

Garfield Voluntary Stewardship Program
Work Group
Meeting Notes

Date: August 22, 2023 **Location:** Pomeroy Conservation District **Time:** 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Attendance: Brad Johnson (VSP Coordinator), Justin Dixon (County Commissioner), Lance Frederick (Pomeroy CD) Seth Claassen (Pomeroy CD), Bryan McKeirnan (Farmer), Ernie Kimble (Garfield Wheat Growers), Jim McKeirnan (Weed Board) and Sam Ledgerwood (Cattlemen's)

Justin called the meeting to order at 7:01 am and welcomed the Work Group.

Ernie Kimble moved and Seth Claassen seconded to approve the June 20th, 2023 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Brad discussed the August 2023 2-Year Status Report. Almost everything in the 2-Year Status Report for Garfield County shows positive progress. The question was asked that with all the improvements in stewardship actions and improvements to critical areas and meeting the 2026 goals in 2023 is there a possibility of being out of compliance if we don't show future participation and increased stewardship? Discussion occurred and we believe there will not be enough disenrollement of stewardship to affect future goals and objectives. Discussion from Ernie centered around maintaining the viability of agriculture and showing how much funding from both VSP and private landowners has been spent over the years. Pages 4 and 11 are areas in the report that will include both VSP and landowner costs for stewardship. The Work Group feels it is important to show that landowners are contributing almost as much funding for projects as the VSP program. The monitoring sections were discussed and the improvements that we are seeing for both summer base flows and temperature show improvements in the three largest watersheds within Garfield County. Sam Ledgerwood is interested in looking at resource concerns by watersheds and hopefully coming up with priority watersheds based on erosion or some other priority concerns for protecting and or restoring critical areas. Being proactive and trying to address resource concerns if they exist. The Work Group identified the costs for VSP-funded projects for both VSP and landowners need to be included report.

Seth Claassen moved and Ernie Kimble seconded approving the 2-Year Status Report with both VSP and landowners' costs included in the report. Motion carried

Lance discussed the rates for both mowing and terrace removal for VSP funding, in the past the rates were very low and barely covered the equipment rental costs. The Work Group would like Lance to research other agencies or contractors who do similar projects with both mowing and terrace removal to come up with rates that are more in line with current prices. Lance will present these comparisons at the next Work Group Meeting.

Landowner cost-share payments were discussed and payments to landowners need to be quicker. We are almost 60 days out from July 1st and the County has not received payments from the Conservation Commission. The Work Group requests that Lance asks if there is any help for interest payments on invoices that have not been paid for almost 60 days.

Brad talked about the upcoming Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee Meeting that will be held in Pullman at the USDA Plant Materials Center on WSU campus on October 12th from 10:00 – 6:00 pm. This is a great opportunity for Work Groups to showcase what is working and get comments back from the TP on what is needed for the 5-Year Status Review.

Sam would like to the Work Group to discuss run-off from both County and State roads within Garfield County. There has been some discussions in the past, but working with both to alleviate run-off is a priority for Sam.

The next meeting will be scheduled for October 5th, 2023 at 7:00 am

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 am.