



Skagit Voluntary Stewardship Program

Work Group Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 11, 2026

8:00-10:00 am

Welcome

Attendance: Shannon Rupert, Maggie Taylor, Terry Sapp, Bill Dewey, Brian Lipscomb, Emmett Wild, Loren Fuell, Larry Iaccino, Jeff McGowan, Taylor Scott

Agenda & Meeting Minutes

January and March Minutes

- ✓ Motion to approve as presented: Emmett
- ✓ Second: Brian
 - Discussion: None
 - Yea: 7
 - Nay: 0
 - Abstain: 0
- ✓ Motion passed

May Agenda

- ✓ Motion to approve as presented: Brian
- ✓ Second: Maggie
 - Discussion: None
 - Yea: 7
 - Nay: 0
 - Abstain: 0
- ✓ Motion passed

Welcome New Members!

Welcomed our new members Larry Iaccino and Loren Fuell, the Work Group went around to introduce themselves.

General VSP

The Butler Creek project received funding in round 4 of the state funding. This returns our 40k and some of the reappropriated funds that will be used for the Crows Farm project which was approved at the last meeting.

- Taylor will alert partners to funding opportunity

Taylor presented on “What is the VSP”? A few highlights below:

- The VSP is to protect and enhance critical areas where agricultural activities exist. For us in the Skagit, this means the parcels zoned Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL, per the Work Plan.
- The critical area that Skagit VSP is required to protect and enhance are fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (FWHCA). On Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL these areas are not subject to the normal critical area ordinance provisions.
 - The specific goal and benchmark is “Protect, restore where practical, and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their associated habitats. No degradation below the statutory 2011 baseline. “
- Ultimately, Skagit VSP’s focus is on AG-NRL and RRc-NRL parcels that intersect with FWHCA, with a goal to protect, enhance, and monitor these areas to answer questions like: Are agricultural producers participating in voluntary and incentive based measures at a sufficient level to meet the county’s goals and benchmarks?
- A brief overview of how the Work Group helps meet the goals and answer these questions consists of:
 - Outreach to different VSP watersheds
 - Monitoring these areas using varying sources and methods
 - Helping the Coordinator during reporting periods
 - Funding projects that help protect and enhance our VSP focus areas

Shannon: If we only focus on Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL we will cut off all East County.

Larry: Seems like there is a VSP specific goal that focuses on Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL and an overall goal of tracking voluntary stewardship in the entire agricultural community.

As of now the Work Plan states VSP is to protect and enhance Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL.

Report Update

The WSCC provided us with the Technical Panel comments and that we met all our goals and benchmarks. There is an opportunity for a “County Response”. The comments were generally good and gave us some insight on what we can focus on in the next coming years. There was one comment from WSDA that the Group would like to address.

- WSDA commented that Skagit VSP does not embody the spirit of VSP
- DOE requested we quantify practices and update Work Plan language
- WSCC wants more ways to measure the ecological functions of BMPs
- WDFW wanted a follow up on the Group A data and Middle Skagit implementation data and to quantify practices
 - The DOH stated that the Group A sample in Anacortes would not have been affected by Lower Skagit, but instead come from nearby. Anacortes is also not in our VSP area.

The Work Group supported Taylor in writing a County Response document if she provided a copy before submittal.

Open Discussion

The Work Group wondered about the mailer that was sent out.

- Number of response (Post meeting): Letter: 10, Postcard: 5, Social Media: 0, Website: 5

Terry would like to note there seems to be an internal conflict or enhancing buffer zones, but also conserving agricultural. His stance is to not lose any agricultural land .

- Taylor confirmed that VSP is not trying to diminish agriculture but instead is here to ensure that critical areas that intersect with it continue to function and we remain at the 2011 baseline. We are losing buffer zones each year and need to offset the loss to meet the goals of VSP.
- Loren noted that there seem to be many projects that say landowners are willing to sacrifice some of their agricultural land for riparian buffers and that's where the voluntary piece of it comes in. Are there enough landowners willing to sacrifice some acreage for the functions and values of our critical areas.
 - Taylor agreed that according to the implementation data, we do see an increase in tree cover in each VSP watershed, and thankfully these projects helped us meet our goals since there was loss in each watershed.
- Loren stated that there are also many projects that help the functions and values that are not buffer zones.
 - Taylor said yes, that's the next step for Skagit VSP! What are those and how can be quantify the effect they have on critical areas.

Terry would like Taylor to attend the June 10th Agricultural Advisory Board meeting

Adjourn

Next Work Group meeting July 13th, 2026.