

Chelan County Voluntary Stewardship Program
First workgroup meeting
Wednesday, October 29, 2014
9:30 am – 12:30 pm

The meeting began at 9:30 p.m. Mike Kaputa introduced the staff team and the facilitator, Neil Aaland. Neil reviewed the agenda and asked each participant to introduce themselves, and provide a brief perspective on their interests in the process. Neil then reviewed a list of proposed ground rules; the workgroup had no comments on them so they will be used as work progresses.

Scope of work/tasks

Mike introduced the scope of work between the Conservation Commission (the funding agency) and Chelan County. It's a fairly basic scope and does not contain a lot of details. It was suggested that a copy of the statute be made for the group. For future meetings, sections a through l of the legislation (RCW 36.70A.720) should be posted on the wall as a reminder of the required contents of a work plan.

The group discussed the relationship to watershed planning groups. The legislation speaks to using existing planning organizations; a lot of work is going on already. It was suggested that this work group could be an advisory group for the whole county.

Once drafted, the test for the plan is found in RCW 36.70A.725 (Technical review of work plan); it is reviewed by the state technical panel. The panel is responsible for determining whether, ten years after initial funding, the work program will protect critical areas and maintain and enhance agricultural areas.

Observations and questions from the group:

- The process should rely on existing data; there is no need to recreate science.
- This is a land use process; it's exciting to see a process taking a shot at a less regulatory program
- Local irrigation districts should become more active in this process
- Will need to spend some time discussing the intersection between Critical Areas Ordinances and agriculture; what are the gaps in existing programs?
 - What is the relationship to Global Gap, food safety?

Mike asked if this group is willing to serve as the watershed work group. It was suggested that there needs to be more representatives from other watersheds. For example, nobody from the Wenatchee watershed is here, and we might consider the Stemilt partnership. Mike said they've done some initial outreach to those groups.

Commissioner Ron Walter had some suggestions. He thought this probably looks like coming up with best practices. We probably should not get too watershed-specific, think about practices that would apply county-wide. One point to consider is, for the most part, most of Chelan County agriculture looks the same – relatively homogenous.

John Stuhlmiller suggested that the group think about a toolbox, rather than best practices. Commissioner Walter liked that idea. It was suggested that other groups need to be pulled in; local knowledge will help us. We can learn from local areas – what do we have, what needs to be addressed. We need to focus on “protect”.

The statute was displayed on the projection screen, and John reviewed it. Discussion and comments on some of the work program requirements (section 720):

- Section (a) is reviewing existing information; should catalog them and move on
 - Mike said there is a white paper on the website, which may already have accomplished this
- Section (b) is seeking input; we’re still looking at the issue of tribal participation and environmental interest participation. Staff will be sure they include them in e-mails
- Section (g) does not mean all agricultural operators are required to have a stewardship plan
- Section (h) discussed the use of existing development regulations; we should view this broadly as the “regulatory backstop”. If the county relies on an adopted regulation, we need to reflect that. Commissioner Walter mentioned that the Ruckelshaus Center developed some initial work on existing regulations. Evan said the lesson learned from the Thurston County effort is some sideboards existing in the 100 and 200 numbered sections in the Growth Management Act, not just the 700 sections that address VSP
- Section (i) on baseline monitoring – a lot of monitoring is already going on. The baseline date is 2011.

BREAK from 11:05 to 11:25.

Proposed work schedule

Mike reviewed the proposed process from here. He handed out a one-page document showing the work schedule. He would like to develop a staff work team. More people are needed for that. This workgroup is more of a reviewing body for the work that the staff work team will produce. The decision process has the work program going directly from the work group to the Conservation Commission. Evan pointed out the statute has different timelines than does the contract. The statutory timeline starts on February 20, 2014, and there is 2 years 9 months to produce the work program. [However, the funding only goes to June of 2015.]

Lisa Sturdivant, one of staff team members, showed some maps with information on agriculture in Chelan County. There were questions on how to deal with Endangered Species Act, whether it is part of a Critical Area. It was pointed out that the GMA defines what a critical area is. The maps don’t yet show the overlap between agriculture and critical areas. Neil asked how the maps will be used in this process. Mike thought it would help the winnowing process, identify the overlap and gaps between CAOs and agriculture. Lia suggested they can also be used as monitoring tools.

Observations and questions:

- Mike asked if there are any volunteers for the staff work group. Britt Dudek, Tim Smith, Dave Holland, and Sara Troutman-Zahn from NRCS all volunteered.

- John said it would be important to decide who, on the larger work group, would be a voting member vs an advisory member; this would be a good task for the staff workgroup to discuss
- Staff workgroup will review and identify gaps and overlaps, then bring back to the larger workgroup
- Evan reviewed the definition of protection in the statute; it includes a date certain; don't degrade further; and need to encourage voluntary enhancement.

Neil asked if there were any follow-up questions:

- Need to pin down more specifically dates for this group to meet; dates to avoid include first week of December (conflicts with a horticultural show) and January 19-22
- Commissioner Walter suggested using the subsection a through l as an outline; start plugging things in
- Mike thought next steps are to figure out the schedule, get the staff work group going, and send out an email and start getting additional participation
- Final thought: stay short and simple

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:15 p.m.

Attendees:

Workgroup members:

- P. Olin, citizen
- Michael Rickel, Cascadia Conservation District
- Andrea Jedel, Ecology
- Mike Cushman, Cascadia CD
- Evan Sheffels, WA State Farm Bureau (WSFB)
- Sarah Troutman-Zahn, NRCS
- Vicki Malloy, Farm Bureau
- David Holland, Ecology
- Norm Gutzwiler, W.H.I.D./Grower
- John Stuhlmiller, WSFB
- Britt Dudek, CDFB
- Harry Malloy, CDFB
- Lynda Jamison, Ecology

Other attendees;

- Neil Aaland, Facilitator
- Mike Kaputa, Chelan County
- Lee Duncan, Chelan County
- Tim Smith, WSU/Chelan County
- Lisa Sturdivant, Berk Associates