

**WHITMAN COUNTY
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
MEETING
PUBLIC SERVICE AUDITORIUM
June 13, 2024
10:00 a.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

**Jon Jones , CHAIR
Alan Thomson
Art Swannack
Mary Collins, Zoom**

**Kim Weerts
Jeff Pittmann
Nancy Belsby**

STAFF: Mark Storey, WC Director; Brad Johnson, Palouse CD; Gerrit Bass, Palouse CD; Josh Larsen, Whitman CD; LeAnn Thomas, Rock Lake CD; Brandon Johnson, Public Works; Elinor Huber, Clerk.

10:02 a.m. - Brad Johnson called the meeting to order.

MOTION by Jeff Pittmann and seconded by Jon Jones to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2024, meeting. Motion carried.

Brad Johnson - Next on the agenda, we talked about the Work Group Succession Plan and Art came up with this document. This is a synopsis of, if someone is stepping off the VSP we hope you will find a replacement. If you can't find a replacement the work group will work together to find a replacement that represents a broad interest in the work group.

Art Swannack - You have to have a process where the County is actually involved in finding that person or the work group and the County. You can't just leave it up to the person, and if nothing happens, nothing happens. But there are pieces in here. If you are going to resign from the Board, you have to notify the BOCC because that official notice starts the process for finding a new person. If you don't notify the BOCC you're on there as a member.

MOTION by Jon Jones and seconded by Jeff Pittmann to approve the succession plan for the VSP work group. Motion carried.

Next on the agenda is the VSP Monitoring Plan. I got some comments back from Art and talked with Jon, and one of the comments was pretty similar and were we promising too much in the monitoring plan? Gerrit is here and he wrote this. This is due at the end of this month to the Commission, so. Mary, did you have any comments on the monitoring plans?

Mary Collins - No, nothing from me. Thank you.

Jeff Pittmann - I have nothing.

Jon Jones - I was afraid that we promised too much. But I think if we don't deliver, there are no consequences. Anyway. I think we are safe there. The other thing is that the water quality monitoring station set up. I would prefer that they were at the mouth of the rivers instead of midway through the stream. We might be able to prove our case a little bit better if we did that. I understand those are historic monitoring stations.

I think also if we, we don't need to put this in the plan, but there should be a way to incorporate the mouths of the rivers later and maybe work into that. I know there is historic data from Ecology at the mouth of the river, closer to the mouth of the river when they did the TMDL's. It is something maybe to work forward to do but not have to do it right away.

Gerrit Bass - (Inaudible) We don't have the funds going forward to,

Jon Jones - I totally understand.

Kim Weerts - Isn't there a monitoring station at the state line? We discussed that a while ago. I thought there was a point coming into Washington from Idaho that there was a station that we could use.

Brad Johnson - We have been using that station, Kim, and also Hangman Creek has a station inside Idaho that we got some information off of, too, which isn't very far from the state line. I think you are talking about the one on the Palouse on the South Fork of the Palouse.

Jon Jones - There is one on Hangman Creek too, as it comes across the line. I think it is Rock Creek up there.

Brad Johnson - (Inaudible) trying to document what the parameters are when we hit the state line which we have no control over. We are tracking through Gerrit and Ryan with our research and monitoring.

Gerrit Bass - (Inaudible)

Kim Weerts - I don't think we have to (inaudible)

Larry Cochran - The only question I have, is the monitoring plan asking us to do more than what we are already doing?

Gerrit Bass - (Inaudible)

Kim Weerts - I called Brad and asked the same question and his response to me was, are we locked into this (inaudible). Is that correct, Brad?

Brad Johnson - Absolutely. I think pages 1 and 2 with the background and what documents were out there that we are using some of that stuff might be different than the work plan.'

Larry Cochran - So, basically it is more on our plate to make the State happy.

Brad Johnson - Exactly.

Kim Weerts - Mine is mostly grammatical. I don't know that we want to go through all of this. One of the things that I have an issue with is acronyms. So, within a document, as an example, a "Whitman County VSP Program," to me that is redundant. We should be spelling out "Voluntary Stewardship Program," instead of using "program" twice. I'd like to see that change throughout the document. There are places in the document where it talks about enrollment (inaudible). One other thing, we need page numbers.

