

**WHITMAN COUNTY
VOLUNTARY STEWARDESHIP
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
January 31, 2023
Public Works Auditorium
2:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

John Pearson
Kim Weerts
Jon Jones

Art Swannack
Larry Cochran
Jeff Pittmann

Others: Brad Johnson, Palouse CD; Casey Lowder, Pine Creek CD; Caitlin Harrold, Rock Lake CD; Alan Thomson, WC Planner; Brandon Johnson, Public Works; Elinor Huber, Clerk.

Zoom attendees: Melissa McCalby, Fish & Wildlife; Nancy Belsby; Josh Larsen; Lois, Fish & Wildlife.

2:05 p. m. – Brad Johnson opened the meeting and introductions were held.

MOTION by Kim Weerts and seconded by Jeff Pittman to approve the minutes from the October 10, 2022, meeting. Motion passed.

Brad Johnson – One thing we didn't have on the agenda, and Art reminded me, we had David Swannack and John Stuhlmler who are no longer work group members. David has moved into Cheney and didn't think he could make the meetings. I appreciated David and I think he enjoyed our meetings. If anybody has any ideas to give to Art, the BOCC makes the decision.

Art Swannack – The story is, Dave Swannack moved out of the County as his primary residence so he wasn't eligible to stay on the committee. John Stuhlmler is no longer with the Farm Bureau who helped us start this, so we really need two people. I talked with David a little bit today. He has one person he is working on but if you have any suggestions for anyone, please put the name forward and the BOCC can appoint. So, contact me if you have any information.

Brad Johnson – Are there any other additions to the agenda? It is a pretty short agenda, but we have a couple of things to go through.

Nancy Belsby – What did you say?

Brad Johnson – We have two members who are no longer on the work group. John Stuhlmler and Dave Swannack. If you know anybody who is interested, contact Art Swannack.

The first thing I wanted to start with is obviously the governor's budget and the legislature working on funding. But there are a couple of things that are going forward with VSP and that is all I was going to talk about today.

The supplemental funding that is out there currently, it came about half way through the second half of the legislative session for the supplemental funding for cost-share. It looks like there will be another three million in funding available to VSP workgroups that have cost-share. That is above and beyond money that we get to run VSP.

The other thing that is coming through right now is some monitoring funding for VSP. What I've heard is that each county could get somewhere between 40-50 thousand dollars for monitoring. One thing that would have to be done if that money comes, is a monitoring plan completed for the County. Some of that \$40,000 would have to go towards monitoring but I believe there will be, it won't cost \$40,000 to write a monitoring plan for WC, but there will be other things that we can look at as far as monitoring and stewardship activities.

In this work group we will decide what we would spend that on and when we would spend it. So, I just wanted to get monitoring information out to you. There is going to be a VSP meeting and we will learn more and obviously until it comes out and it is in our budget, but I just wanted you to think about that.

The monitoring plan for WC really shouldn't be that hard. Ryan Boiling with the Palouse CD has been doing a lot of monitoring with the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and he has written a bunch of craft quality assurance protection plan that have been approved. So, our monitoring plan would just say we are going to be following this quality assurance protection plans that have already been submitted. Then what other new and innovative monitoring that the work group would decide they would want to go out and decide.

Kim Weerts – Could you explain what the quality assurance protection plan is?

Brad Johnson – It is called a QAPP. We could bring Ryan in to talk about that. Basically,

Casey Lowder – The acronym comes specifically from Ecology funded projects and any Ecology project that requires data collection requires that plan. Essentially, they want you to define what you are going to collect, how you are going to analyze it and so forth so you are not just out there making measurements without some.

Brad Johnson – Also, the VSP money wouldn't fall under this, but every QAPP that is created, that monitoring data that is recorded with Ecology money, and I'm not talking Ecology money here, but those QAPPs also ensure that data will be submitted to Ecology in their big data base so that people have access to it and can see that data.

If we set up to do some monitoring it is my belief that we don't have to put it into Ecology's data place but it might be strings attached with some money if we, we will look into that and make sure that is not the case. Anyway, we already have those plans in place. We would just say we would follow those plans. We don't have to follow the data mining part of it.

Like I said, this is something to be talked about later but I just wanted to get it on everybody's radar that we might have an extra, now this is on our base funding, what I'm calling our base funding, because the supplemental cost-share is separate. But we get a \$117,500 every year and it sounds like we are going to get an additional, I think it was \$47,000, but somewhere between \$40-50,000 for monitoring and I know we have to develop that monitoring plan for the County.

Now into the real meat of the why we are here. The supplemental funding that is out there for VSP. It is currently out there right now, and work groups that have a cost-share program are eligible for that funding. I really, you know, I've got no dog in the fight from the standpoint of whether or not you guys approve it or not, but the funding comes from the Commission and it will come through the Commission down to the work group and, go ahead and pull up that PowerPoint presentation. I think I can walk through that.

This supplemental funding is out there and it is for any work group that has a cost-share program. As far as us guiding you on this, we don't see any need to go after any funding until after July 1, 2023. We think it is in the governor's budget and the legislature is going to approve it but if it is there, we cannot access it without a cost-share program approved by the local work group.

There is 3 million dollars identified, and here is where some, with all funding there are strings attached to it. The practice has to be identified in our work plan, it has to have a minimum of a ten-year life span and then we would have a call for proposals that this work group would have to score and rank proposals and then because it is coming from the Conservation Commission the project would have to be entered into this conservation practice data base by a conservation district employee.

