

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 21, 2017

**TO:** Benton County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Work Group

**FROM:** Lisa Grueter, Principal, BERK Consulting

**RE:** February 27, 2017 Work Group Meeting

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Thank you to all the Work Group members who have provided comments on the various chapters and documents between November 2016 and February 2017. It has been very valuable and we have been working to integrate your input.

By the January 2017 meeting we had prepared drafts of nearly all chapters and appendices. Since several Work Group members understandably felt a bit overwhelmed seeing the material all together, and wanted some time to review, we have stepped back from providing Chapter updates until one of our next meetings.

Instead we have limited the February 2017 materials to:

- **Compiling Work Group comments** on the January 2017 draft goals and benchmarks regarding critical areas, agricultural viability, and participation. The compiled comments also have **discussion questions for the group**. We are providing the January 2017 goal and benchmark materials as a courtesy copy, but it hasn't changed.
- An **updated outreach chart**, which has morphed into a brief draft chapter of the VSP. Note that we have discussed with County staff next steps on preparing outreach materials and potential future outreach activities and will share more at the meeting.
- **Updated checklists**. There is a long-form screening checklist geared towards a Technical Provider such as Benton Conservation District (BCD) walking through needs and options with a producer. A short-form is now provided that is more streamlined for an individual producer to fill in. Here are the main changes since January:
  - Based on our conversations with BCD staff we have removed some of the columns identifying critical areas and instead have put in space to fill in status of conservation practices since 2011. We added rows so that conservation practices that do not necessarily fit a NRCS code can be shown.
  - Input from Zirkle Fruit was helpful in identifying some other market-based programs that producers may use beyond Global Gap, as well as encouraging a simpler version of the checklist (more check box oriented) similar to other state and producer programs.

We will continue to work on refining and updating these checklists. Also, we are working with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to develop a tracking tool that fits with WSDA's crop type mapping program based on some experience BCD staff have had with WSDA in the past.

Thank you again for your time and advice on the Work Plan to make it best fit Benton County conditions and goals.