Art Swannack - The one he sent had page numbers.

Kim Weerts - Mine didn't have page numbers

Brad Johnson - The one thing on the bottom is that there are page numbers and the date of November on the first one we sent out. That has been changed to June. We just updated it before we came to the meeting.

Kim Weerts - I can show Gerrit after the meeting. I think it is a really good document. I would like to see us, there are a couple of places where it almost feels like (inaudible

Brad Johnson - Larry did you have any comments?

Larry Cochran - I kind of went through it and it just frustrates me that we have to do it. That is what I have trouble with.

Nancy Belsby - I didn't have any comments.

Art Swannack - I thought this plan had way too much preamble in it. I don't know that we need all of that for a monitoring plan. I think mostly what we need is, "here is how we are going to monitor." The other problem I had with the preamble, and I gave you guys the notes on it, but some of this stuff, honestly, I cross checked with Mark, is not right. It is not correct. The whole explanation of the Palouse Basin Aquifer is wrong.

I don't know who came up with it or who you got it from, but that one plain and simple is not correct. I knew that from being on the aquifer committee. It also makes some generalizations about the aquifer that sounds like the whole County is covered by it, but even Colfax is not in the Palouse Basin Aquifer as regulated. About 10% of the County is actually in the Palouse Basin Aquifer.

Brad Johnson - We can just take that paragraph out, like you said that is more of a preamble, right?

Art Swannack - Well, there is a lot of preamble in this thing. What do they need at the State for a monitoring plan? Is it simply how we are going to functionally monitor, or do they need all this other stuff that we put into it?

Brad Johnson - They do not need the preamble. They need how we are going to monitor.

Gerrit Bass - I tailored it to Whitman County. I guess that would be a question for the BOCC and state the questions to them.

Art Swannack - The VSP plan talks about our entire plan and all of its different characters in all of its critical areas. All the soil, wildlife, etc., already. So, they have that information in that copy of the VSP plan. Shouldn't this simply say, "these are the methods and practices we are going to use to monitor." That's what I thought.

Jon Jones - I think you are right. It is a boiling point that agencies use. If that is the language they want to speak, we can conform to that. I don't think it is hurting anything to have that in there. But it is a little "tedious," would be the word I would use.

Art Swannack - The problem I have with a bunch of boiler plates that are in here and some of the info is just wrong. Before it makes statements that, "only recently has this been done." In terms of controlling soil erosion, that started in the 30's. I wouldn't want that to be how we represent how agriculture was before. We didn't just figure this out. We started working on conservation a long time ago. Almost over 100 years. So that is my problem with that one.

I also thought there were some comments later on, on indirect monitoring. It seemed like there is an impression that we are going to do a bunch of stuff. I have to ask the question whether we have the capacity, staff and funding to meet that requirement? I think that is what you were thinking, Jon.

Gerrit Bass - (Inaudible) talks about making policies,

Art Swannack - But in your third sentence, "within each of these critical area functions, multiple indicators will be measured."

Gerrit Bass - (Inaudible)

Art Swannack - It sets us up to say, we are going to be doing this work. Period. I think if you want to modify that I would, "Multiple indicators will be measured as funding allows." Or something like that. That third sentence in that paragraph commits you to use multiple indicators to measure. You may say we don't know if we have enough money to do it, but you've committed to do something, like condition it. This is on page 10, last paragraph.

Gerrit Bass - (Inaudible)

Kim Weerts - My thought was that this report was basically a cover up fund because I don't think, they still haven't given us additional funding for monitoring have they?

Brad Johnson - They gave us that \$47,000 this year.

Kim Weerts - Did they set up the parameters regarding what they want from that previous meeting?

Brad Johnson - Those are just guidelines of a monitoring plan that they completed from the commission level. They give us parameters that they want us to use that hopefully we can. But as far as setting up anything that any counties have to specifically do, you

have to do it within your monitoring plan, what you wrote in your individual plan. They are not setting anything on top of what we agreed to in the VSP work plan.

Art Swannack - I'm going to summarize it up in a different way. If we write it down and say, "This is what we are going to do," that is what they will hold us to. This isn't a general kind of concept thing. This is a, "we just send them how we are going to monitor."

