



STATE OF WASHINGTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

PO Box 47721 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7721 • (360) 407-6200 • FAX (360) 407-6215

August 5, 2021

Alex Case-Cohen
District Manager
Pend Oreille Conservation District
121 N. Washington Ave.
Newport, WA 99156

Re: Concurrence with the assertion of the Pend Oreille County Work Group in their Five Year Report

Dear Alex:

This letter is serves to document my decision to concur with the assertion of your county Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) work group that it is meeting its county VSP work plan goals and benchmarks in its five year report, submitted February 10, 2021.

Background

The VSP requires each county watershed work group to report to the Executive Director of the Conservation Commission and the county on whether it has met the work plan's protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks.

Reports are to be submitted at five-year intervals from the date of receipt of funding, and sent to the Director of the Commission and to each county legislative authority by each work group. The Director must decide to concur, or not, with each county work group's assertion.

Your county work group, in its five year report, asserted that the work plan was meeting its protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks.

Five Year Report Review

My decision to concur comes after review and evaluation of the report by the VSP Technical Panel, consultation with the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee, and recommendations from my staff. The Technical Panel comments accompany this letter.

Technical Panel members overall review and evaluation of the report, answering the question of whether the member agrees with the assertion of the work group, was as follows:

Department of Ecology:	Partly agree
Department of Agriculture:	Partly agree
Department of Fish and Wildlife:	Partly agree
Conservation Commission:	Partly agree

Some of the reasons for my decision include:

- All technical panels agree, partially, that you've met your goals and benchmarks. Multiple reviewers noted that BMP implementation was occurring to protect critical areas functions and values,
- I acknowledge that your goals and benchmarks depend on a 5-year timeframe, but you haven't had five years to implement. The county's work plan was approved on September 28, 2018. Its 5-year report was due February 2, 2021. There has been only three years and five months (to date) of implementation. Being able to show progress in such a short amount of time is significant.

Some areas for adaptive management include:

- Multiple reviewers noted that benchmarks were asserted as being met by the county, but did not provide the best management practices (BMPs) that were used.
- All reviewers noted that baseline values and units were not provided, so it was difficult to ascertain whether protection goals were being met.
- Multiple reviewers noted that benchmarks that "offset identified agricultural degradation" don't show how degradation was measured, so the reviewer couldn't tell if the new work was sufficient.
- Benchmarks reported exactly the same accomplishment as another, so it was hard for all reviewers to tell if the second benchmark was meaningful or different from the first.
- More clarity needs to be provided to show the link between the BMPs and the outcomes by watershed.

Next Steps

The Commission urges the county work group to review the Commission comments, the Technical Panel comments, and to work with state agency staff either at the local work group level or through the Technical Panel when making improvements to its VSP implementation efforts and taking adaptive management actions. We look forward to seeing the Technical Panel concerns addressed in your next five year report.

Please continue to implement VSP in your county with the above comments in mind. VSP counties are strongly encouraged to continually self-evaluate and make adaptive management decisions to improve implementation of their VSP plans.

Thank you for your participation in the Voluntary Stewardship Program and for coordinating best management practices with landowners to demonstrate protection of critical areas.

Sincerely,



Carol Smith
Executive Director

Attachments: VSP Technical Panel Comments

cc: Greg Snow, Community Development Director, Pend Oreille County