



SKAGIT COUNTY
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273-5625
(360) 416-1400

**Skagit Voluntary Stewardship Program
Watershed Advisory Group**
January 23, 2024, 3:00-5:00 pm

Meeting Notes

In attendance:

Owen Peth, Karen DuBose, Emily Derenne, Emmett Wild, Rebecca Rising, Jenn Johnson, Maggie Taylor, Jeff McGowan, Brian Lipscomb, Bill Eller, Terry Sapp

The meeting generally followed the agenda, which is shown below in blue italics. Notes are added in regular black text.

➤ *General VSP Update (5-10 min)*

- *Outreach: Skagit Valley Herald, Country Living Expo, Skagit Ag Summit, misc. contacts*
- *Get involved / stay informed: sign up for VSP Newsletter and attend meetings.*
- *Upcoming task for WAG: adaptive management of work plan*

Briefly reviewed table showing how much VSP has exceeded work plan goals, necessitating adaptive management. This will probably not happen until after the monitoring plan is complete, although the monitoring plan will address the theme of adaptive management.

➤ *VSP-Funded Projects (30-40 min)*

Emily brought up that project proponents / managers bringing prospective projects to the WAG for approval will not know the exact cost of the project and would like the group to consider a range that would be acceptable. It was suggested that the project proponent provide a minimum to maximum range. There was consensus that a min-max range, or a dollar amount within 10% would be acceptable without further WAG review.

- *Update on approved / funded projects (10 min)*

Emmett provided an update on SCD project progress, and Emily on NRSP/SFEG sponsored projects. Of note is that for Lewis, we will need to revisit after April to review fencing estimate (cannot estimate now because of blackberry covering the area). Although the slide showing sediment reduction due to cover crops was not

necessarily accurate, the group gave positive feedback about showing the positive impact that these projects are making.

- *Proposed Projects*
 - *Trial – criteria matrix for rating proposed projects*

We reviewed the draft criteria matrix. In general, people liked the idea of having more structure and a way to evaluate the projects. Several suggestions:

- Add checkpoint – “Is the project in VSP area (Ag-NRL, RRC-NRL)?”
- Add this to the proposed project template (where project proponents fill out information for WAG review) so that the project proponent has guidance for how their project will be evaluated.
- Add a notes column to the rating table
- Set a minimum score for project approval

- *Re-visit Benson – pasture re-establishment*

The group approved \$15,937.50 for pasture re-establishment .

Concern was raised about the solar waterers, both the cost and because they could be lost in a flood again. A more permanent watering system was suggested as an alternative. The proposed \$18,000 for this item was not approved.

- *Re-visit Blanken – updated funding request*

WSCC Shellfish awarded \$46,500, and WAG approved the remaining \$19,375.00.

- *New: Legacy Dairy Waste Separation Facility*

WSCC Shellfish awarded \$46,500, and WAG approved the remaining \$19,375.00.

The Shea project had not been on the agenda, since it was but we also revisited this project, and approved an additional \$12,500.00, bringing the project total to \$90,000.00.

➤ *Monitoring Plan Development (60 min)*

- *Review scope of work and budget from Anchor QEA*
- *Work through questions*

This discussion was open format and not necessarily well-structured. We discussed what monitoring has looked like to date and that some of those methods will continue (riparian vegetation change detection). We touched on how some methods are too expensive (pesticide monitoring) and others are likely to be used in some capacity since they are a long term data set (Skagit County Ambient Water Quality Sampling). We talked about the need to set action points if monitoring results show we are not meeting goals. The agricultural producers in the group liked the idea of

an anonymous way to monitor / self-report stewardship actions that are not necessarily part of an established program.

- *Monitoring working group*
 - *Meet Feb 19?*

Input is sought from those interested in helping guide the development of the monitoring plan and meet with the contractor who will create the plan. Please let Rebecca know if you are interested or have thoughts to incorporate. A meeting date has not yet been set but it would be around February 19th.

- *Open Discussion / Questions (5-10 minutes)*

Not much time remained for this, so we adjourned.

- *Adjourn*