Kim Weerts - Okay, but my thought was because Brad said that most of this was taken from the work plan. My belief was that we were already doing that because all this data is available. So, are we going to have to do more work that you don't have funding for to provide for them?

Brad Johnson - Not as this is written. The only thing was Jon's request to go to the mouths and set up monitoring at the mouth of the stream, we would have to find funding to do that. That is not in the plan right now.

Kim Weerts - We talk about that in the future. So, the way I read this plan was more of the, "Let's write down as much as we can to give to the Commission so that we can get a monitoring plan now." That's what I saw. And I am in favor of taking out the preamble. But my thought was if we say as little as possible, they would say this isn't good enough.

Art Swannack - They might, but we also would then have another chance to update it to meet it what they want, if we haven't put enough into it. If you put too much into it, they may say it is fine, you're not committed to doing it. That is my concern. They aren't going to give you any more money to do it.

Alan Thomson - Shouldn't we be matching what we are intending to do, what we stated we would do with the funding available? If we put too much in there, and there is not enough money to do all of it, we need to match it.

Larry Cochran - I wanted to say that we are already doing this.

Kim Weerts - But that's my point. We are already doing this according to what you said in the work plan. I didn't see that we were offering up any additional stuff. Is that correct?

Brad Johnson - You are correct and that is why Art's clarification, "as data is available from someone else and funding is available." So that's everything that Gerrit's group used for the 5-year plan, was data that was already existing. You can see it in the tables whether it is stream flow temperature, or water quality data, that is what we evaluated for the 5-year plan. This highlights, he went back and looked at the 5-year plan and we are not saying we are going to do anything above and beyond. There are some words and sentences that can be changed to clarify better, but you are right.

Mark Storey - (Inaudible)

Larry Cochran - So, Jon would remember, tell me when they tried to save the (inaudible) sole source aquifer and we had a lot of work to make sure that wasn't true. So, to me,

when we are talking about the WC aquifer it is like it is not a sole source aquifer. it is one of many aquifers.

Brad Johnson - That is why I was concerned about what it said about Palouse Basin Aquifer and trying to make that across the entire County because we know like Rock Lake has a whole different water system source going there, and it may be a sub-chamber somewhere but it isn't related to the one down here. The same story when you get over into the Lacrosse country and the irrigation there. That isn't the same aquifer source in a general sense as what we have right here.

Mark Storey - The confusion is that they are all sitting in the Grande Ronde aquifer, which is the name of the basalt, not the name of the aquifer. But we all refer to them as the Grande Ronde. There are hundreds of Grande Ronde aquifers. That is the problem.

Art Swannack - And multiple different questions as to recharge points are not,

Larry Cochran - On top of that there's a lot of artesian wells in this County.

Mark Story - (Inaudible)

Jon Jones - I think just a preamble or a qualification to that section of the plan would be to say, the aquifer in WC is complicated. I know it is complicated and controversial too, so you can put that in and it would cover the stuff. You can put in the stuff we know about the aquifers. But cover ourselves with a preamble.

Kim Weerts - So what was the purpose of the preamble? Is it to attempt to educate the Commission without having to go back and read the work plan?

Gerrit Bass - It was to give instruction as to what is going on in WC. What you said is correct, so that you don't have to go, (inaudible) it does refer back to that plan to make it more the whole document.

Brad Johnson - Some of those we wanted the precepts because it changes from east to west. We've got the land use cover, and you can see how much land is private. It is just a page for the critical areas. I'm in agreement with Art, if everyone else is. That aquifer we take out and the south studies the summary of studies performed in WC.

We take out all of page 6 and the bottom of page 5, and then I know that Art has more comments as we go through here. I don't think that will hurt our document at all. Especially like Art says, if it is old information and I was reading through it, we want it to be right. We don't want them to be saying there is only one aquifer in the County.

Kim Weerts - If the preamble isn't necessary and it is only education, why couldn't the plan just say you've got the book, this is how we are going to monitor. If you need more information, we refer you to our work plan. They are the ones making us do the report. They can do the homework, too, they get paid for it.

Brad Johnson - So we just start on page 7, is that what you are saying? Where we start talking about the critical areas and the goals?

Kim Weerts - Yes. Why not, if we don't need it.

