



SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273-5625
(360) 416-1400

Skagit Voluntary Stewardship Program

Watershed Advisory Group

Nov 18, 2024, 8:00-10:00 am

Meeting Notes

Watershed Group Members in attendance: Terry Sapp, Jeff McGowan, Bill Dewey, Shannon Rupert, Emmett Wild, Maggie Taylor, Brian Lipscomb, Owen Peth, Mikala Staples Hughes

Watershed Group Members in absent: Jeremy Gillman

Staff and Others in Attendance:

Skagit County: Jenn Johnson, Emily Derenne

Skagit Conservation District: Ryan Gelwicks

Summary of the outcome:

The original agenda topics were discussed as intended. Discussions centered around final changes to the Operating Procedures, any final 2024 edits to the Monitoring Plan, group discussion on a survey to ag producers as well surrounding how to clarify our group's criteria for ranking projects for both project proponents and Watershed Group decision making.

Decisions made or postponed:

- The group decided to approve the Operating Procedures as presented.
- The group decided to allocate all currently returned funds as well as additional funds from the Cultural Resources pot to funding towards completing current projects.

Jenn called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Quorum was confirmed.

➤ Review Draft Agenda & Draft Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made by Bill Dewey to approve the agenda, a second was made by Owen Peth. No discussion. Motion was approved unanimously.
- A motion was made by Brian Lipscomb to approve the agenda, a second was made by Jee McGowan. No discussion. Motion was approved unanimously.

➤ Operating Procedures

- No additional changes requested.
- Comments were made regarding holding in-person OPMA training at the beginning of the year to ensure all members are up to date. Procedures landed on 9 voting members, with 5 as quorum needed.
It was also clarified that members of the group can meet to discuss some issues, but never more than quorum outside a regular meeting as to comply with OPMA requirements. Additionally, all email communication should be via BCC.
- It was also noted that we should look to expand membership as vacancies become available to new groups.
- Procedures were approved unanimously by the group.

➤ General VSP Update

- Monitoring Plan

- Jenn reviewed key sections on new monitoring efforts with the Group by walking through parts of the draft monitoring plan. General consensus was that it is ready, with some comments around:
 1. Adding drainage to irrigation wording.
 2. Considering inclusion of the Ecology's 303(d) list database.
 3. Clarify artificial vs. natural wetlands using established WDFW or other approved distinctions.
 4. Consider using the language from the annual USDA census survey for the survey noted in the monitoring plan.
 5. When we document how much ag land was lost, consider reporting what it was lost to.
 6. For Open Use enrollments, report both number and acreage.
 7. Check all page numbers and bullet numbering to make sure it is consistent throughout.
- Budget Check-in & Project Review
 - The group moved to allow sponsors to reallocate any new returns to current projects, with any amounts under \$7500. Any amounts over that will come to the Group at the January meeting. Jenn will work as arbitrator of the reallocations with the sponsors. Bill Dewey made the motion, Owen Peth seconded, and the motion passed unanimously with one abstention from Emmett Wild. Details of the motion included:
 1. Currently available funds in Cultural Resource pot: \$28,595.32
 2. Returned funds
 - a. Shea: \$15,485
 - b. Cover Crops: \$144
 - c. Franklin: \$183.13
 3. Request for additional Funds
 - a. Benson: \$6170
 - b. Maxwell: \$3565
 - c. Curry/Dykstra: \$8000 (request further details to try to minimize costs)
 - Following approval of reallocations, cultural funds remain at \$26,672.25
- Education & Outreach
 - The Group removed the current mailing going out in early January 2025 to all ag land in the County. The Group made many comments regarding:
 1. Isolating mailing to "active" ag land producers.
 2. Look to give out mailings at local meetings and events in addition to mailing and the online survey format.
 3. Add QR code for online option, and make sure boxes can expand for more text submissions.
 4. Make sure to put a watershed map and ask submitters to ID the watershed they are in for reporting needs.
 5. Clarify measurement/unit for each conservation practice.
 6. Make sure when we report, there is a note that survey data may not meet state standards for each reported practice.
 7. Require name is filled out.
 8. For the Educational content at the beginning:
 - a. Add language around livestock exclusion code
 - b. Fix main title about "doing nothing"
 - c. Remove "ample" in funding
 - d.

➤ Review Draft Project Criteria

- The draft criteria to send to sponsors requesting new projects what brought before the group. General agreement was that there is a need for this and that it would help both the sponsors and the group in the long run.
- The group decided much further discussions will be needed at the January meeting, but initial comments included:
 - Highlighting Coho for 4 points.
 - Adding areas around water quality and fish passage, other benefits surrounding riparian improvements.
 - Make sure the weight of agricultural viability is at a level consistent with VSP objectives.
 - Think of potentially adding a category around discretionary points for the group.
 - Consider minimizing points for large buffers on non-fish bearing streams
 - Take out mandatory language
 - Look to focus on certain BMPs approved by the group
 - Concerns around cost-related points
- The group also requested that some past projects be run through the criteria to get a sense of how they would have scored.

➤ Open Discussion / Questions

No time remained for additional discussion.

➤ Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:00am

Action Items:

- Jenn will incorporate feedback on the ranking criteria and send out a new draft to the Watershed Group prior to the next meeting.
- Jenn will incorporate all feedback related to the Monitoring Plan before submitting the State at the end of December.
- Jenn will prep OPMA training for the January Watershed Group meeting.
- Sponsors have the discretion to reallocate any returned funding to other current projects for any amounts under \$7500, anything over that amount will come to the Group in January. Jenn will report any reallocations and return funds at that meeting.
- Jenn will update the survey and provide a new version for Group review at the January meeting.