So, you guys would have your hands on it and calling for the proposals, scoring and ranking the proposals and once that proposal gets submitted to the Commission it has to go through CPDS so conservation district employees are the only ones that have access to the data base, so it is Commission funding so Commission guidelines to follow Commission cost-share practice.

Next slide. So, there would be a lot of informing and educating and outreach to producers, to develop the cost-share program.

Next slide – These are based on our work plan, based on it being a 10-year practice. Here are the types of things that would be eligible in a VSP cost-share program. It comes down to the practice like there are more things identified in our work plan but they are one-to-three to five-year practices. They are not a 10-year practice. This money comes from the capital budget. And the capital budget requires a 10-year life span.

Next slide – Hopefully you can see this, but at the end of December, all these red dots are VSP supplemental projects. Spokane, Asotin County got 8-9, Walla Walla County has a few, Columbia. I work with the Garfield County work group. We've got two but they came in after this map was completed.

Then you can see on the west side. But of the 3 million dollars funding, you can see here, sprinkler systems, access control, irrigation, livestock, pipeline stream, shrub planting, wetland enhancement, these are examples of BMPs that are part of these different projects.

If you go back to the previous slide, this is what I want to keep front and center. This really, I was talking to Art about this, if you look at this, fencing, tree and shrub, watering facilities, water wells, heavy use area, critical area planting, most of what is on here is more focus on ranchers or cattlemen, because they are 10-year practice life.

The one I put up, here, I think we would have a lot of interest with the GPS precision guidance system working with producers to upgrade their systems for nutrient and pest management and precision ag.

But those are the eligible projects that are within our work plan with the 10-year practice life. So, then I already talked about the monitoring. So, the next slide talks about the reporting that is required, the 2-year and the 5-year reports which we have already been through.

So, what is the pleasure of the work group? I handed out some frequently asked questions. I think it was after the October meeting. There were a lot of questions that we got responses back from the Commission. But a lot of that stuff, the details we can get that worked out after we get a cost-share program.

Casey, Caitlin, and Josh, who was here and left, we are not asking for the cost-share program between now and July 1st. If you choose to do so, we would get everything put in place so we could offer something July 1st. Most of these projects that are eligible require cultural resources, so it takes a little time to get them put in. So, our interest is, is there a need for a cost-share program with 3-million dollars in supplemental funding? If so, we will get all the pieces put in place so it is ready to go sometime after July.

Larry Cochran – So, I can understand taking VSP money for monitoring. Oraleen has got money coming out of here pretty soon that will cover all these projects through NRCS. I see no reason why we need to double up. (inaudible) I know she doesn't have enough employees. All this climate change money is coming down. She has a lot of money and that would take care of any project that we would want to do but as far as the monitoring, I can understand the VSP. If it is funded through VSP, I think we can take it, but as (inaudible) far as the practice is, let that program go through and see what happens.

Brad Johnson – Like I said, I'm only here to let you know if, the Commission funding is some of the easiest funding that we work with to get projects on the ground. It is, Ecology is hard to get on the ground, some of these other funding sources that districts have gone after, if VSP offered this, this money can be married with NRCS which has hold down rate and things like that to pay a larger portion of the project.

Larry Cochran – Most of those projects are not farm bill money so there is no cap on how much money you can pretty sure you can get.

Brad Johnson – Okay, I'm not privy to that.

Larry Cochran – I think the rate is either 75% or 90% we are only talking (inaudible).

Brad Johnson – I know in Asotin County the projects, they tied them to E-quip projects. I was trying to figure out who was doing what type of projects but again, probably streambank protection might be one and I would assume that NRCS is doing wetlands stuff. I don't know what they do on GPS guidance systems. I don't do anything on GPS guidance systems.

Larry Cochran – They came down with the riparian buffer bill, so hopefully,

Brad Johnson – The Commission is going to have a lot of money in the next, before it is even spent.

Larry Cochran – They will have a lot of work to do before that time.

Alan Thomson – How many producers are interested in having fences along their property? That seems to be a controversial one right there.

Kim Weerts – Cattleman? No.

Alan Thomson - Do you want fences? No, that is the controversial part.

Jon Jones – I think Kim’s probably talked about livestock exclusion. We don’t have to limit ourselves to livestock exclusion. There can be fences along the breaks of the Snake where the fences have burned or the, it is a lot of money to have those fences fixed. That would be a place we could do.

Art Swannack – Can we do that to use this money towards replacing fences that have been burned out?

Brad Johnson – There’s that part, it will be on a case-by-case basis but I think some of it would work. Definitely if it is protecting one of our critical areas. This money would have to be tied back to protection or enhancement of a critical area.

Art Swannack – The other one that pops into mind is Pine Creek District and all of the rules on Hangman Creek that are coming through. I was thinking in terms of, I think they are playing games with our County but besides the fact there are producers that are going to be required to fence off areas or plant stuff in there and stay a long-ways away from the creek.

Jon Jones – I used to be a TMDL lead when I worked in Ecology and it doesn’t really come down to rules. It is just a plan to achieve the rules that are already there.

Art Swannack – My understanding is Ecology is coming in and actively going after producers up there and telling them that they must do this.

Larry Cochran – Because of that lawsuit.

Art Swannack – Yes, because of the lawsuit. So, there is an area of the County that it isn’t great, but in terms of their situation, this funding might be able to help some of those individuals and not have to pull it out of their pocket.

Larry Cochran - They don’t have to prove it. It just has to look like it.

Alan Thomson – Is it true that they are forced to pay for this themselves along the Hangman Creek area?

