lands accomplished outside of Individual Stewardship Plans
5. Maintaining or enhancing the baseline level of agricultural viability and critical area function and value as of July 22, 2011

Implementation of individual plans would be used to create a tally of achievements, which will then be rolled up to the watershed level. The totals measure the work plan's success and, by contrast, when changes need to be made should success not be attained.

Individual Stewardship Plans v. Farm Plans – “Conservation Plans (a.k.a. Farm Plans) are designed to help landowners inventory the resources on their property (soil, water, livestock, crops, etc.), identify the objectives of their farm, and create a dynamic plan that reflects those objectives while protecting the quality of the natural resources.”¹ An Individual Stewardship Plan is one that may have all the features of a Farm Plan, but is intended to be consistent with the VPS Work Plan and is presumed to be working toward the protection and enhancement of critical areas.

Forest and Timber Land – Long Term Commercial Forest and timber lands are not considered critical areas and their regulation and/or protection do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Voluntary Stewardship Program.

WHERE CRITICAL AREAS AND AGRICULTURE MEET – POWERPOINT

The three goals, reiterated in the information above, can be implemented through four tracks:

1. **Individual Stewardship Plan (ISP)**
2. VSP Work Plan Outreach
3. Monitoring VSP Progress
4. Program Maintenance

Starting with **ISPs**, these plans address those areas where critical areas intersect with lands containing agricultural activities. Often farms, or agricultural activities, are located near critical areas such as

¹ Mason Conservation District

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wetlands or frequently flooded areas due to their proximity to water and favorable soils. In these symbiotic relationships there can be opportunities to create an environment of commensalism², where the farm can continue to benefit while causing no meaningful harm to the critical area. Responsible planning under the VSP can be an educational tool for a mutually safe and beneficial co-existence between farms and critical areas.

Frequently Flooded Areas – defined by GMA as areas generally subject to flooding due to high groundwater, they include rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands, and are fairly abundant throughout the County. Flooded areas are of specific concern to agricultural operations for several reasons, including soil and bank erosion, property and livestock damage, and the deposition of flood-borne debris. There are also several conservation practices an operator can take, through an ISP for example, that retains farm land, improves flood water filtration and better protects livestock, crops and structures.

Geologically Hazardous Areas – meaning the susceptibility to geological events, the County breaks these areas into erosion hazards, landslide hazards, and seismic hazards. Like flood areas, geologic hazards are a concern for agriculture due to potential damage of livestock and structures, soil erosion, and stream migrations. Minimizing the risks in those areas and reducing the potential for loss can be accomplished through conservation practices, or **Best Management Practices**, as developed through an ISP.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas – what is most important to cull from GMA's lengthy definition of these is that it pertains to only those habitats of endangered, threatened or sensitive specials. Not EVERY species. There are many Habitat Conservation Areas throughout the County; most prominent however are those of salmon. Operator concerns about the habitat include damage to crops, safety of livestock, regulatory impacts, and the trespass of wildlife enthusiasts. Again, an ISP can provide practices to retain agricultural lands, reduce conflicts, and avoid disturbances.

NEW BUSINESS

The Group's next meeting will be **Tuesday, June 27, 2017** at the Mason Conservation District Office. After some discussion, it was decided that the Group would not meet in July and August. This will provide a break for Group members during the summer, and allow Staff time to prepare a Comprehensive Work Plan, including outreach and strategies, for review.

A background document has already been prepared that includes information regarding the genesis of the VSP Program, the process, the Work Plan, and a large amount of baseline data. This document will be provided to the Group for their review, and for discussion purposes at the June meeting. At this point, Staff is looking for Group feedback on:

FORMAT – are the maps large enough, readable, and understandable; are the tables formatted so that they represent data in a way that makes sense?

² **Commensalism** is an association between two different species where one species enjoys a benefit, and the other is not significantly affected.

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ACCURACY – are there any inaccurate statements, observations, or conclusions?

COHESIVENESS – does the information flow in logical manner?

UNDERSTANDABILITY – does the overall document make sense to the reader?

Over the next couple months the Work Plan will be drafted for the Group’s review. This Plan will be a foundational document, and not intended to be a final version until properly vetted through the Group.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was received.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

***Barbara Adkins, AICP ♦ VSP Contact**
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