

Chelan County Voluntary Stewardship Program
VSP Advisory Committee meeting
Monday, March 26, 2018
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

The meeting began at 1:00 p.m. Facilitator Neil Aaland asked each participant to introduce themselves and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present to offer comment.

Follow-up items

- Packing houses: Britt had a conversation with Stemilt about information. Lisa has some of the latest forms from Global Gap and SQF. The packing houses don't have anything independent of global gap. Lisa will send what she has to Britt.
- Will discuss later the chair/co-chair idea
- Neil and Mike have started coordinating on contacting environmental organizations regarding participation; the state-wide groups do not seem to be interested in being on individual workgroups. Mike talked with Chelan-Douglas Land Trust; they want to informally track.
- Next steps on change analysis: on the agenda
- Neil contacted Brian Cochrane; he doesn't have a specific proposal but is willing to come talk with us at our next meeting
- Examples from certification programs – need to find growers that have access to global gap and vinewise to access that information

Imagery

Adam Cares from Stevens County called in to discuss their approach to monitoring using imagery. The monitoring question they are trying to answer is: since the 2011 VSP baseline date, how has vegetative cover within riparian areas, floodplains, and steep slopes changed due to agricultural activities? He reviewed a powerpoint presentation.

Landsat imagery provides 30 meters per pixel, which is not very detailed. They are using Landsat and augmenting with National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP) from USDA. They collect information from these, and other, sources and use Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI); this looks at differences in the reflections of light for different land types and assigns a value. Typical values range from 0.1 (bare soils) to 0.0 (for dense, healthy vegetation). NDVI is calculated over time and compared.

Questions and comments included:

- The problem with using the WDFW data is it only picks up negative changes, not the positive changes (e.g. increases in ag land)
- Britt asked about trees next ground, and wonders if NDVI will show change in these circumstances; Adam did not think it would since it is not detailed enough
- It takes about 2-3 weeks to process the data and do a report
- When changes are identified, need to verify

Lisa noted that the UW has an imagery lab which might be able to help the Chelan workgroup. She asked the group to identify questions to determine how to move forward. Britt said a program used for Douglas County used Landsat data, and evaluated the whole county. He thinks the cost was around \$2,000. Ben from Berk, on the phone, said the UW imagery uses a free program that is customizable and shows some promise. Required Java scripting can be costly; might be able to get some inexpensive help from UW grad students. Workgroup thinks it is important to have something that is repeatable, and that county staff can do.

Further review will be done for the next workgroup meeting.

Budget

Neil noted that we wanted to continue the discussion from the last meeting, and Lisa reviewed what has been discussed so far. Mike Cushman had put together a proposal for a budget. Lisa worked with Hillary Heard to refine this. A revised budget, sent to the workgroup for today, included more dollars allocated for county and CD meeting participation; \$40,000 for the biennium for incentive/cost share. Mike Cushman and Mike Kaputa both had questions about the “farmbudsman” funding; Neil and Lisa explained this came out of the Thurston plan and the Chelan workplan included it. The aim is to provide general assistance in explaining VSP and how to participate. It was pointed out that there are other resources in the community that can help growers related to consultation on laws and other regulations.. There still will be a need to work with landowners informing them about, implementing, and reporting on/sustaining VSP. Members thought that funding might better be used for incentives/cost shares. It appears that the CD assists with 1-3 cost shares per year, and some may be VSP related. Mike Kaputa thinks it’s very important to invest in robust baseline mapping.

The workgroup went back to discussing change analysis. There are two processes so far available: the WDFW process and the Stevens County process. We could also consider Britt’s Douglas County process, and Ben noted that there are free trials on some software. He will talk with the UW lab professor about possibilities.

Berk will set up a call with the UW, and Lisa, Erin, Hillary, and Britt will participate.

Mike Kaputa mentioned that reach assessments done for various programs might have some useful information. Erin thinks that a literature review for these would be useful. We need to bring all these pieces together.

Next steps on this include:

1. Figuring out the utility of rapid watershed assessment approach
2. Conducting the conference call with the UW professor
3. Check on reach assessments

More detail is still needed on programs that the CD is currently doing that may be related to VSP. We need more refinement of the CD’s work.

Implementation Field guide

Neil noted that at the last meeting Lisa presented the outline of topics, and we discussed that. Today we want to start going through the proposed guide and get workgroup reaction to it. Britt suggested reaching out to Mike Cushman to serve as the co-chair for an executive committee

For the outreach section, several suggestions were made:

- Northwest Fieldmen’s Association Fruit Days (in January)
- CD annual meeting – hosted by Cascadia CD (although this is not typically geared to participation from the public; per Mike Cushman, it’s primarily a goal and objectives setting discussion by the Board)
- Yearly meeting of NRCS
- Farm Bureau summer BBQ – have materials available there (not actually geared for presentations)
- Washington Association of Conservation Districts meeting – might be that the Conservation Commission takes the lead on presenting information
- Prepare articles for local newsletters, including CCD quarterly newsletter and the Chelan-Douglas Farm Bureau newsletter

Using social media was briefly discussed. The workgroup concluded that we should not set up our own Facebook or Twitter accounts but provide information for other organizations that have these.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:50 p.m.

Next steps:

1. Change analysis/imagery:
 - a. Work on understanding the utility of rapid watershed assessment approach
 - b. Conduct the conference call with the UW professor
 - c. Check on reach assessments and their usefulness
2. Begin planning out some outreach materials that could be used, including stand-alone brochures
3. At the next meeting, discuss prioritizing activities
4. Confirm the chair/co-chair and executive committee idea
5. Lisa send her information on forms from Global Gap/SQF to Britt
6. Check with Brian Cochrane about participating in next meeting

Attendees:

Britt Dudek, CDFB
Vicki Malloy, CDFB
Dennis Berdan, WHRD
Mike Cushman, CCD
Neil Aaland, Facilitator

Mike Kaputa, Chelan County
Lisa Grueter, Berk Consulting
Hillary Heard, Chelan County
Erin McKay, Chelan County