Jon Jones – The internal policy of Ecology, I haven’t worked there for 10 years now, but they never asked anybody to do anything that Ecology didn’t have the funding to implement. That was just something that wasn’t written anywhere but that’s the way it worked.

John Pearson – Did that funding come with strings?

Jon Jones – The strings would be, if they said you had to have livestock exclusion, yes.

Kim Weerts – That is what the DOE, that is one of their criteria. Fencing is livestock exclusionary.

Brad Johnson – I've only worked with one project in southeastern Washington where they allowed a grazing management plan but it was only weeks and they are not much longer than that. So, Jon is right.

Ecology comes down, talks to the landowner and as long as there is progress being made, everything is fine. But if that landowner digs his heels in, and it goes to court, once they go to court, there is no money from Ecology to help them. I'm not even sure that it stops any other money from being used on their property but until that point, and Joe Lameer is one of the only ones that has gone to court, right, Kim? A court case with cattlemen in this area, anyway. I don't know about the whole state but, there was a producer on lower Pataha Creek which had a finding against him but nothing has ever been done. He passed away and I don't know, there are still cattle there.

Kim Weerts – My guess is that Hangman is a different situation in that there has already been a court case and (inaudible) is actively enforcing that. I would be surprised if they don't have the ability to enforce it and if we did a cost-share and if we could use this money, it would certainly be more palatable to most people.

Brad Johnson – That is where I'm coming from, Kim. Not only is it more palatable for people but for us that would be applying for the projects that you approve. It is a lot easier funding source to work with to get reimbursed.

But Larry sits on some different bills with the Commission and their money has been really easy to work with. I hear what Larry is saying but I think if you close the door on a cost-share program through VSP with that 3 million dollars, there is going to be some resource concerns that could be better protected and people would want to work with this money as opposed to a different source. That's just my take on it.

Larry Cochran – I will quote a paragraph from the Hangman Creek letter. *"Additionally, there are several Ecology grants that I can assist with applying for that would provide cost-share for livestock BMPs, riparian restorations, and riparian (inaudible)."* That is in the letter that went out to most producers.

Art Swannack – That was from who?

Larry Cochran – Ecology.

Jon Jones – One of the things we are talking about here, is some kind of a criteria for ranking. If we do a full cost-share program whoever is going to be on the ranking committee is going to have to have some guidelines on how to rank a project. That would be us, but it is going to be hard to rank if we have a project in each one of those categories. Which one is going to rank higher? Is it going to be?

Brad Johnson – You submit them all.

Jon Jones - I know which one is going to rank higher for me.

Art Swannack – We are not the final decision maker on the money. The State is.

Jon Jones – But we can make pretty heavy recommendations and,

Art Swannack – Do we make a recommendation or do we just score them as eligible or not?

Brad Johnson – You score them as eligible and then you put them in a rank order. In Garfield County, we send them in as a rank order.

Jon Jones – I think the biggest thing on that list there is the GPS Precision Guidance System. That would do more for water quality. It is profitable for farmers. That is one of those win-win things. That would come to the top of my list pretty easy.

Art Swannack – I just don't know how you can put that one as a 10-year life because most computers, now mine survived 10 years but there are a lot of things that have changed on that and I just wonder, that would be one I would ask you to research and see whether it really would be funded by the Conservation Commission.

Jon Jones – Cost vibration makes a lot of different (inaudible) lifetime with farmers and equipment.

Art Swannack – Software changes, support changes and everything else. Look at windows 10 as of today is no longer being put on anything.

Jon Jones – Going back to my point, we need to come up with some ranking criteria to make a cost-share really work.

Kim Weerts – If we are going to do a cost-share program, then I would say I would support Larry's first comment in that we, if there is a lot of money through NRCS, we should try to do something that is a little more out of that area. To me, if we are going take it, helping Hangman Creek producers is much more important than something that NRCS could fund.

Casey Lowder – A quick comment about the overlap with the NRCS practices. I think you are absolutely right, Larry, there is a ton of money coming to support almost all of these practices right now. But what I would encourage the work group to think about is the long term. If a VSP cost-share program was adopted now, it would be in place until you guys decided to end it.

If the money from NRCS or other sources wanes in the future, we would still have that VSP cost-share program in place to fall back on. In the meantime, when there is lots of money coming out, the existence of the VSP cost-share program, it doesn't mean you have to consider projects were even open for applications. They could just sit on the table until it is needed.

Brad Johnson – Or, like Kim is saying, there is nothing that says we can say we are doing a VSP cost-share for the Hangman Creek watershed. We can focus it on one, that is the work group's decision. It's not open for the whole County, it is open for the Hangman to see how it goes and then re-evaluate.

But when, like John is saying, there is some legwork that needs to happen but until you guys say, "no," okay, fine. But if "yes," then there is some work that we are going to have to bring to you guys. You've been on enough scoring and ranking of salmon projects to know that a score card evolves, because what you think is going to fit doesn't fit. Art has been there. I've been a part of a lot of different scoring and ranking processes.

So, being a part of it in Garfield County, Art asked me that if we put this together, and July 1st whenever we get the money, we know there's the 3 million dollars, if we got 10 projects in here, and we scored and ranked them and submitted them, all ten of them would get funded. I can guarantee you that.

Because the Commission is going to only at the end when they get down on that 3 million dollars, going to evaluate things. But the first few sign-ups with VSP after July 1st, as many applications as we put in I believe would get funded. But that's only what I know how this first 3 million in supplemental funding went.

