

**FRANKLIN COUNTY VSP  
WORKGROUP MEETING MINUTES**

**October 27, 2016**

**Franklin Conservation District  
1724 E. Superior Street, Pasco WA 99301**

**ATTENDED BY**

James Alford (Farm Bureau), Kent McMullen (FC NRAC), Dave Solem (SCBID), Brian Cochrane (FC Wheat Growers), Debbie Berkowitz (LCBAS - Alternate), Valerie Carlson (LCBAS), Mark Weiseler (FCD), Mike Ritter (WDFW), Mark Nielson (FCD), Heather Wendt (FCD), Matt Harris (WA State Potato Commission), Evan Sheffels (WA State Farm Bureau), Bill Eller (WSCC), Josh Jensen (Anchor QEA), Vivian Erickson (Anchor QEA), Ben Floyd (Anchor QEA).

**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Ben Floyd welcomed the group and introductions were made.

**FOLLOW-UP ACTION ITEMS FROM SEPTEMBER**

Work group ground rules' regarding designation of an alternate – language was added under 1a. **THE REVISED GROUND RULES STAND AS APPROVED. ANCHOR QEA WILL POST FINAL GROUND RULES TO WEBPAGE (COMPLETE).**

Work Plan Stewardship Checklist – The group consensus was that this would be a good educational tool. We need to add a caveat that this is meant to be a flexible education document, not a mandate. This document would be used to educate groups not to evaluate a farm. It will have the added benefit of helping producers understand the conservation value of practices that they are already implementing. **ANCHOR QEA WILL DEVELOP A DOCUMENT SPECIFIC TO FRANKLIN COUNTY.**

**AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND CRITICAL AREA INTERSECTIONS**

Ben reviewed the updated maps showing where critical areas intersect with agricultural lands. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitat and Species maps do not show corridors that wildlife utilize. We should take credit for enhancements to these corridors even if they are outside of the county's designated critical areas. Mike Ritter said that he would provide Anchor QEA with a link to the statewide habitat connectivity analysis documents for reference purposes (COMPLETE). The Streams and Wetland Map is heavily influenced by the Columbia Basin Project. Irrigation efficiencies may cause changes not controllable by private landowners and should be factored into baseline conditions. Frequently Flooded Areas are more of an agricultural viability issue. Anchor QEA will revise the Frequently Flooded Areas maps to show laterals and drains for context. Anchor QEA is working with Kevin Lindsey, a local

hydrogeologist, on creating maps for the Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas. Wind erosion is primarily an agricultural viability issue.

In summary most critical areas are located on agricultural lands. Protecting critical areas on agricultural lands is crucial to protecting critical areas functions and values. Conservation practices only need to be implemented on a small portion of agricultural land to protect those functions and values.

The draft Conservation Practice List was reviewed. Practices on this list will be included in the VSP checklist. The Work Plan will include a detailed toolbox of conservation practices in the appendix. Most common practices by land type will be summarized in the Work Plan. It was suggested that we add a box for critical area conservation to the list. ANCHOR QEA WILL UPLOAD AN UPDATED CONSERVATION PRACTICES LIST TO THE WEBPAGE (COMPLETE).

### **VIRTUAL TOUR OF ALFORD FARMS**

James Alford provided the workgroup with a virtual tour of Alford Farms, Inc. The farm is located in Sagemoor, Washington and is adjacent to the Esquatzel Coulee and wetlands formed by the Columbia Basin Project. The farm consists of 4,000 acres of irrigated and dryland crops. Crops include potatoes, corn, wheat, and various seed crops. The farm has areas that potentially intersect with critical areas which include: soil erosion/reduce topsoil which effects long-term land productivity; Columbia Basin Project irrigation infrastructure improvements which has implications on wetlands by modifying their hydrology; noxious weed control; maintenance of diversion facilities; pesticide drift and other aerial applications. Management actions have and will continue to help mitigate potential impacts.

Alford Farms implements numerous conservation practices including: variable frequency drives and low pressure sprinkler systems to improve water conservation; mulching of field edges with woodchips to reduce erosion; water storage (up to 24 hours storage capacity); utilization of aerial and satellite imagery monitoring and onsite telemetry; implementation of wetland and coulee weed species removal; development of waterfowl habitat enhancement projects; and participation in the WSU pilot program that provides a 96% efficient irrigation system.

Potential Voluntary Stewardship (VSP) actions that Alford Farms could engage in include: riparian planting around maintained drainages; if feasible, implement WSU water efficiency program across operations; continue implementation of existing conservation practices including mulching, wildlife habitat improvements, invasive weed species control and water management.

The group had a good discussion about planting around wetlands and other areas that may be part of irrigation project infrastructures. Maintenance and function of irrigation project structures needs to be considered before improvements are made.

### **NEXT STEPS**

December 8th – Next Meeting Date – at the FCD Office

**Public Comment / Other:**

**ADJOURN**

The meeting concluded at 3:10 pm