

Appendix E: Community Outreach and Participation

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One of the main purposes of the VSP process is to allow members of the public to participate and provide information – to have an active role in protecting critical areas and maintaining agricultural viability. The Columbia County VSP Work Group was appointed by the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners to serve as a conduit between the VSP Work Group and the citizens of the county. This appendix outlines the Work Group’s efforts to communicate with and obtain input from the general public and from relevant agencies regarding the development of a Work Plan.

VSP Work Group Membership

NAME	REPRESENTING
Glenn Warren	Columbia/Blue Mtn Counties Farm Bureau
D.J. Frame	American Energy - Contractor
Connie Spray	Columbia Co. Public Health
Scott Magill	Landowner
Roland Schirman	Retired Educator
Bill Warren	Warren Farms/Orchards
Paul Carter	WSU Extension
Marty Hall	Livestock & Irrigated Farm
Skip Mead	Conservation Dryland Farmer
Justin Pearson	Columbia Conservation District
Valerie Turner	Livestock
Rick Turner	Dryland Farmer
Bryan Martin	Planning Commission
Jim Bob Bloomfield	Columbia County Cattleman's
Dick Rubenser	Livestock/Forestry
Tom Schirm	Fish & Wildlife
Terry Bruegman	Columbia Conservation District
Eric Thorn	Ag Producer

Don Jackson	Dryland Farmer
Kelly McLain	WA State Agriculture
Steve Martin	Snake River Board
Ed Teel	NRCS District Conservationist
Don and Janet Howard	Ag Producers
Larry Fairchild	Landowner
Randy Mann	Landowner
Bill Turner	Landowner
Lester Literal	Landowner
Dave Frame	Landowner/Irrigated/Livestock
Dan Franiz	Self
Gerald Magill	Local Legend
John Foltz	Snake R. Salmon Recovery Bd
Non-Voting Members & Staff	
Kim Lyonnais	Planning Dept
Meagan Bailey	Planning Dept
Clint Atteberry	Planning Dept
Greg Abramson	Planning Dept
Dwight L. Robanske	
(retired and replaced by	
Norm Passmore	Board of County Commissioners
Don Brigham, Jr.	Project Coordinator/Facilitator

VSP Work Group Meetings

Work Group meetings were held on roughly a monthly schedule from early spring of 2016 through the summer of 2018. The public was invited to attend any Work Group meeting and notices were always available on the Columbia County VSP web site. Shown below is a schedule of the meetings that were held along with the main agenda items for each meeting.

FIRST Watershed Work Group (WWG) MEETING – APRIL 13, 2016

- Introductions

- Ground rules and election of chairperson
- VSP process
- Review of Critical Areas and their interaction with VSP
- Discussion of goals and benchmarks
- Work Plan & Future Steps

AGENDA for June 8th, 2016

- Our Web site
- Timeline of tasks for Work Plan
- Agricultural viability in Columbia County
- Discussion of Threats/Roadblocks to Ag Viability

AGENDA for July 13th, 2016

- Our Web site
- Update on Timeline of tasks for Work Plan
- HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: Discussion of Threats/Roadblocks to Ag Viability
- Agricultural viability in Columbia County
- Develop Goals and Targets

AGENDA for October 12th, 2016

- Summary of Mapping Sub-Committee
- Agricultural viability in Columbia County
- Develop Goals and Targets

AGENDA for December 14th, 2016

- Agricultural viability in Columbia County
- Review draft chapter
- Setting Benchmarks for Critical Area Protection

AGENDA for January 26th, 2017

- Our Tool-kit - Getting credit from our Conservation Programs
- Critical Areas Functions/Values
- Measurable Benchmarks Process

AGENDA for February 8th, 2017

- Outreach & Communication Plan
- Measurable Benchmarks Process in light of things we learned at Moses Lake seminar
- Our Tool-kit - Conservation Programs & Critical Areas Functions/Values

AGENDA for March 8th, 2017

- Outreach & Communication Plan
- Farm Stewardship Plan
- Ag Viability Definition
- Measurable Benchmarks Process
- Our Tool-kit - Conservation Programs & Critical Areas Functions/Values
- Open Meetings Act compliance video

AGENDA for April 12th, 2017

- Clarification on Critical Areas impact – official language definitions are on our web site
- Drafts of Table of Contents and Chapter One for our Work Plan
- Measurable Benchmarks Process

AGENDA for May 10th, 2017

- Updates from State VSP – Adoption of Work Plans from Thurston and Chelan Counties

- Drafts of Table of Contents and Chapter One for our Work Plan
- Measurable Benchmarks Process
 - A compilation of examples from the two pilot projects that have been adopted

AGENDA for June 14th, 2017

- Presentation and discussion of Critical Area Appendix
- Presentation and discussion of Critical Area Maps and Intersection with Aglands
- Drafts of Table of Contents and Chapter One for our Work Plan

AGENDA for September 27th, 2017

- Review and discussion of draft Chapter 1 of Work Plan – already reviewed last Spring
- Review and discussion of drafts of Chapters 2 & 3 of Work Plan

AGENDA for October 11th, 2017

- Review of draft Chapter 2 comments from September Meeting
- Review and discussion of draft Chapter 3 of Work Plan
- Review and discussion of Critical Area maps and Benchmarks, Goals and related topics

AGENDA for November 8th, 2017

- Review of draft Chapter 3 comments from October meeting
- Review and discussion of draft Chapter 4 of Work Plan
- Review and discussion of Critical Area maps and Benchmarks, Goals and related topics

AGENDA for December 14th, 2017

- Review of draft Chapter 4 comments from November meeting
- Review and discussion of draft Chapter 5 of Work Plan
- Review and discussion of Critical Area maps

Outreach Methods

Several avenues were utilized to share the VSP process and inform the general public including the creation of a web site and newspaper articles. These outreach materials and announcements listed the dates and major topics of the VSP meetings, opportunities to be involved locally and contact information. Shown below are elements of the outreach plan developed and implemented by the Work Group.