Jon Jones – Then are we going to do a call for projects to the conservation districts?

Brad Johnson – We would send out VSP post cards. It would be a VSP, the conservations districts would promote it. That's all to be determined. We need to decide whether or not you want to do a cost-share program.

Jon Jones – It would apply for.

Brad Johnson – There would be an application period and they would have come in and I've got an example of that we can pull up. We put all this stuff together 8 months ago when we were talking about this. We've got the application already. We did pull some criteria together that you saw at one meeting, but I didn't want to bring that out here, because I just want to know whether or not you want the cost-share. I've got it, Brandon's got it over there. We can pull it up.

Kim Weerts – So that, the two projects that we talked about in the October, neither one of those would be eligible?

Brad Johnson – I believe the Ewan project, there are components of it that would be eligible. But we talked about one being a design project or a,

Art Swannack – That won't work. This funding has to be, the whole project has to be completely done by the end of the biennium the funding is in. When we looked into that, you couldn't use it just for planning dollars if the project wasn't going to be completed by the end of the biennium. You could mix it with other projects.

Kim Weerts – Neither one of those projects would fit.

Brad Johnson – I think they would fit after July 1st.

Art Swannack – They may but we have to guarantee that that whole project will be completed by the end of June of 2025.

Alan Thomson – And that can be done.

Art Swannack – That could be done with Ewan.

Alan Thomson – You could get someone on it.

Brad Johnson – So they have, now we are getting to some of the details here where I didn't want to dive into. Fifty-thousand-dollar cap but you can request to go over the fifty thousand cap on a case-by-case basis. I would assume you want it higher than \$50,000. I don't know.

Alan Thomson – There will be engineering costs which will (inaudible)

Brad Johnson – Yes, so they do have a cap but they also have a process where that project, if there is a project that goes over \$50,000, that's what I said, it is not a no-brainer. But it is pretty close for me because of the Commission funding and the things that you can work with the Commission on. They are really easy to work with. But, again, we have to know all the components of the grant. That project hits two if not three of our critical areas, frequently flooded, fish & wildlife habitat, wetlands. So right there you have three out of the five critical areas and that's going to be in the scoring and ranking. How many critical areas does this affect? That project probably would be number one on our list based on the number of critical areas it affects. So, I'm not trying to say,

Alan Thomson – On Ewan, and can there be a combination of funding? Once the scope of the project is figured out which is going to be fairly easy and this a, b, and c needs to be done, and maybe some of this funding from VSP could go to the particular components of that on top of the NRCS and conservation district funding and get all done within a year or so.

Casey Lowder – You hit on exactly what I was going to mention. Especially with projects that require engineering. The Commission has a specific funding pool for engineering. So, VSP money could be used for the implementation fees and it could be matched with something like the conservation commission's engineering and then there is other funding sources that could be matched or paired with it as well.

Alan Thomson –

Jon Jones – Match always gives extra points.

Larry Cochran – I was talking to Jerry Bailey, talking like up in that area, Ewan, the blue line is not even there, so if that's the case we would want to,

Art Swannack – What does the blue line mean?

Larry Cochran – The water ways, frequently flooded.

Brad Johnson – Somehow it didn't get on the map.

Larry Cochran – But if you've seen the state map, everything that's got the blue, every water course draws that blue line goes through my mother's house.

Alan Thomson – But we can get a floodplain map and FEMA maps and it will tell you if it is within the floodplain. FEMA has already been mapping things and we are getting close to having a final product there. So, the floodplain can be figured out fairly easily. There are definitely floodplain issues there and we've got wetland issues there, too. So, we've got two, possibly got three critical areas right in one spot.

Larry Cochran – So, there is one practice I'd like to see on here that these guys may not like it. That is the snow fences.

Brad Johnson – That is not identified in our work plan but there is an opportunity to go back and add that. We added a couple of those. Fences for those snow plow drivers? I don't disagree with you. So,

Art is looking over basically what is up on the screen. Those are the 10-year practices. I printed it out for you.

This is when we are doing our 2 and 5-year reporting. These are the practices that we report on critical area functions and values, whether we are protecting or restoring them. The list on the back, those are projects.

So, if you're talking about a water well or a watering facility, a pipeline eligible, so you can see on the back if you went to drill a well, a pumping plant, a well, a pipeline and a stock tank, they are all eligible. But if you just went off the ones on the front which we are reporting on, you would say, the pipeline is not eligible. But everything on the back includes what is it on the front, and there is a more exhaustive list than what we have here on the screen.

I will double check, Art, on the GPS guidance system but the Commission identifies that as a 10-year practice. That is why it has that SCC 52, that is the practice code and that is a WA State Conservation practice with a 10-year practice life. My understanding is it is eligible, but before we would call for those projects, I will verify that.

Art Swannack – I checked on that the caveat it says okay, you get the money at the start but you have to maintain that for 10 years on your own.

Alan Thomson – Brad, can you explain what the GPS system does for the,

Art Swannack – GPS system will guide you when you are farming to keep you from overlapping when you are practicing. It will also allow you to do variable rate fertilizer or pesticide application. You can do land leveling, you can do all sorts of different things if you have the different software packages and the equipment to do it with.

Alan Thomson – How many locals have that kind of equipment?

Art Swannack – A lot of people are using the guidance systems and some are using the variable. A big challenge is when you start getting into the variable rate fertilizing and yield monitoring, is with our hills and figuring out what your soil measurements are to make it accurate. We don't go back and forth like the flat land mid-west guys. We've got all this curving around. Jeff knows this. I'm not the only guy using it. The challenge honestly, is some of the software isn't up to our hills.

