

**Yakima County Voluntary Stewardship Program  
Meeting Notes - Workgroup Meeting #8  
October 27, 2016 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
North Yakima Conservation District Office**

In attendance:

Eric Bartrand  
Donna Broers  
David Child  
Stuart Crane  
Dave Holland  
Celisa Hopkins

Frank Lyall  
Zach Meyer  
Arden Thompson  
Michael Tobin  
Kerry Turley

Project Staff: Neil Aaland, Sarah Sandstrom

Welcome and introductions:

Facilitator Neil Aaland opened the meeting and asked attendees in the room to introduce themselves. He reminded workgroup members that the November meeting is being moved to Friday, November 18 from 10 to noon. The group decided to keep the December meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (the regular meeting day), but to check back again at the November meeting to confirm.

Neil noted he is still in contact with the Training Center to see if they can come to a meeting. It was suggested that Neil check with the Kittitas County VSP group to see how they are addressing their piece of the training center.

He then reviewed the outline of the work plan. The first three pieces will be done for the November meeting.

Mapping: Shrub Steppe Habitat and Connectivity

Sarah explained that previous maps have shown much acreage in habitat lands. These maps are intended to focus on the important areas of habitat, something more manageable. She said they will have additional information from WDFW a week or so after today's meeting, which can be used to further refine. The information comes from a connectivity working group that includes WDFW and The Nature Conservancy.

She described the first map. 11 different species are possible – if the color is red or yellow, less than 11. Comments and discussion points included:

- Some of the higher elevation habitat has burned
- A lot of are marked “low” – what species are there? [Salamanders, mule deer]
- Why did the working group convene? [It's an initiative to characterize what is important; it might help for benchmark information]
- If a landowner has legal access to water for irrigation, that makes it an appropriate use
- Are the maps showing occurrence but not necessarily quality of habitat? [Yes]

The second map is Linkage Centrality. The linkages are based on modeling output. Frank Lyall noted the food safety act results in increasing pressure to fence lands (to prevent contamination of food).

The third map is Pinch Point. This looks at where the natural topography, or human obstruction, limits linkages. The modeling sometimes shows some unusual results, for example pinch-point is shown as going through the whole county. Sarah asked if this represents a corridor opportunity, or just a product of a flaw? Eric thought it might be a transition between steep topography.

She asked the group – are these maps useful? Mike thought it is useful to see opportunities to increase critical area value – definitely map 1, maybe map 2, but the third map is uncertain. Eric said he can come back and discuss that map again after he gets more information.

Other comments and observations:

- The interstate highway poses a barrier
- It's helpful to see this information across the county, reinforces that location in the landscape matters when evaluating how a program works
- Frank thinks it would be useful to overlay the map over developed and irrigated farms; he also noted that highways and urban development have a much larger impact on movement than farms do
- How old is the data on development? If it's older than six months, habitat could be gone
- Dave Holland said these are helpful in reminding him that VSP deals with both agriculture AND critical areas

Review draft goals, benchmarks, monitoring for Wenas Creek

Sarah took the discussion from the previous meeting and prepared some draft language for review and discussion by the workgroup.

Comments and observations on table 1 (Protection Goals, benchmarks, and monitoring approaches to maintain critical areas):

- Use the term “salmonids”, not “salmon”
- Hard to determine what a “non-native invasive” is; consider using “noxious weeds”
- Missing stream screening and passage structures
- Last column (performance metrics) could be connected to monitoring requirements

Comments and observations on table 2 (voluntary enhancement goals for critical areas):

- It's good to capture maintaining and enhancing, but it's confusing to have in 2 different goals
- One concern is that enhancement depends on farms having enough return on land to afford to enhance (unless the enhancement is fully paid for)

- Mike thought a good example was converting Moxee Valley to drip irrigation; that came with financial help
  - He said nowadays, can't sell some improvements unless 100% funded; if we're going to protect critical areas, need to be funded
- David Child noted that, in his experience, he can't sell fish passage projects without full funding
- Arden suggested adding cubic feet per second as another metric

Sarah asked if these goals and benchmarks are applicable only to Wenas Creek; generally, workgroup members think this is more broadly applicable.

Comments and observations on table 3 (agricultural viability aims): Sarah noted this section is structured differently because the statute does not require benchmarks for agricultural viability. Frank wondered if we should offer a seat on the table for the Wenas irrigation district, since we're discussing Wenas Creek. Neil expressed concern about the workgroup becoming too large, and suggested a different way to get their perspective would be during an outreach phase prior to finalizing a workplan. The workgroup will consider this point.

The meeting began winding down. Sarah suggested that, for the next time, we might try to briefly run through goals – use a different watershed and see what would apply, and what would be different. The workgroup liked that suggestion.

It was suggested that donuts be provided for the next meeting. The workgroup was hungry.

The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.

**Next meeting: Friday, November 18 from 10:00 to 12:00 noon at the North Yakima Conservation District.**