Art Swannack - I have a question on page 11 under the water quality. It had "Whitman County/Washington DOH Sentry Database. I wasn't clear on this, so I made a note. How are you going to get access to private well water test data? Are you referring to, it says public drinking water in the measurement, are you talking public water systems, or private well systems?

Brad Johnson - Just Pullman and Colfax, the public water systems is where we looked last year to see for the first 5-year if there were any contaminants and there was none in either place. So, we are not looking at individual wells.

Art Swannack - Okay, also remember if you are doing the whole County, you've got 16 different towns with a public water system plus some other Class B's. If you are going to do this measurement you are going to have to have some check-ins on all of those systems because they are all state regulated.

Brad Johnson - Class A is going to be in every town.

Mark Storey - (Inaudible)

Alan Thomson - Twenty-five connections is the mark, there.

Mark Storey - (Inaudible)

Art Swannack - I just wanted some clarification. So, you are just talking about the ones the towns have. Just be aware there are more than two towns, and they are going to be expecting that at the State if you are actually doing that monitoring because that is going to give you a sample around the County.

Mark Storey - (Inaudible)

Larry Cochran - One thing about the preamble. If we take it out, and then they don't like it then it will come back to us, and we can add it then.

Art Swannack - You sent another appendix this morning and I did a check on one of those links and looked at the, is it brown or green? I wouldn't use that data right now. We need to do a bunch of ground truthing on it because the last one of those links when I clicked on it, and I looked at my fields in the north end of the County, it said it has been brown for the last 4 years. I know that field has been through at least 2 crops. I don't know that that high resolution data, I send that stuff high resolution change,

Brad Johnson - No, this is from Amanda Stahl and it's in place of that high detection,

Art Swannack - That map doesn't accurately reflect what happened on that ground for the last 4 years. Part of that ground is in solid alfalfa.

Brad Johnson - There has to be the ground truthing, like Art said.

Art Swannack - I would hold off on doing anything with that one for now.

Brad Johnson - Okay, that's fine.

Larry Cochran - When I saw it was all apps, I just didn't look at it.

Art Swannack - If you go up above then they have the link and I clicked the link, then I rolled up to my fields.

Larry Cochran - It depends on what time of year they took the picture, too.

Art Swannack - How they averaged the data over the 12 months, too.

Brad Johnson - I thought maybe put it in as an appendix, and Art is recommending not. It is not in there right now and we have those edits that we have right here, and Kim you are going to talk with Gerrit after the meeting. Is there any more discussion on the monitoring plan?

Is there a motion to accept with the edits we talked about here, and I will send it to you before I send it to the State. There is a webform that they have attached to this, so they get it by the end of June. We have a signature page here for those of you that are here can sign it,

MOTION by Art Swannack and seconded by Larry Cochran to approve the VSP monitoring plan with the edits required by the work group. Motion carried.

Brad Johnson - Next is the VSP budget. The only change is under Tasks. Now there is #4. When I sent it out Cost-Share was under Task 1 and Art made a recommendation to make it its own task. The reason it is zero is because we have two cost shares. Only one funded but that money does not come out of this. It is a supplemental funding, so I didn't get a chance to call Josh, but it's a contract directly with Whitman CD so that is why there is no budget in that 12 months total. Do you remember what you awarded for that?

Josh Larsen - \$39,000.

Brad Johnson - That is what the work group approved at a meeting.

Josh Larsen - So the work group approved both projects. The Commission lost the second one. There was a system error so they lost (inaudible).

Brad Johnson - The work group should recall, one thing I wanted to point out, there was \$17,000 that you have not allocated to anything that we have gone through,

Art Swannack - You said two different things regarding the money. One, it was in our budget, and two, it was funded directly from the Conservation Commission through the Conservation District. Did that money get pulled out of our budget? The cost share.

Brad Johnson - The cost share, yes, so it didn't get pulled out of our budget. It was a separate pot of money, supplemental so it,

Art Swannack - Okay, I see.

Brad Johnson - It was a supplemental cost share funding pot.

Art Swannack - So it was just an allocation of what we thought we would submit. Not a actual money we had.

Josh Larsen - So your budget now is \$326,205 with that additional \$39,000 from the supplemental cost share program. (inaudible)

Art Swannack - You are confusing me. Sorry, your budget doesn't show that here.

Larry Cochran - The cost share money is a separate budget item at the Commission.

