

**Yakima County Voluntary Stewardship Program  
Meeting Notes - Workgroup Meeting #7  
September 22, 2016 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
North Yakima Conservation District Office**

In attendance:

Eric Bartrand  
Betsy Bloomfield  
Donna Broers  
David Chase  
David Child  
Bill Eller  
Jack Field  
Steve George  
Kristie Getsinger

Byron Gumz  
Frank Hendrix  
Frank Lyall  
John Marvin  
Eric Olson  
Troy Schilperoort  
Evan Sheffels (phone)  
Michael Tobin

Project Staff: Neil Aaland, Lisa Grueter, Sarah Sandstrom

Welcome and introductions:

Facilitator Neil Aaland opened the meeting and asked attendees in the room to introduce themselves. He noted that the November meeting falls on Thanksgiving. The new meeting day, for November only, will be Friday, November 18. Neil will send around a poll to see if we meet in the morning (10 to noon) or the afternoon (1 to 3). For all future meetings, Neil asked the workgroup if they'd like to meet regularly in the morning or keep the afternoon time; members agreed to keep the current afternoon time.

Update: Training Center invitation

Neil has contacted Steve Krueger at the Training Center. He asked Steve if someone could attend a workgroup meeting to discuss their land management practices. At his request, Neil sent a letter formally requesting this. He has not yet heard back and will follow up.

Update: Mapping

Lisa explained they are nearly done with this work, and anticipate only minor changes from here on. They may bring another set of intersect maps to the workgroup. After some discussion, Neil reminded the workgroup that the maps are only to provide a general indication of where the intersections between Critical Areas and Agriculture exist, and are not intended to be used for regulatory purposes. The key determinant is whether the county would consider them as critical areas, since VSP is intended to take the place of regulations for such critical areas (where agriculture overlaps with them).

Additional comments on the mapping include:

- Need to show fish species on exhibit 6

- Are fish species a higher priority [than other critical areas]? Mike thinks they are; Eric Bartrand noted there are agreements with Yakima County regarding fish
- What about artificial wetlands? There can be a fine line between artificial and natural; the consultants used the National Wetlands Inventory information, which in some cases is older information based on imagery from the 1970s

Information on steelhead and sage grouse

John Marvin discussed this topic, after requests came from the workgroup to have him explain the data he provided last month. He thought the group would be interested in the information about two tagged fish found going over McNary Dam. They don't know why that is occurring. This was the first occurrence they are aware of. It's possible this is an expansion of the range for steelhead; the workgroup should keep track of this.

Critical Area Functions, Issues, and Potential VSP Goals

This is a continuation of the discussion begun at the previous meeting. Neil explained the form seemed to help at the last meeting to provide a framework or the discussion on potential goals. The discussion picked up where the group left off, at water quality/other contaminants – use of oil, pesticides. Comments included:

- Key is whether label requirements are being met
- Turbidity could be a potential issue; but that was already discussed under the “sediment” topic
- Leaking equipment and wash water might be factors
- Potential goal could be “follow federal and state label requirements”
- Should refer to “petroleum or crop oil”

The workgroup shifted how the discussion was going; it seemed that we were too far “in the weeds”. The question was asked, instead, at a higher level – “what are the stream habitat issues in Wenas Creek?” Comments recorded on the flip charts:

Goal for Critical Area	Goal for Agriculture Viability
<b>Streams/Other Contaminants</b>	<b>Streams/Other Contaminants</b>
Label precautions adhered to Functional critical area to intercept washwater Keep equipment away from critical area Maintain equipment in good repair Recognize both (petroleum/crop oil) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hydraulic fluids = low priority</li> <li>○ Surfactant = bigger issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to use pesticides/herbicides per standards</li> <li>• Address significant pollutants               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not indeterminate sources</li> <li>○ Use objective criteria</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Don't increase pesticides/herbicides above federal/state standards</li> <li>• Note: For conservation it is possible to use tractors to maintain buffer</li> </ul>
<b>Stream Habitat</b>	<b>Stream Habitat</b>
Maintain viable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rearing habitat</li> <li>○ Spawning</li> <li>○ Migration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control invasives, e.g. may need pesticides/herbicides</li> <li>• No prescriptive buffers</li> <li>• Educate farmers</li> <li>• Opportunities to enhance habitat by willing landowners</li> </ul>
Complexity (Ecosystem processes)	

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**Goal for Critical Area**

- Floodplain processes/habitat

Maintain channel dimensions appropriate for hydrology

Invasive species removal

Clean, clear, cold (water quality)

Educate farmers

- Problem is not floodline
  - Relative issues – AG lands vs State/Tribal
- Opportunities for enhancing habitat should be available

**Shrub Steppe Issues**

- Fire (federal lands)
- Loss of land habitat
- Conversion from shrub steppe
  - WDFW to provide map
- Pinch points connectivity
- Quality
  - Deep soil (has been converted)
- Educate landowners
- Conserve/protect key areas of connectivity
- Increase biodiversity
  - Grazing promotes biodiversity
- Engage Yakima Training center to protect its habitat
  - Grassbank
  - Conservation easements
- Restore marginal Agricultural lands
- Managed grazing on Yakima Training Center to correct fire regime
- Control invasive species
- Goal is not to maintain 100% of shrub steppe habitat
- No net loss (regulatory connotation?)

**Goal for Agriculture Viability**

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**Shrub Steppe Issues**

- Fires
    - Army should mitigate for lost habitat
    - Grass bank on Yakima Training Center
    - Need federal input
    - Avoid cheat grass and bunch grass
  - Conversion shrub-steppe to agriculture: grazing can occur in lower value shrub-steppe
  - Water from Irrigation District. Recognize farmer pays whether it is used or not.
  - Agricultural practices can be tools to protect shrub-steppe – examples:
    - Grazing easement – seasonality and rates
    - Grass banking, easements
    - Avoid first, don't overgraze
    - Studies have shown that exclusion fencing with no grazing = biodiversity decreases whereas light to moderate grazing = better outcome
  - Voluntary incentives set aside in corridors grass banks, easements; maintain base of shrub-steppe, connectivity
  - Avoid invasives – fire
  - Shrub-steppe in Wenas near Selah
    - Not good for Agriculture
    - Dry, no food
  - Careful with terminology – voluntary now, would that change?
  - Irrigated Agriculture – encourage where viable
  - Public agencies clean up act on Yakima Training Center
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The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.

**Next meeting: Thursday, October 27 from 1:00 to 3:00 at the North Yakima Conservation District.**