# Meeting Minutes

*June 5, 2026*

## Joint Meeting of the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee and VSP Technical Panel

*In-person & Online (via Zoom) – Recording available here: **June 5, 2026, SAC Meeting***

The Washington State Conservation Commission's (Commission/SCC) Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) convened a meeting of the Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) for a regular meeting on June 5, 2026, at the WA Department of Ecology building in Lacey, WA, and via Zoom. On behalf of Chair James Thompson, SCC VSP Coordinator Mike Poteet called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

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| SAC MEMBERS PRESENT | TP REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT | COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT |
|---|---|---|
| Ben Buchholz | Victoria Fischella, SCC | Paige DeChambeau, Communications Director |
| LaDon Linde | Levi Keesecker, SCC | Kate Delavan, Deputy Director |
| Brian Muegge | Kelly McLain-Aardal, WSDA | Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant |
| John Stuhlmiller | Leslie Michel, WSDA | Mike Poteet, VSP Coordinator |
| David Troutt | Tom O'Brien, WDFW | James Thompson, Director & SAC Chair |
| Ron Wesen | Teresa Opolka, ECY | |
| | Sean Williams, WDFW | |

| GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE | ORGANIZATION |
|---|---|
| Dani Gelardi | WSDA |
| Kara Whittaker | WDFW |
| Lauren Driscoll | ECY |
| Taylor Scott | Skagit County Natural Resources Division |
| Jenn J. Johnson | Skagit County Natural Resources Division |
| Emmett Wild | Skagit Conservation District |
| Brad Johnson | Palouse Conservation District (Whitman VSP) |
| Andrew Plieth | Columbia County Planning & Building |
| Mike Tobin | North Yakima Conservation District |
| Rodney Heit | South Yakima Conservation District |
| Savannah Crnick | South Yakima Conservation District |
| Lisa Grueter | Berk Consulting (Yakima VSP) |

| GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE | ORGANIZATION |
|---|---|
| Kerrie McArthur | Confluence Environmental (Yakima VSP) |
| Bailey Draper | South Yakima Conservation District |
| Becca Hebron | Foster Creek Conservation District (Douglas VSP) |
| Sydney Balderston | Foster Creek Conservation District (Douglas VSP) |
| Mallory Hirschler | WDFW |
| Brian Gaston | WDFW |
| Annie Byerley | Walla Walla County Conservation District |
| Jenny Freer | Walla Walla County Conservation District |
| Nells Hannah | Walla Walla County Conservation District |
| Deanna Elliott | Columbia Basin Conservation District |

## Updates

A series of updates related to program functions was provided by the VSP Coordinator. Updates addressed the following:

- WSDA announced that Dani Gelardi will be the new Technical Panel Member for the Agency after Kally McLain-Aardal steps aside in June 2026
- WDFW announced that Kara Whittaker will be the new Technical Panel Member for the Agency following Tom O'Brien's retirement at the end of June 2026
- Status of county submissions of 5-year reports and reviews by Tech Panel and SCC Director
- VSP staff working on Adaptive Management support plans for winter 2026-27
- VSP Program Guidelines are set for expansion (including revisions) and adoption
- VSP will seek appointment of Greg Green, Director of Conservation Pororams – Northwest Region for Ducks Unlimited, to SAC at July Commission meeting

## Action Items

1. Minutes from SAC Meeting on May 6, 2026, were approved as presented by 4-0 vote. (*NOTE: SAC Members Linde and Buchholz joined after this vote was taken.*)

2. SAC Recommendation for Skagit County
   Motion (Stuhlmiller → Muegge): Recommends that Skagit County continue in the program and update any out-of-date goals, benchmarks, or targets in its existing work plan. (Motion passed 5-0-1, Wesen abstains.)

3. SAC Recommendation for Whitman County
   Motion (Wesen → Stuhlmiller): Recommends that Whitman County continue in the program and update any out-of-date goals, benchmarks, or targets in its existing work plan. (Motion passed 6-0.)

4. SAC Recommendation for Columbia County
   Motion (Stuhlmiller → Wesen): Recommends that Columbia County continue in the program and update any out-of-date goals, benchmarks, or targets in its existing work plan. (Motion passed 6-0.)

5. SAC Recommendation for Yakima County
   Motion (Stuhlmiller → Buchholz): Recommends that Yakima County continue in the program and update any out-of-date goals, benchmarks, or targets in its existing work plan. (Motion passed 5-0-1, Linde abstains.)

6. SAC Recommendation for Douglas County
   Motion (Wesen → Stuhlmiller): Recommends that Douglas County continue in the program and update any out-of-date goals, benchmarks, or targets in its existing work plan. (Motion passed 6-0.)

## Other Information

SCC VSP staff provided an overview of the following topics for the benefit of the SAC and meeting attendees:

- Overall submission and Technical Panel review process for 5-year reports
- Roles and responsibilities of county VSP teams, SCC staff, Technical Panel, SAC, and SCC Director in the submission, review, and determination processes for 5-year reports
- An explanation concerning monitoring with respect to programmatic requirements and timing associated with the creation of Monitoring Plans was provided to the SAC
    - Given the circumstances, monitoring data was treated as an optional component of the five-year report. Counties were still expected to provide detailed information on BMP implementation efforts even if critical area monitoring information was not included in the report submission.
- An explanation of statute language related to the concept of adaptive management
- A brief description of agricultural viability and how local programs may integrate this into their work plans, but that it is **not** a factor when considering ongoing participation in the program
- The statue definitions of “protection” and enhancement”
- The statutory responsibilities that guide how counties develop watershed work plans from existing plans and with watershed partners, including agencies, NGOs, Tribes, etc.