

# **Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Group Meeting Minutes**

September 15, 2020 ~ Zoom Meeting Platform

## **I. Call to Order**

Chair Marty Hall called to order the third quarter meeting of the Columbia County VSP Work Group at 4:02 p.m. on September 15, 2020. The meeting was held via the Zoom meeting platform due to COVID-19 gathering restrictions.

## **II. Attendance**

Marty Hall, Don Howard, Roland Schirman, Terry Bruegman, Val Turner, Aneesha Dieu, Ryan Rundell (Commissioner), Levi Keesecker (State Conservation Commission), Bill Eller (VSP State Coordinator) and Dena Martin (Staff) were present.

## **III. Approval of Minutes**

*Schirman moved to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2020 meeting; Howard seconded. Approved as read.*

## **IV. Updates from State VSP**

State VSP Coordinator Bill Eller discussed the new 5-year report template which will be released to counties following an online training on Sept. 25. The template has been released in BETA format to Kittitas, Garfield and Mason Counties. Eller said the counties are “cautiously optimistic” about the template format. The template was designed to provide the very specific data needed by the executive director to determine whether or not counties are meeting their critical areas protection and enhancement goals.

## **V. County Updates**

Martin shared that she and Turner have been attending webinars on the 5-year Report and have met to discuss goals, benchmarks and monitoring.

## **VI. Implementation Progress**

a. Conservation District Manager Terry Bruegman provided an update on current cost-share projects.

- VSP 2019-01, Earth Spring Runoff Basin: There are general concerns with the site including location, rockiness, depth and the ability to design a large enough pond. Waiting to hear back from landowner on how materials will be delivered to the site.
- VSP 2019-02, Engineered Spring Catch Basin: This project has been dropped.
- VSP 2019-03, Reforestation: The District is waiting to hear if the applicants want to move forward on a smaller scale with the understanding that maintenance will be necessary.

- VSP 2019-04, Livestock Control Fencing/Watering Stations: Cultural resources has been completed and nothing was found. Project will move forward.
  - VSP 2019-05, Livestock Watering Stations: The spring was located and CCD is talking with landowners to verify the vision/scope of the project before drafting a plan.
  - VSP 2019-06, Livestock Control Fencing: A previous cultural resources report is on file. Applicant is gathering materials and project is in process.
  - VSP 2019-07, Windbreak and Shelterbelt Establishment: CCD met with applicant, took measurements and identified goals to be accomplished. Will work on developing a plan.
  - VSP 2019-08, Invasive Species Control: Applicant has not made a firm decision on the desired approach and what to plant.
  - Hall asked questions regarding cultural resources being required for tree planting. Eller responded that it may be and referred the work group to the Commission grant manual which lists project requirements.
- b. Aneesha Dieu and Terry Bruegman introduced two new cost-share applications for work group review.
- Dieu explained that the projects will use research from Kinsey Labs to show the positive benefits of nutrient management, which has been used widely, with great success, in the midwest. Because the project requires a high up-front fiscal commitment, producers are reluctant to take that jump. It is hopeful that the project will be successful, showing improved yields and lesser ongoing inputs, and that data can be shared with other landowners who will be more inclined to participate. Dieu said the project addresses the root problems, which means less fixes are needed down the road, as opposed to continually addressing surface problems.
  - The work group discussed whether the projects fit under the VSP requirement of protecting critical areas. Both projects are in Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas as well as Geologically Hazardous Areas. Turner noted that one of the stewardship practices specifically mentioned in the work plan is 590 Nutrient Management which is the maintenance/improvement of the biological condition of soil and protection soil function in critical areas. Keeseker noted that lesser inputs could result in less contamination and runoff. Group members agreed that the projects meet the VSP work plan goals.
  - *Howard moved to approve VSP 2020-01 and 2020-02 for cost share funding; Schirman seconded. All in favor, none opposed.*

- i. VSP 2020-01 has no other funding and is approved at 75% VSP cost-share funding of \$9723.67. The total project cost is \$12,964.60 with the landowner contributing \$3241.23.
    - ii. VSP 2020-02 has secured Conservation District Funding and is approved for VSP cost-share funding at 50% of the unfunded balance, for a total of \$3940.58. The total project cost is \$21,881.15, with the Conservation District contributing \$14,000 and the landowner contributing \$3940.58.
  - c. Martin explained that grant guidelines require that an authorized signatory for the cost-share program must be designated and noted in the minutes. Bruegman outlined the current signatory process which includes signatures from the landowner, Conservation District and County.
    - *Schirman moved to make Martin the authorized cost-share signatory for the county; Turner seconded. All in favor, none opposed.*

## **VII. On-going Items**

Martin discussed the upcoming 5-year report and work plan goals, benchmarks and monitoring. Martin and Turner will attend the upcoming report template training and then meet with Bruegman to discuss data gathering and what will be necessary for reporting. Keeseker said that he is available for support in regards to monitoring.

## **VIII. Next Meeting**

Because there may be a need for adaptive management once data has been gathered and reviewed, the group decided set the upcoming meeting for early in the fourth quarter. A tentative date is set for November 10 at 1 p.m. at the Conservation District conference room, with an option to attend via Zoom. That date may need to be changed depending on what data has been gathered by that time.

## **IX. Adjournment**

*Howard motioned to adjourn; Schirman seconded.* Hall adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.