Larry Cochran – So, this Spring my GPS quit working one day and I was trying to remember the old way. Come to find out the government just shut the satellite down until, (inaudible)

Art Swannack – Oh, when the changeover on that 131-135 or whatever?

Larry Cochran – I found out later I played with (inaudible). I can't afford to replace it, I can't afford to have it upgraded.

Art Swannack – It was out on there, you just weren't reading the blogs, Larry.

Larry Cochran – I played with it long enough until I got it set to find another satellite and then it started working again. The government put that out here and didn't tell anybody.

Art Swannack – There the hiker things, the little GPS units you hike around with that are using loss which is no correction to it. Mine is using Omen Star XP. It will keep me within 6-8 inches of the line on the hills and all through the field in general. I mean there are spots it will goof up. You get into the basin, you are talking 2-inch accuracy but when they are doing potatoes, you're talking 3-4 thousand dollars an acre fertilizer.

Jon Jones – People don't realize, farmers realize it. They know there is an overlap. Sometimes the overlaps are 20-25 percent.

Art Swannack – If you get the right hired man and you're driving by when he is fertilizing and it is 50%.

Jon Jones – Farmers don't need that and our water doesn't need it either. It is a big deal.

Larry Cochran – Mary Dye, I asked her what it costs just for the equipment. It was \$15,000 was just for the equipment to get set up.

Art Swannack – Mine was \$11,000, I think when I bought it. I'm stretching it as much as I can for its lifespan but some of the challenges are okay, I can put a sprayer unit on it but, will the software actually work? In my case, because of the hills and the free form, I've done some experimenting, with an 83-foot pole square I can do 300 acres and not have a problem. If you do a 15-foot plow you get about 25 acres and then the whole memory is locked up in the system. So, it just depends on what is out there. It is getting better, I think.

Larry Cochran – The technology is out there. I've got my yield maps out of my combine but I haven't figured out how to get them into my drill.

Art Swannack – So then you get into controlling systems that actually do variable rate, seed application with hydraulic drive motors that are on PWM controller's stuff.

Alan Thomson – I can see it being problematic for ranking. We could offer to take that to the local farmers and to rank that one.

Jon Jones – It would go pretty high because it affects every critical area we have.

Alan Thomson – Yes, it affects most of them.

Kim Weerts – However, NRCS is going to cover that. Aren't they?

Casey Lowder – That is one practice that is a conservation condition practice. That is not (inaudible)

Art Swannack – If you play devils' advocate, you'd have to look at, okay, you are wanting to use it on your farm how many critical areas do you actually have and how far are you from them?

Brad Johnson – The action map we've got those mapping features when people fill out the action map, they are documenting how many critical areas are on their property.

Art Swannack – I know. I'm just saying that would be the complicated part when Alan said something about how do you rank this? How do we justify one, all these different applications for GPS systems? It will help some but, in some cases, it will make a minor difference to what is going on out there.

Larry Cochran – You will have to have to have (inaudible)

Kim Weerts – My thought is, too, how many farmers are you going to help? Or are you going to help a lot of people on Hangman or in Ewan. There is a difference on how many it affects. That expense per farmer and you are only helping maybe a handful and you are looking at projects that are helping a significant number of producers. I think that has to rank just as high as GPS does.

Art Swannack – You could look at what we as a group can look at, what priorities do we want to hit immediately and what do we want to hit down the line? As Alan says, the Ewan project, if you could put enough money to it and to get it done, then that one is off your plate.

The Hangman Creek thing will only take so long before it is pretty well handled. It doesn't have to be this is the priority for the next 10-years, and maybe this is a priority for the next two-four years and we examine every two years and go okay, next biennium what do we want to prioritize? Maybe it will be cattle and feed lots and stockyards.

Brad Johnson – That's in Idaho.

Larry Cochran – So, to me we just start out with critical areas. Any project in a critical area would be ranked higher.

Kim Weerts – It has to be. It is part of the rule.

Brad Johnson – Nancy, go ahead.

Nancy Belsby – (inaudible)

Art Swannack – It doesn't have to be in a critical area, it has got to affect a critical area. But you can say if it is in a critical area that is our highest priority and then if it has a significant impact to a critical area that is your next and you could go down yes, this could impact your critical area.

Brad Johnson – We are getting ahead of ourselves. Brandon, could you pull up WC VSP resolution on that thumb drive, please.? This is similar to what we did in Garfield County. I don't know where you are landing on a cost-share program. I have copies for everyone and it is up on the screen.

The first paragraphs are just what has to be in there. That is the contract. It is talking about how long this would last. This is for as long as the supplemental cost-share is and I put in there that the work groups can decide whether or not they want to have a cost-share program.

This is how we set it up in Garfield County. It is a 50% cost-share unless they are expensive type projects and then you go to a 75% cost-share. If it is a pilot project or something that hasn't been done, it gives the workgroup some different avenues. It is either 50% or 75% or if it is more of a demonstration education pilot project determined by the work group, we could pay for it 100%. This needs to be in

there based on this is what the Commission recommends, if the workgroup was to adopt a cost -share program.

I just had Art, being the signatory because he is the WC Commissioner on the work group so this is what we would be approving, if you so choose to. This has been in front of you at the third meeting. I apologize for not sending it out. This only comes into play if you choose to do a cost-share project.