Art Swannack - At the Commission that's right. But why, our budget was okay. We will submit a couple projects, but they aren't part of our VSP budget. So they shouldn't have a relation to what our VSP budget is for the next year.

Brad Johnson -What I sent out to you does not have the cost share. It is something we have to invoice to them from us to the County to the Commission to get some money sent back.

Mark Storey - (Inaudible)

Larry Cochran - But the \$17,000 he says is not spent, we can spend that on a project, couldn't we?

Brad Johnson - No, it is in the monitoring portion. It was a part of that \$47,000 that we originally got, and we didn't allocate it to anything as of yet. My recommendation to the VSP work group is that we have that for revisions to the monitoring plan or an analysis for the 5-year report that is going to be due in January of 2026. So, it would be getting set up for any revisions if we get any comments back that they want a monitoring plan that you just approved or start doing an analysis which is monitoring for the 5-year report.

Kim Weerts - So if we don't put it in there, what happens?

Brad Johnson - It goes back to the Commission if we don't allocate it or spend it for something before June of 2025.

Art Swannack - What happens if it stays in our base contract until such a time when we either do something with it through a budget amendment or if we don't spend it, it goes back.

Kim Weerts - So if we put it into revision of a monitoring plan and/or analysis of a 5-year report, can we pull it out at any time and re-allocate it?

Brad Johnson - You guys have the ability to look at this budget at any time, correct.

Art Swannack - Or you can put it into a non-allocated and have that as a line until later in the year until we decide.

Kim Weerts - Wouldn't that be more truthful? This sounds like WSU at the end of the year putting money into one account and 24 hours later putting it back.

Josh Larsen - (Inaudible) when it comes to an audit we have \$17,000 just sitting there not allocated? The Commission might not say anything but the Auditor would say, why do you have \$17,000?

Kim Weerts - Because we can.

Art Swannack - I don't think in our situation that would be a problem as long as it's clear that it is something we will decide on later. I don't know if you want to go that route, I don't know.

Larry Cochran -If we don't have anything to spend it on, let's hang on to it. Something may come up.

Kim Weerts - I agree, but I'm not sure it should be put into an area where it, we initially looked for a project and now we are throwing it into what if, administration.

Larry Cochran -Monitoring could be a project, too.

Brad Johnson - This \$47,000 was identified for monitoring and I want a clarification on a cost share. We couldn't do a cost share project because it is in monitoring, and we have to do something related to what is eligible in monitoring.

Kim Weerts - Okay, so now I am confused. Is the \$17,000 part of the original \$47,000? So how could we have used that for a project before?

Brad Johnson - I never said it could be used for a project because it was unallocated in the monitoring \$47,000.

Kim Weerts - I thought the \$17,000 was left over because we didn't do the second project.

Brad Johnson - No, that was the supplemental budget.

Kim Weerts - Okay,

Brad Johnson - That's why, this is my idea to put it in there. Today I wanted to call it to your attention, but clarification is it is part of the original \$47,000 for monitoring so it has to be used on something required for monitoring. The monitoring plan revisions and analysis for the 5-year report of the monitoring is eligible. So, that's why I put that in there.

Art Swannack - I'm a little confused. If you go back to the top of that budget. So, the one that is on the screen is the one that we are using? So where does that \$47,000 or \$17,000 what line is it on that budget? Neither number is clear. Is it in the \$29,000 or what? This shows July 2024 through June 2025 as the budget and it is listing your individual costs, travel, etc. monitoring shows \$10,000. Then down below it shows #2 monitoring shows \$29,852. Then we get down to the bottom and you're talking \$47,000 with \$17,000. I'm confused with what the budget is that we are actually looking at for this next year.

Brad Johnson - Part of the \$47,000 has already been spent as of June 2024 writing the VSP monitoring plan. Then, there is money in both in those ones above there. I can

break that out and send it out to you. What we have spent so far the \$47,000 is how much is remaining. I can do a better job with that.

Art Swannack - This is the budget you sent us, Brad, to approve for next year. None of the numbers in the top match with what you are talking about down below. Unless there is something I am missing.

Brad Johnson - On the back, the \$1200 hasn't been spent, the \$3400, the \$17,000 hasn't been identified, so I tried to highlight them.

