

**FRANKLIN COUNTY VSP
WORKGROUP MEETING MINUTES**

Friday, April 28, 2017

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

ATTENDED BY

Kent McMullen (FC NRAC), James Alford (FC Farm Bureau), Debbie Berkowitz (LCBAS), Mike Ritter (WDFW), Brian Cochrane (Wheat), Mark Wieseler (FCD), Rick Miller (FC Commissioner), Perry Beale (WSDA), William Harder Jr., Matt Harris (Potato Commission), Mark Nielson (FCD), Heather Wendt (FCD), Josh Jensen (Anchor QEA), Ben Floyd (Anchor QEA).

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Ben Floyd welcomed the group and introductions were made. The next meeting will be at 1:00 pm at the Kahlotus Grange with a 10:00 am tour before the meeting and no-host lunch at Farmer's Daughter. Josh Jensen reviewed the comments that have been received on the work plan to date. Josh thanked everyone who had submitted photos and encouraged work group members to send in more.

TRACKING DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

Direct effects are those that occur in the critical area or the critical area buffer. Indirect effects are those that occur outside of the critical area or the critical area buffer. We need to qualify what counts as an indirect benefit or adverse impact. Protection buffers for regulated activities under critical areas can serve as a surrogate for the outer limits of the direct effect area. Do we want to support current buffers as defined? The group felt that the work plan should be consistent with the county's code. The VSP work plan should also be updated when updates occur in the county code. Conditions before 2011 will be described in a narrative. There will be a random sample of projects that are implemented to verify efficacy. The state does have an ArcGIS-based remote sensing program that the county can opt into. This program allows users to track changes to the landscape over time. What do we want to call best management practices in the work plan? The group opted for conservation practices as opposed to stewardship strategies.

UPDATED PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT BENCHMARKS

The protection benchmark needs to maintain critical area functions and values as they existed in 2011. Benchmark conditions will be tracked by maintaining the level of conservation practices and accounting for the discontinuation of practices. Enhancement benchmarks that are higher may provide opportunities for additional funding. Lower benchmarks are achievable and would not need to be revisited during the monitoring process. FCD and Anchor QEA will look at

existing data and will present a range of benchmarks to the Work Group for approval and incorporation into the Work Plan.

Debbie Berkowitz expressed a concern about not having quantifiable data. The approach will be to use number of conservation practices (or acres) as a quantitative approach and confirming using a random sample to be tracked by FCD during monitoring, along with pictures documenting results, and remote sensing, as applicable. We can use aerial photography as a verification tool. The SAFE program was discussed as a tool to increase CRP acres in the county. SAFE acres do not count towards the cap on CRP acres in the county. Recent changes to the SAFE program have increased the area in the county that is eligible to be enrolled. CRP acres will be considered an adjustable enhancement measured by the acres that are enrolled annually.

PRODUCER PARTICIPATION GOALS

Should we count the number of producers that participate in enhancements or the number of acres treated? FCD will provide information on the number of farms from 2011-2016. Mike Ritter suggested looking at the number of producers that have implemented practices. FCD and Anchor QEA will look at existing producer participation numbers and provide a suggested goal for Work Group approval.

MONITORING BY THE FCD

FCD will track program performance and will report to the state. FCD plans to track practices by location to determine their direct and indirect effects on critical areas using an ArcGIS-based system. Monitoring data will also be used as indicators of the plans performance.

NEXT STEPS

Review Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the Work Plan and bring your comments to the next meeting.

May 25, 2017 – Next Meeting Date – at the Kahlotus Grange – 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm with an optional tour from 10 am till noon. If interested, meet at the FCD office and leave by 9:45 am. No-host lunch at Farmer’s Daughter at noon.

Public Comment / Other:

ADJOURN

The meeting concluded at 1:02 pm