Alan Thomson – What kind of effort would it take to put a cost-share program together? Do you have examples? (inaudible)

Brad Johnson – So, its, it is just a short application. It is what the Commission uses.

Art Swannack – What is the maximum cost-share you can have?

Brad Johnson – 100% of demonstration project.

Art Swannack – And on other than demonstration? I know what this says, I am wondering what are the rules from the state Conservation Commission as to what is allowed as a cost-share? Is there any or is this what we are making up ourselves?

Brad Johnson – What I put together there, the Commission has different cost-share, one and two-year practices, usually are cheaper 50% cost-share, we probably wouldn't recommend that one, but the 75% is where I would like to land on for fencing projects. Fencing projects can get expensive.

Art Swannack – All these projects are 10 years or longer.

Brad Johnson – Ten years or longer so I'd say the 75% is where we would land at but we have the ability to go to 50% if you want, or 100% if you want if it is a demonstration-type project. Really, I don't see any demonstration-type projects on our list, but I put it in there just because we had that in Garfield County.

Kim Weerts – What is he definition of the demonstration project.

Brad Johnson – It would be something new and innovative and we don't have any new and innovative projects on our list. it is something that hasn't been done in the County or hasn't been done at a large scale.

Kim Weerts – A law suit hasn't been done and it is in play right now. It is mandatory. Why wouldn't that be a demonstration project?

Brad Johnson – You could choose Ewan and it would be 100% if this group was for it.

Kim Weerts – Ewan? That's something new and innovative. Nobody's done anything like that.

Brad Johnson – That's why I put it in there. This would be at your discretion. You have three different cost-share rates you can choose and when you get applications in, you can put one in the 100%, seven in the 75% and one in the 50% or put all of them in the 75% or,

Kin Weerts – So what you are saying is that work group would be responsible for creating the definition of a demonstration.

Brad Johnson – Yes, the work group, when we would call for projects, I would anticipate saying that we have three different cost-share levels. The work group will score and rank these and decide what they fit into and maybe just pick two, 75 or 100. I just put that in there so that we can do any one of those. The public doesn't have to see this.

This is the work group deciding they are going to have a cost-share program. You are going to have three parameters and you are going to follow either 50%, cost-share, 75%, or 100% and you guys can make that decision when you see the project.

Art, I would say guidance systems, 50%. The landowners are benefiting too from those but that is my opinion.

Kim Weerts – Wouldn't we have to have definitions in here. Right now, it is a resolution and it is very, very vague.

Art Swannack – You could have an addendum to this. I'm not sure this covers everything we would need. I also, Alan, I'm thinking about, this is additional money under VSP, the County would still have to receive it and distribute it, wouldn't we? How does that work, Brad?

Brad Johnson – So, it goes into CPDF, the contracts are made between what the work group has approved and the conservation district to work with them, and the bills would all be submitted to the County. Commission pays the County and the County pays the district.

Art Swannack – What I'm saying is we are adding more dollars to that flow, so do we need to do some type of an addendum to our agreement with the conservation districts?

Alan Thomson - (inaudible)

Brad Johnson – I believe, don't quote me on this, I couldn't get ahold of Bill Eller but I believe the Commission is trying to figure out, Casey fills out, you guys have approved it, it is all VSP money. Casey is working with Jeff on a project. The Commission is trying to figure out how to spend this VSP money to Casey who then pays Jeff. But they are not trying to leave the County out. They are trying to figure out a way that they can do that. I don't know if they have come to any conclusion on that yet, or not.

Alan Thomson – Each county would have to have a contract with the conservation district.

Brad Johnson – As far as in those questions and answers, and I don't have one in front of me. It said it is already in there, that nothing new would be because of some wording they put in there. If you look at 5b. at the very bottom of the page:

“The SCC position is that each contract that the SCC has with each VSP county has language sufficient to provide for cost-share programs to be run by the County (or the County's sub-contractor) and the Commission, provided that each county abides by the SCC cost-share policies and procedures. The SCC position is that the sub-contract template example (between the CD

and the County for VSP) that it provides has language to provide for cost-share programs to be run by the CD acting as sub-contractor to the County.”

Brad Johnson – From my perspective on things like this, we will definitely get this ironed out before now and July and we will figure it out. This is your program and if you want the money run through the County, the Commission will do that. If you are okay with that, once you guys approve a practice, and the money comes to Pine Creek, and then goes to producer, we don't have to do that.

Art Swannack – I think we would have to look at the contract the County currently has and see whether the language we agreed to actually has that in it.

Alan Thomson – The way this is written it says language is sufficient to provide for cost-share programs. But there is not a dollar number in here saying that we are giving you 50 grand extra. That has to be written in somewhere between the state and the County.

Art Swannack – They are saying that they are going to give X amount for project but they have to decide how much they want. Is it fifty thousand per county max?

Brad Johnson - Fifty thousand per project max.

Art Swannack – Fifty thousand per project max. Per county there isn't currently a max?

Brad Johnson – You saw Asotin County had seven different projects and that they were all \$50,000.

Kim Weerts – If the money isn't coming through the County, then basically what it becomes is another CD approval of funding. It is just another CD project.

Brad Johnson – I can see where you would think that, Kim, but that's not true, because we are not eligible to apply for that funding. The funding is, Larry sits on the CD board, he will not be approving or disapproving of any of this. This work group is VSP money. What the Commission is trying to figure out, like in Garfield County we got two projects with the supplemental funding. There was no contract re-write between the County and the Commission.