**COLUMBIA COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION PLAN**

OBJECTIVE: Ensure outreach and communication is provided to the agricultural community and all interested parties that are interested in or impacted by the Voluntary Stewardship Program.

Your Goal	Tool or Resource	Who?	When?	What?
Develop VSP Communications Methods	Work Group meeting notices/minutes	Don & Meagan	1 week prior to each Work Group meeting	Can they target Columbia County?
	FSA e-newsletter	Don & Meagan	TBD	
	Newspaper articles	Meagan	TBD	
	Paid advertisements in newspapers	Don & Meagan	For community mtgs	
	WSU Extension office	Don & Meagan	TBD	
	Postcard mailers	Meagan	TBD	
	Link VSP to County Planning website	Meagan	ASAP	
	Others?			
Develop Outreach Materials	County VSP Web site: includes VSP overview, FAQs, presentations and	Don	Constantly updated	
	Develop VSP Fact Sheet	Don	TBD	
	Power Pt presentation for community mtgs	Don	TBD	
	Others?			
	Others?			
	Others?			
Develop Contact Lists	Producers: Farmers & Ranchers Others?	Meagan	ASAP and then On-going	Weed tax list & from Assessor's parcels

Columbia County VSP Outreach Objectives

- Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing work plan
- Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders
- Gain responsibility and ownership of the VSP Plan by the agricultural community
- Ensure that growers/producers know about the VSP Work Plan as we near adoption
- Bridge the long standing gap between agricultural producers and resource agencies

Early Outreach to Producers

- Contact with members of the ag community, including supporting agencies, in developing the stakeholder work group
- The County hosted an informal meeting with those ag producers that agreed to serve on work group
- Held an Ag Producer Listening Session early in planning process
- Production of a VSP information fact sheet
- Dedicated VSP website
District websites

The Future of VSP Outreach

- Direct outreach to growers/producers to inform them of the VSP
- Direct outreach to technical assistance providers
- Outreach between the CD and growers/producers to develop stewardship plans



The Future of VSP Outreach

- Educating producers through educational workshops, tours and events
- Direct mailings and newsletter articles
- Repository of print, electronic and website information to increase landowner access



Ongoing Outreach

All stakeholders continue to engage with elected officials, community partners, the ag community and others



Ongoing Outreach

Beta testing the Stewardship Plan on two ag operations



Public Meetings

Public meetings were scheduled periodically to share information on VSP and on the development of the VSP Work Plan. Press releases and the web site were used to inform the citizens of these meetings.

Documented Review Process

The opportunity to review and comment upon the Work Plan has been provided to the Work Group members and to members of the general public through a number of avenues. During the regularly scheduled meetings, the Work Group and other attendees discussed findings, reviewed mapping and analysis and provided comments on draft sections of the Work Plan.

Drafts of chapters and appendices of the Work Plan were presented to the Work Group on a monthly basis beginning in September of 2017. After review by the Work Group, these documents were posted on the web site for review by the public.

The final draft of the Work Plan was released in **XXXXXXXXXX**. The Work Group and the public was given **XXX** weeks to provide comments.

Public Comment Period

A public comment period was conducted from **XXX** to **XXX**, 2018 to allow the general public an opportunity to view a draft of the Columbia County VSP Work Plan and to submit comments or other input to the Work Group for consideration. A press release was submitted to the local newspapers on **XXX** announcing the comment period, the locations of the plan for review and instructions on how to submit comments. Hard copy drafts were printed and made available at the Columbia County Courthouse, the Columbia County Planning Department and at the local library. A digital copy was available at the web site: www.columbiacountyvsp.com

Comments were received from **XXX** individuals during the public comment period. The Work Group took the comments under consideration and adjusted the Work Plan to incorporate the comments. These comments are included in this appendix.

Continued Public Involvement

Columbia County is dedicated to involving the public directly in review and updates of the VSP Work Plan. The Work Group is responsible for periodic reviews and updates and will keep the citizens informed of their meetings and actions.

A public meeting will be held as part of each evaluation, or when considered necessary by the Work Group. The meetings will provide the public with a forum at which they can express concerns and opinions about the plan. The Work Group will be responsible for publicizing the public meetings and maintaining public involvement through the web site and the news media.

The Columbia County Conservation District is designated as the lead for VSP technical assistance. There are other local organizations that can also provide technical assistance to producers. Washington State University (WSU) Extension and the area growers associations are engaged in new technologies and are sources of information.

Summary

Several attempts were made to reach out and obtain local public involvement in the development of this Work Plan. While the public input was limited, that may be due in part to members of the Work Group reaching out to their friends and neighbors to keep them informed of VSP and the Work Plan.

Consideration on how to use other educational opportunities within the community may prove valuable. This could provide interaction between both ag producers and local community members in a joint effort to meet the VSP goals. Stakeholders must be responsible for supporting communication, informing and joining in the formal and informal communication networks across organizations.