

# Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Group Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2021 ~ Columbia Conservation District Boardroom/Zoom Meeting Platform

## I. Call to Order

Work Group Chair Rick Turner called to order the meeting of the Columbia County VSP Work Group at 10:04 a.m. on November 17, 2021.

## II. Attendance

In-person attendance: Rick Turner, Joy Eckhoff, Roland Schirman, DJ Frame, Aneesha Dieu (Conservation District Staff), Val Turner (Conservation District Staff), Dena Martin (County Planning Staff).  
Zoom attendance: Marty Hall (County Commissioner – excused himself early), Brian Cochrane (SCC Technical Panel)

## III. Approval of Minutes

*Schirman moved to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2021 meeting; Eckhoff seconded; all approved.*

## IV. Updates

### • WSCC October 13 Monitoring Symposium:

- Martin shared that the first of eight VSP monitoring symposium webinars, hosted by the WSCC, was attended by Martin, Val Turner, Dieu, Schirman and Eckhoff.
- WSCC Tech Panel member Brian Cochrane shared that this was the first in an 8-part series intended to address VSP struggles in determining what level of monitoring is required and the best methods for meeting requirements.
- Eckhoff stated that she hoped the next sessions would provide practical techniques that we can do ourselves that are more simple and affordable than those used in the two sample projects highlighted in the presentation.
- Cochrane said upcoming webinars will address techniques but that the focus will be helping work groups determine what questions to ask to know what is needed before jumping to a solution. He said that they will be looking for lower-cost, simple models. He also noted that third-party data collection could be utilized if written protocols were developed and followed by data collectors.

### • County:

- Martin shared that the third quarter report had been submitted.
- The approved 2021-23 VSP budget was submitted to the State.
- Martin shared a budget update, following October expenditures.

### • Conservation District:

- Dieu said that the Touchet Valley Golf Course is working on a reservoir and sprinkler project.
- The Phinney pasture restoration is on hold until spring.
- The Peyton spring development project is on hold until next summer due to materials shortages.

- Dieu shared photos of the Archer pump site restoration project which has just been completed and provided an update on the project.
- She requested that members put in a “good word” about nutrient management as more projects will help with data collection.

## V. Discussion Items

### • Discuss Work Group Guidelines

- Because there are no official Bylaws or Rules and Procedures for the Work Group, Martin asked the group to consider developing a set that would specifically address, at minimum:
  - Work Group membership requirements
  - How members apply and are approved
  - Positions and terms
- Meeting attendees discussed relevant issues including:
  - Whether or not to require any specific experience or education from work group members
  - Whether or not to limit or set a work group size (number of seats)
  - The importance of having a balance between ag and environmental interests represented
  - Tenures
  - Areas of potential liability
- Martin/Val Turner will talk with Bill Eller and review RCWs to see what other work groups are doing, solicit recommended strategies, and become familiar with state requirements.
- Martin/Val Turner will use information received to develop a rough draft as a starting point for work group review at the February meeting.

### • Review State Tech Panel Comments regarding the 5-Year Report

- The work group read through and discussed tech panel comments from Brian Cochrane.
- Cochrane said that a main concern is ensuring that there is supporting documentation to support conclusions and that the results are derived from robust samples that are better than random.
- Schirman commented that he is proud of the local mindset toward voluntary stewardship of natural resources but is unsure of how to document and monitor this in order to satisfy funders.
- Turner mentioned possible upcoming requirements from the Dept. of Ecology regarding clean water standards and asked about the possibility of taking a proactive approach and sampling water regularly from multiple selected locations.
- Cochrane concurred saying the goal of VSP is to monitor, identify problems and areas that need attention, and address them voluntarily.
- Dieu will connect with Levi Keeseker to develop a water sampling plan for future work group approval.

**VI. Comments, concerns, items not listed on the agenda**

Martin relayed comments from former work group member Skip Mead who regretted that he is unable to commit to the work group, but still has interest in the program. Mead feels that monitoring information is existing and available from other sources and agencies, it is just a matter of tracking it down. He also commented that great strides have been made in activities such as erosion control, so it will be difficult to show future improvements.

**VII. Next Meeting**

The work group will meet on Thursday, February 3 at 10 a.m. at the Conservation District boardroom, with attendance available via Zoom as well.

**VIII. Adjournment**

*The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.*