That money is sitting in a VSP pool and I believe currently has gone through Garfield County, back to Pomeroy CD to be paid out to the landowners. What the Commission is trying to figure out is, if the counties are nervous about that, they can just have a contract with the district, if they don't want that new supplemental cost-share money run through the county books. I don't know where they are at on that.

Art Swannack – This is what the County had on for VSP. From the County perspective, one thing I would be concerned with is making sure we didn't get into some type of gifting of public funds issue. Because that is a real restriction on government and I don't know whether, we would have to get some people to look into it like Dennis or someone. We would have to know whether those dollars coming to us could go to a private entity or not.

Casey Lowder – They still would go through the district first.

Art Swannack – It doesn't matter if they go through you first, they are still coming from us to you to a final person versus from us to you for implementation. Now it is going into cost-share programs. I think there are some questions that Alan I need to look at. Then Mark and whoever.

Alan Thomson – It would have to be under the VSP program.

Art Swannack – It would have to be very clearly titled that these dollars are intended for this purpose and they're allowed by state law.

Brad Johnson – Counties are doing it right now. You saw Asotin County, Columbia,

Art Swannack – I don't care what the others are doing. I've seen others do a lot of stupid things. I don't know that this amendment necessarily, or this agreement implementation necessarily covers everything the County staff covered. That would be my concern. I've seen plenty of things being done by various entities that aren't necessarily right.

Alan Thomson – When you have a conversation with Bill and maybe ask these questions and how did he go about this when it comes through the County if we need to amend the contract.

Art Swannack – I don't know if there is any language in there regarding providing cost-share programs. Not that I remember. We got time to get this done because it is the end of January and we have until July before we can really do much of anything.

Jon Jones – It would be fun to see a project, something you can really pick at.

Art Swannack – Like it has been said, Ewan would be a good project, some of the stuff on Pine Creek would be good, I'm sure there are some other ones around that are in need of some help but,

Larry Cochran – In this language they talk about (inaudible)

Art Swannack – Yes, there is some legislation that is not beneficial to VSP out there, too.

Alan Thomson – Let the state be responsible for dumping critical area ordinances on the agricultural community and (inaudible)

Art Swannack – My mandatory retirement bill just came through, Alan.

Larry Cochran – I do support any (inaudible) next to the Palouse River,

Melissa - Hey, Brad, I just wanted to say thank you all. I have to hop off to another meeting but I wanted to say thank you guys for having me for this brief hour. If you see the random number that is on here it is me. So, thank you.

Brad Johnson – Thanks, Melissa, we look forward to seeing you.

Jon Jones – Regressing a bit on the monitoring project, monitoring is more than doing water quality monitoring. Everybody knows that, I think. Photo monitoring and other monitoring requires QAPP and I regress even farther, QAPP is a hard thing to do. Writing QAPPs, to get it through all the groups, there's

hidden trip wires everywhere, and once you have a QAPP you have to follow it and that's very hard. Anyway, just think, what is a quality assurance project? Not a big deal but it is. Don't take it too lightly.

Brad Johnson – One of the other parts of monitoring is participating monitoring, and that's where that action map has helped us. When we went through the first 5-year review, the participation we had on that to document stewardship that is occurring to protect and restore critical area.

Those of you in the room that have filled that out has really helped us because there is participation monitoring, there is photo monitoring and there's water quality monitoring. There is a lot of different things but we are sitting in a pretty good spot with our monitoring. That was not an issue within a 5-year review. I don't see it being an issue because that regional conservation partnership program that brought a lot of stored watershed monitoring and different things into WC.

Jon Jones – I will say that photo monitoring is probably one of the most powerful tools we can use for public. Pictures are worth a thousand words. It is worth more than that.

Brad Johnson – On the screen is an example of a Commission cost-share. Just change the wording at the top that it is a VSP agreement. This was a work in progress at the time and it could probably be a little refined a bit more but, there are a few yes, no, answers and then stewardship strategies proposed, and it talks about your BMPs, which we know which ones are eligible.

Then on the second page it's got the cost-share and Jon had mentioned whether there is any match or anything like that. All that stuff can get pulled out and be shown. The 3-page cost-share application that people would fill out.

Alan Thomson – So this is the landowner that filled this out? So, the cost-share program is actually just an application. So, are you saying they are implementing a cost-share program?

Brad Johnson – In order to be eligible for that supplemental 3 million dollars you have to have a cost-share program.

Alan Thomson – So that's what I'm getting to, how do we do that? We got add language to the contract?

Brad Johnson – That resolution that I passed out is the start and if Art, we want to work on that and get more information in there.

Art Swannack – My understanding is cost-share with regular VSP funding, cost-share programs were allowed, but the work group had to determine that they wanted to do one. Then if they wanted to do one, they had to create the parameters and criteria and ranking criteria and then score the applications.

With this additional funding it probably is the same thing, but the work group still has to vote to actually do a cost-share program. And again, create the parameters and the criteria and the ranking process and everything to make a decision on that. And then in this case, once we do that and we score applicants then those have to go to the State Conservation Commission for approval or denial.

Alan Thomson -That is going to take a lot of effort from this group to put that in place.

Art Swannack – It is going to take a fair chunk of effort to create that unless we can steal it from somebody else that has done it effectively already.

Alan Thomson – (inaudible)

Brad Johnson – We’ve got it in Garfield.

Art Swannack -I’m just thinking there are two or three counties that have done this already. Take a look at those three and see what the group thinks is the best approach to it.

