

Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Group Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2020 ~ Columbia Conservation District/Zoom

I. Call to Order

Chair Marty Hall called to order the third quarter meeting of the Columbia County VSP Work Group at 1:03 p.m. on November 10, 2020. The meeting was held at the Columbia Conservation District boardroom with Zoom meeting access.

II. Attendance

Marty Hall, Don Howard, Roland Schirman, Tom Schirm, Val Turner, Aneesha Dieu, Ryan Rundell (Commissioner)

Via Zoom: Levi Keesecker (State Conservation Commission), Leslie Michel (State Conservation Commission) and Dena Martin (Staff)

III. Approval of Minutes

Schirman moved to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2020 meeting; Howard seconded. Approved as read.

IV. Updates from State VSP

- Martin informed the Work Group that the State Conservation Commission had released a 10% grant retainage which will allow \$24,000 to be added to the current budget.
- Leslie Michele and Levi Keesecker, from the SCC, said that they are happy to provide help in working with the 5-Year Report template, monitoring questions, adaptive management, and answering any questions we may have. Hall asked Michel about wildfire recover and she provided a brief update on the ongoing battle.

V. County Updates

- **Quarterly report:** The most recent quarterly report was made available for review.
- **Work group membership:** Martin reviewed the original Work Group member list and expressed a need to increase membership. Martin will contact previous members to encourage participation. Current members will reach out to others as well. Hall has been elected County Commissioner and this will be his last meeting as Chair. A new Chair will be elected at the January meeting, with hopes of increased numbers by that time.
- **Budget update:** Martin presented current budget category totals as well as a breakdown of cost-share commitments and technical assistance costs. *The work group voted to designate the entire \$24,000 grant retainage for technical assistance.* Martin will update the budget and submit to the State. Martin will amend the contract between the Conservation District and the County to reflect the increased payment allowance.

VI. Implementation Progress

a. Conservation District Project Manager Aneesha Dieu provided an update on current cost-share projects.

- VSP 2019-03 (Touchette), Reforestation: Because a tree planting team is being contracted, the CD believes there will be minimal ground disturbance and cultural resources review can be bypassed. The project is ready to move forward.
- VSP 2019-04 (Howard), Livestock Control Fencing/Watering Stations: Cultural resources has been approved and the project should be finished this fall.
- VSP 2019-05 (Peyton), Spring Development/Livestock Watering Stations: Dieu recommended working with a company that has been used with other spring development projects and presented a preliminary budget of \$78,953.76 with an estimated additional \$15,000 expected for additional labor and cultural resources review. Cultural resources will be ordered once the Work Group authorizes the project. The project is planned for spring.
- VSP 2019-06 (Hovrud), Livestock Control Fencing: Equipment is being moved but actual project will not start in the immediate future.
- VSP 2019-07 (Knebel), Windbreak/Shelterbelt: Set aside for reapplication next grant cycle.
- VSP 2019-08 (Phinney), Invasive Species Control: Dieu presented budget for first year recommendations at a total of \$10,151.20 Applicant is aware that he must reapply for the necessary subsequent applications.

b. Project approvals.

- *Following a discussion of the projects Howard moved to approve 2019-05 (Peyton Spring Development) and 2019-08 (Phinney Invasive Species Control) as presented. All in favor, none opposed.*
- *CCD updated with costs for newly-approved Nutrient Management Cost-Share Projects.*
 - i. VSP 2020-01 (Thorn Nutrient Management) 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 (Hutchens Nutrient Management) 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.

VII. On-going Items

Val and Dena gave an update on 5-Year Report progress and data gathering. It is hopeful the majority of data will be gathered over the next month. Keesecker and Michel gave input and ideas regarding adaptive management options for monitoring and can give suggestions for inexpensive monitoring options. Schirm requested to be involved in any monitoring conversations.

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 January 7 at 1 p.m. at the Conservation District conference room, with an option to attend via Zoom. A new Chair will be elected as the first order of business at the January meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Schirman motioned to adjourn; Howard seconded. Hall adjourned the meeting at 2:17 p.m.