

**Benton County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Workgroup Meeting #9
January 23, 2016
Benton PUD Meeting Room, Prosser WA**

In attendance:

Nicole Berg	Fred Muller
Debbie Berkowitz	Mark Nielson
Stuart Crane	Dirk Peterson (for Karen Sowers)
Michael Crowder	Mike Ritter
Seth Defoe	Matt Vickery
Phil Hull	

Benton County staff: Michelle Cooke, Greg Wendt

Project staff: Neil Aaland, Lisa Grueter, Sarah Sandstrom

Open the Meeting: Facilitator Neil Aaland opened the meeting at 1:30. He asked attendees in the room to introduce themselves. He then reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment: No members of the public were present to offer any public comment.

Outreach: Neil reviewed the outreach table and asked for additional ideas. These included:

- Press release
- Farm organizations e.g. WA State Hort Association for tree fruit; Northwest Horticulture Council; WSU Extension for wine grape growers. All of them have annual meetings, Dec 1 through mid-January. Good Fruit Grower Magazine. Phil said he can provide a list.
- Benton County Farm Bureau, Cattleman's Association
- WA Dairy Federation
- Native Plant Society has monthly meetings; Friends of Badger Mountain
- WA State Potato Commission
- Yakima Valley Fair in Grandview – second weekend of August
- Benton-Franklin Fair – first weekend in September

Neil will revise the table, and then the consultant team will meet with the county and discuss how to do outreach during this phase of the projects.

Goals, Benchmarks, and Performance Metrics

Sara led this discussion, starting with Chapter 7-1 from the download files. Lisa captured specific comments within each document. We focused on the first two columns, goals and benchmarks. The general discussion comments included:

- The reference to “intact shrub steppe habitat” on page 4 should be revised and just reflect “shrub steppe habitat”, since there is very little that is intact
- The work plan needs to be consistent with the county's definition of Critical Areas

- Sara noted the workgroup should not get too focused on the maps; be sure we mention in the work plan that this is not different from the Benton County Critical Areas Ordinance
- Lisa reminded the work group that early on they presented some definitions that helped with the initial mapping; she will send that around again
- The work group discussed the goals for invasive species and decided to leave both goals
- People were comfortable with aquifer recharge on page 6
- Not a huge area of intersect between wetlands and agriculture in Benton County
- Floodplain language is okay
- Geologically hazardous areas, streams and rivers, looks good

We then turned to the documents 7.0 (cover memo) and 7.2 (participation goals). General comments from the discussion included:

- Mark noted we need the number of acres, number of contracts
- Nicole cautioned that we need to not have outreach be too early

The next discussion was on 8.0, monitoring. Mark Nielson expressed concern about the tracking tool proposed for technical assistance providers. Lisa explained this idea came from the Chelan VSP work plan, and offered to meet with Mark and further review the idea. They will set a date for this. Lisa then reviewed the adaptive management matrix; the concept for that way of organizing the information originated with WDFW. Mark thinks it's a reasonable approach, as does Seth. Seth appreciated how it captures nuanced information.

The next steps for these documents are to look at the information in the cover memo (document 7.0), get feedback from work group members on goals and benchmarks, and get feedback on the adaptive management matrix. Neil will send a reminder with a due date for comments [this due date was Friday, Feb. 3].

We then reviewed the Individual Stewardship Plan (the stewardship checklist). An ISP is required by the statute. It has no space for address and name; the Chelan workgroup wanted this to be anonymous, since privacy has been a concern. The technical service provider is the one who sits down with the grower and fills this out.

Mark thinks it is good as a general tool, but doesn't think it replaces a voluntary stewardship plan. Phil is intrigued by Thurston's approach, where 10 practices were selected as priorities. Nicole also liked that approach.

The work group decided to continue discussion at the next meeting.

Next steps:

- Please review and give feedback on the materials discussed today in the next couple of weeks
- Next time we'll review the additional sections
- We'll also discuss additional outreach possibilities

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Next meeting: February 27, 2016, from 1:30 to 3:30.