Kim Weerts – I think we should get a few, at least two, definitely three would be nice and let us look at it. Along with sending, I know you said you sent it out before but send it out again to us and then send us a copy of the resolution and after you get the answers, send us the answers regarding the resolution.

I think we end up having a lot of stuff here that we are seeing for the first time. I think we should do more email interaction answering questions so that we come more prepared to be able to vote on it.

Art Swannack – Like I said, this one here, I’m looking at it and it said to have Art sign it and I’m asking why does Art have any more authority than the rest of the group? We are all at the same table. We are all on the same level.

Brad Johnson – I can make lines for everyone. We will just figure out who should sign it, and what it should actually say.

Alan Thomson – It could be that one person could sign it.

Kim Weerts – I think we have beaten this dead horse long enough, can we move on?

Brad Johnson – I’ve got an announcement. There will be more information coming out, but Caitlin with Rock Lake, Casey with Pine Creek, and Josh, with Whitman, and the Palouse CD, we are going to hold a four CD meeting on March 1st at the Fairgrounds, at 9:00 a.m.

Casey Lowder – Coffee is at 8:30, the talks will start at 9:00 a.m.

Brad Johnson - There will be a mass mailing on that. If anybody doesn’t have anything to do, we’ve got 120 people coming to the Damen Barn tonight for the Palouse Conservation District Meeting. There will also be a free lunch on March 1st.

That’s all I have. So, I’ve got some work to find out the money for projects, how that works out. I will get this stuff put together and work with Art and Alan. If you guys will work on that resolution. Do you need me to come over and work with you?

Art Swannack – We will figure it out.

Brad Johnson – I’ll sent it to you. It is in the October 3rd.

Art Swannack – You will talk with Bill Eller and we will have to talk with you and Mark a little bit on making sure how we feel about money coming through the County.

Alan Thomson – I'm more interested in what Bill Eller has to say, if we have to have additional language in the contract. If more money is coming in and we don't have that contract, I don't see how that works. We have a set number of dollars that we are contracted with the State at the moment, you have to add something in the language for that.

Larry Cochran – So on your action map, are there parts of the County that you are lacking or is it all in pretty good shape?

Brad Johnson – I would say the western edge of the County from north to south we're lacking out in that part of the County. It would be more of the Whitman CD area. You've got some up here but basically the middle part of the County on the west end all the way down to the Snake River, we don't have a lot of pins out there.

Art Swannack – There's about what, four landowners?

Brad Johnson – Casey just pointed out the Hangman Watershed, of that 14,000 acres, we've only had one pin documented in Hangman.

Casey Lowder – There are also projects that people are working on now, that will be added once those are, but it is a scarce area.

Brad Johnson – We have 90 pins on the action map with 648 stewardship actions. I think that is awesome and there are some other people that are really close. They are looking at it. I've got guys on the hook. I just haven't got them yet. They are busy but they have seen it and they are getting the postcards that are coming out.

I'm going to grower meetings. There are different meetings where I'm setting up and having a computer but it is just like the Fair. We've had a Fair booth and I think it is very good thing to have but people are busy with their kids and other stuff, but they are seeing it at least.

Kim Weerts – So, you are gearing up to going to growers' meetings, again?

Brad Johnson – Yes, I will be at McGregor's.

Art Swannack – How long is that thing on March 1st?

Casey Lowder – I think it ends around 2-2:30.

Art Swannack – I might be able to make the morning. I have to be in Olympia by 6:00 p.m.

Brad Johnson – There will be a presentation at that meeting and I will have a table set up with the computer to show people. That meeting last year was very well attended and I actually got 2-3 people that filled it out. For me, that was a success.

I really appreciate everybody's time and in some regards I apologize for all over the map information at different times. I will get all that stuff that you got today with the frequently asked questions, with the new answer at the bottom of the page and get this stuff sent out.

When would you guys like to meet next and talk about the cost-share program? Once we get the information and get it sent out to you, do you want me to send out a doodle poll?

Jon Jones – I would say do that and we can criticize you.

Brad Johnson – I appreciate your support.

Jon Jones – Put something out there and we will see what happens.

Brad Johnson- Early March? When do you start getting in the field? Larry, I appreciate what you are saying but the Commission money is easy money to implement. The hard part would be you guys having to take the time to sit down and score and rank those projects, depending on how many you get in? In Garfield County it is usually a 4-hour meeting projects and scoring and ranking them.

Jon Jones – I think we are going to learn a lot when we start ranking the first project. We will come across a lot of questions that we can answer.

Brad Johnson – It will be a work in progress.

Larry Cochran – I just had a thought. I don't know how it would fit in here but, if we can use the VSP money to make a producer (inaudible) if they would make 75% of it (inaudible) could we put the other 25%? You can't go over 100%.

Brad Johnson – Yes, and you will see that it is written in there that we are not ever going to pay over 100% on the

John Pearson – (Inaudible) would they promote it?

Brad Johnson – We will have to promote it. Or work with Steve Johnson to find out, not give him our cost-share and say if you are working with anyone not us contact them because he can't give us that information. But give that information to NRCS and let them pass it on. That person is going to have to come in and sign up.

Art Swannack – Is this the State budget money? The VSP dollars?

Brad Johnson- Yes, it is out of the capital budget of the State.

Art Swannack – I know, but it is not federal dollars that have passed through capital.

Brad Johnson – I don't believe so, it is Fed dollars. That is why I think it is all state because another work groups are using it to match (inaudible)

That is all I have. We did our business of approving the meeting notes. Unless anyone has other questions. Thank you everyone.

3:15 p.m. Adjourned.

