

Cowlitz County VSP Work Group Virtual GoToMeeting

November 24, 2020

Meeting Summary Notes

Attendees:

Lynn Simpson- Cowlitz Conservation District
Joel Rupley – Former Commissioner
Jesse Swofford – Local Agriculture
Levi Kessecker – Washington State Conservation Commission
Greta Holmstrom – Cowlitz County
Mark Taylor – Cowlitz County

Unable to attend:

Jeff Wilson – scheduling conflict
Jan Wilson – internet access issues

Welcome and Introductions: There were no new attendees or guests present.

VSP Work Group materials sent out: Mark Taylor emailed the following digital information prior to the meeting for the work group's review:

- November 17, 2020 VSP Work Group meeting summary notes
- November 24, 2020 Work Group meeting agenda

VSP Implementation project update: *Hagen Beef Farm* in Toutle, Washington.

Hemlock Creek Farm Protection and Habitat Enhancement Project:

- Construction of a mud-free winter feeding station – Completed
- Removal of and replacement of the barbed-wire fencing with “wildlife-friendly” fencing – Completed
- Riparian restoration with planting of native trees and shrubs – In Progress
- Bio-engineered bank stabilization – Planning in progress

Carbon Capture Foundation and *RiverJunkey's Conservation* will be meeting with VSP staff and landowner on Friday, December 4, 2020 at 3:00 pm to discuss donation of trees and hand labor for riparian planting.

VSP Work Group PowerPoint presentation:

- Five-Year Report process continued. Information discussed:
 - VSP Education and Outreach efforts to date – **PowerPoint slide**
 - Conservation practices in place on VSP participating farms – **detailed project parameters soon**
 - USDA-NRCS - 2011-2020 BMPs are now available as an Excel Table

Work Group Challenges:

- Increasing Landowner Participation and Agricultural Viability
 - **Letters of support** needed from:
 - Cowlitz Conservation District (CCD)
 - Cowlitz County WSU Extension Office
 - Former Cowlitz County Commissioner, Joel Rupley
 - VSP Participating farms
 - **Community Watershed Meetings**
 - Schedule Virtual meetings now that families are accustomed to them
 - Improve Cowlitz County VSP webpage to make it more user-friendly
 - Video testimonials from VSP participating farms
 - Virtual farm tours, etc.
 - **Social media:**
 - Jesse Swofford stressed again that VSP needs a strong presence on Facebook
 - Greta Holmstrom informed us that Cowlitz County has approved a VSP Facebook page
 - Mark Taylor mentioned that *Cowlitz Co. Farm to Table* is posting the VSP newsletter

Work Group Challenges continued...

- **Farmers Market Development:**
 - Committee: Jesse Swofford, Joel Rupley, Greta Holmstrom (and anyone else interested)
 - USDA-certified kitchen
 - Farms can develop value-added products to increase their economic viability
 - Permanent roofed structure w/roof, paved walkways & restroom
 - ADA handicapped accessible
 - Potential shuttle for persons with mobility issues or no transportation
- Developing Strong Conservation Partnerships
 - Use the *"It takes a Village"* model
 - Improved collaborative partnership needed with:
 - Cowlitz Conservation District
 - Cowlitz Farm and Forest Association
 - Clark/Cowlitz Farm Bureau
 - Cowlitz Indian Tribe
 - Columbia Land Trust
 - Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group
 - Ducks Unlimited
 - Trout Unlimited, etc.

Adjournment: 6:10 pm

Next Meeting: 4:00 pm on Tuesday, December 8th, 2020