Art Swannack - You've got \$17,000 under monitoring and you've got \$4,000 under monitoring. That is \$21,000.

Brad Johnson - And then the \$1200.

Art Swannack - but that is participation, that is not monitoring.

Brad Johnson - But that is part of the \$47,000. That is participation, monitoring, that's how we broke them out the last time we did this. There is going to be some, what I was waiting for the end of this month to work with the County to see what we have to carry over and the remaining money we have to allocate was \$137,000 out of our total.

Art Swannack - What you show is \$25,600 in yellow. That doesn't match anything on the budget as a line item.

Brad Johnson - Because some of that was unspent. I previously identified that in the contract, and I sent, so that carried forward. This contract, this money here is the money that we haven't allocated right here. What is remaining.

Kim Weerts - Then if it is not in next year's budget, then it just sits there. You have to have it in next year's budget somewhere.

Brad Johnson - So, it will carry forward. We don't lose it out of the first biennium. I know I'm not doing a good job of saying this but we've got this money plus whatever has not been spent. So, these numbers will be higher than what they are, the actual budget numbers. That money doesn't end June 30th.

Kim Weerts - But we can't approve the budget unless we have the correct numbers.

Larry Cochran - You have to show the carryover.

Kim Weerts - Yes, exactly. The separate line should show the carryover, because it is going to the total budget and the budget is going to be higher than this.

Brad Johnson - It will be, yes, with the carryover.

Kim Weerts - But you have to, (inaudible) all that.

Brad Johnson - Okay, I'll get those numbers and Art, I think those monitoring numbers will make more sense because it will be the 25 that you were talking about plus the 10.

Art Swannack - That would be 35, Brad. But you are showing 29.

Kim Weerts - If you are in the task section, you're not going to equate anything in this budget. Those tasks have to come up and match the budget unless you have a line item and the task that says non-allocated to be carryover. If you don't have any carryover in the task section, because these are the tasks for the coming year, you can't put the carryover in there. In the carryover in the budget you've got to, if you are going to allocate that specifically for monitoring you have to add a carryover monitoring section and a carryover,

Art Swannack - What you should have is the top grid of the budget should show the carryover from last year to this year. In addition, and the goods and maintenance and the bottom task list should show what you are going to spend including that carryover. But everything you have said so far doesn't, math doesn't work.

Larry Cochran - It should probably be called carrying forward from 2024.

Kim Weerts - Carried forward from 2024 Budget. It needs to be explained.

Mark Storey - (Inaudible)

Art Swannack - I don't see how we can approve the budget today.

Brad Johnson - I'll get together with Evon and figure out where we are at on the budget.

Mark Storey - Evon is out sick. (Inaudible)

Brad Johnson - I will get together with Evon. That was one thing I didn't know was the carryover. Art was saying just so I am clear, on the top, I will have the carryover in each department. I think there is going to be some travel carryover.

Art Swannack - What I would suggest for a budget, would be one that reports what happened in the current year, shows the underspend, and then has a summary of the underspend in the carryover line, and then a proposal for what you want to spend in the current coming year. Because then, all of us can look at it and we can see, what we had, here is what was spent, here is what wasn't spent, here is the proposal for the coming year for all the different areas, and then we are all on the same page. Does that make sense to you guys. So do that.

Brad Johnson - Okay, I had on here to discuss the August 13th VSP stakeholder meeting, but basically a lot of the discussion that we had in this room here about, there is a lot of different groups like you trying to get their monitoring plan approved. The biggest thing from the Commission was to get something in, let us look at it from the monitoring plan side and if they have any comments obviously, the work group would review them and edit them for the VSP monitoring plan, if any. Based on some conversation with Brian Cochran, I think ours will be fair to good and I think there will be something that we will have to look at to address or not.

At the bottom I sent you out some Soil Health Days in Colton, June 17-18. June 24th is the Soil Health & Cropping Systems Tour. If you are not registered, I don't know if you can get into it but there are three who will be there on Monday.

Gerrit Bass - (inaudible)

Brad Johnson - Who are the three guys coming from Colton?

Gerrit Bass- (Inaudible)

Josh Larsen - On the 26th the last Wednesday (inaudible)

Brad Johnson - Okay, that's all I have.

MOTION by Art Swannack and Jeff seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Adjourned - 10:58 a.m.