VSP meeting notes

10/25/18

Meeting held from 11:30 – 1:30 at Islanders Bank Admin offices

Attendees:

Byron Rot, San Juan County Salmon Recovery Coordinator
Kendra Smith, San Juan County Public Works
Brook Brouwer, WSU Extension
Vicki Heater, SJICD Board Member, retired Water Resources Manager, SJ County
Sarah Ross, ag operator, Orcas Island
Bruce Gregory, staff, SJICD
Jennifer Thomas, WLNRC, support to SJICD
Candace Jagel, Ag Guild
Mike Ramsey, SJICD ED

Participant:
Lovel Pratt, representing Friends of the San Juans attended to observe the meeting.

The meeting opened with introductions.

Sarah Ross asked what relevance the Governor’s Orca Task Force Recommendations had on VSP. Jennifer said that she could research the document and get back to the group.

Vicki wondered whether the CD (or anyone) had been hearing from producers about this year’s drought impacts. Bruce mentioned that there was some frustration with our federal drought designation. Forage harvest levels appear to be down and that puts livestock producers at a disadvantage because they have to provide supplemental feeding.

All major impoundments in the county are monitored, so we could check those levels (acknowledging that all of these systems are managed).

The group discussed how they envision VSP Individual Stewardship Plans being implemented. From Sarah’s perspective, she doesn’t want to have to fill out 2 forms.

There was some discussion of recruiting new members and outreach to targeted groups. Sarah mentioned a producers group on Facebook that meets regularly on Orcas Island. She is not a part of this group but Learner is.

There was discussion about the type of outreach and different venues; Realtors Continuing Ed classes, Farmers Markets, could SJICD use Americorps volunteers to do some of the required monitoring or outreach? Ellen (SJICD staff) has developed a draft one-page outreach piece.
Mike will review and send out to the group. Brook wanted to know what the main incentive was to participate in VSP. The group thinks it’s technical and financial assistance. The idea is to start with existing Farm Plan participants because Farm Plans are essentially the same thing as Individual Stewardship Plans under VSP, but we do need to go through a process of working with existing Farm Plans to update these as Individual Stewardship Plans to be recognized as implementing VSP.

Sarah talked about wanting to appeal to people’s sense of doing the greater good. Their altruism, that it shouldn’t just be ‘participate because we’ll give you $’. This program is about protecting the environment and what’s special about this place. She is hoping that we can develop something a little more prosaic and lyrical than your typical outreach piece that really speaks to why people come here to live and farm.

Work Group participation has dropped off and we need to recruit new members. The Council has the authority to designate members but we also wanted to talk to the current work group members to get their ideas on potential participants. We will also discuss this with Council on 11/19 when we give them an update (Mike and Jennifer to present an update to Council).

There was some speculation that the current participants are those who have a higher tolerance for developing the process of VSP Implementation. Not all Work Group members have a high tolerance for this kind of process development.

Jennifer provided an overview of the current draft of the Monitoring Report. She gave a schedule and walked the Work Group Members through the current draft. Feedback is needed from the Work Group to showcase farms and farmers. What is the Work Group excited about v.v. farming in San Juan County? Maybe we could provide some case studies of farms and farm tours to dovetail with the existing farm tours. Bruce talked about implementation of the no-till drill project on several farm operations on four of the main islands – that could be an example.

Is there a time-frame for a commitment to serve on the Work Group? Jennifer said that she would double-check the statute but didn’t remember seeing any term limits (Jennifer did check; no term limits specified in statute).

There is a policy advisory from the Washington State Conservation Commission that was distributed with this agenda that addresses Work Group commitments. (Policy Advisory #03-18 Roles and Reporting Obligations during VSP Implementation).

Candace asked whether other Counties had already developed outreach materials that we could look to. Jennifer has checked the WSCC website for this and hasn’t seen anything but said she would follow up with Bill Eller to see whether any template outreach materials have been developed that we could look at before we begin to develop our own outreach materials.

The Work Group walked through the draft VSP Monitoring Report, discussed the need for input from the WG, discussed outreach materials, new Work Group Membership, schedule for
completion of the Monitoring Report, updating the Ag Survey in prep for re-doing it in January 2019, and briefly discussed the following WSCC Policy Advisories

- Policy Advisory #03-18: Roles & Reporting Obligations During VSP Implementation (May 2018)
- Policy Advisory #05-18: Approved VSP Work Plan Implementation Reporting Requirements and Procedures (September 2018)
- Policy Advisory #04-18: How VSP and CAOs apply to ‘new’ agriculture

To do:

- Jennifer to review Governor’s Orca Task Force Draft Recommendations and highlight relevance to VSP
- Jennifer to follow up with Bill Eller to see if there are specified term limits for Work Group members
- Mike to review Ellen’s one-page outreach piece and distribute to group
- Bruce to provide Jennifer with access to pictures of ag implementation in San Juan County so that the Monitoring Report uses local pictures
- Jennifer to follow up with Bill Eller to see whether there are any existing VSP implementation outreach materials that we could look at before developing our own.