
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION

POLICY ADVISORY #03-18

ROLES AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS DURING VSP IMPLEMENTATION

AMENDED MAY 2018

Summary

The Conservation Commission (Commission) is empowered to establish policies and procedures for implementing the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP).¹ The Commission, after consultation with the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC), provides this advisory to the VSP county work groups to advise them on the roles and reporting obligations during VSP implementation.

¹ [RCW 36.70A.705\(2\)\(a\)](#)

This advisory is focused on the implementation of an approved VSP plan, and the collaborative relationship between a VSP work group, county staff, and technical service providers. Detailed information follows, but it is critical to reiterate that this process is unique. The VSP work group functions like a board of directors, approving the work that is conducted under the auspices of the approved plan.

Background

The VSP was codified in RCW Chapter 36.70A. The Commission administers the VSP.² Under VSP, the Commission is charged with establishing the Statewide Advisory Committee.³ “The role of the statewide advisory committee is to advise the commission and other agencies involved in development and operation of the program.”⁴ The SAC is comprised of representatives of county, agricultural, and environmental organizations and invited tribal governments.⁵

The Commission has a number of other duties in the VSP that relate to the Statewide Advisory Committee, including

- To provide administrative support for the program's statewide advisory committee in its work.”⁶
- To maintain a web site about the program that includes times, locations, and agenda information for meetings of the statewide advisory committee;⁷
- In conjunction with the statewide advisory committee, conduct a review of the program beginning in 2017 and every five years thereafter, and report its findings to the legislature by December 1st;⁸
- Consult with the Statewide Advisory Committee upon receipt of a report by a watershed group under RCW [36.70A.720\(2\)\(b\)](#);⁹ and
- Consult with the statewide advisory committee and other state agencies, not later than August 31, 2015, and each August 31st every two years thereafter, and

² [RCW 36.70A.705\(1\)](#)

³ [RCW 36.70A.745](#)

⁴ [RCW 36.70A.745\(2\)](#)

⁵ [RCW 36.70A.745\(1\)\(a\)](#)

⁶ [RCW 36.70A.705\(2\)\(h\)](#)

⁷ [RCW 36.70A.705\(2\)\(i\)](#)

⁸ [RCW 36.70A.705\(2\)\(k\)](#)

⁹ [RCW 36.70A.730](#)

report to the legislature and each county that has elected under RCW [36.70A.710](#) to participate in the program on the participating watersheds that have received adequate funding to establish and implement the program.¹⁰

Roles and Reporting Obligations during VSP Implementation

After a VSP work plan is approved, RCW Chapter 36.70A.700-760 contains a number of different reporting obligations, deadlines, and requirements for various entities during the VSP implementation process.¹¹ Those various entities, deadlines, and requirements are set out in the table below:

¹⁰ [RCW 36.70A.740\(4\)](#)

¹¹ County VSP work plans have various roles and obligations contained in each of them. This Policy Advisory acknowledges those roles and obligations, but advises that each entity identified in the county VSP work plan identify its own role, responsibilities, obligations and deadlines in its county VSP work plan.

Table I: VSP Implementation Deadlines (after work plan approval)			
Responsible	Activity	Deadline	RCW
Work Group	Conduct periodic evaluations, institute adaptive management, and provide a written report of the status of plans and accomplishments to the county and to the Commission.	Within 60 days after the end of each biennium.	36.70A.720 (1) (j)
Work Group	Report to the director and the county on whether it has met the work plan's protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks.	Not later than 5 years after receipt of funding.	36.70A.720 (2) (b) (i)
Work Group	Report to the director and the county on whether it has met the protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks of the work plan.	Not later than 10 years after receipt of funding and every 5 years thereafter.	36.70A.720 (2) (c) (i)
Work Group	Meet its goals and benchmarks for protection	6 months after a report required under RCW 36.70A.720 (2) (b) is received by the director wherein either the director, the work group, or both conclude that the work plan goals and benchmarks for protection have not been met and the SAC determines an additional six months will allow the watershed to likely meet its goals and benchmarks.	36.70A.730
County	Must choose an option (a), (b), (c), or (d) in RCW 36.70A.735 (1)	18 months after the work plans goals and benchmarks for protection have not been met under RCW 36.70A.720.	36.70A.735 (2) (b)
County	Must choose an option (a), (b), (c), or (d) in RCW 36.70A.735 (1)	18 months after the Commission has determined under RCW 36.70A.740 that the county, department, commission, or	36.70A.735 (2) (c)

		departments of agriculture, ecology, or fish and wildlife have not received adequate funding to implement a program in the watershed.	
County	Must choose an option (a), (b), (c), or (d) in RCW 36.70A.735 (1)	18 months after the Commission has determined under RCW 36.70A.740 that the watershed has not received adequate funding to implement the program.	36.70A.735 (2) (d)
Commission	In consultation with each county that has elected under RCW 36.70A.710 to participate in the program and other state agencies, the Commission shall determine for each participating watershed whether adequate funding to implement the program was provided during the preceding biennium.	By July 31, 2017 and every two years thereafter.	36.70A.740 (2)
Commission	In consultation with the statewide advisory committee and other state agencies, the Commission shall report to the legislature and each county that has elected under RCW 36.70A.710 to participate in the program on the participating watersheds that have received adequate funding to establish and implement the program.	Not later than August 31, 2015, and each August 31st every two years thereafter.	36.70A.740 (4)
"Receipt of funding" means the date a county takes legislative action accepting any funds as required in RCW 36.70A.715(1) to implement the program. RCW 36.70A.703 (9).			

Individual Roles

Each entity involved with the VSP has various roles, obligations, and deadlines under RCW Chapter 36.70A.700-760. Those are set out in detail below.

VSP Work Group

Volunteer members of the County's VSP Work Group have a number of different duties. The work group volunteers should insure that they have

- Read the county's VSP work plan and understand its terms and requirements;
- Some training in the background and history of VSP; and
- Training in how the work group functions as an entity of the county.

Then, there are certain duties and timelines that the County work group is responsible for identified in Table I above. The work group members should ensure that those duties and timelines are being met either by their own actions, the actions of the County, or the actions of the Technical Service Provider.

The VSP work group

- Oversees implementation;
- Provides leadership on VSP in the local county;
- Meets regularly;
- Participates in outreach efforts, fosters and builds partnerships with other natural resource entities;
- Provides direction and oversight to the VSP technical service provider on compliance with VSP goals and objectives;
- Establishes a succession plan for the work group, i.e. what will you do when work group members leave, how will you maintain your commitment to a diverse work group;
- Works with the VSP County Commissioners, County Staff and Fiscal Staff Responsible for the County – Commission VSP contract, and VSP Technical Service Providers to establish a budget for VSP implementation that outlines tasks, amount allocated for outreach, monitoring, technical provision, and any other task or deliverable needed;
- Every 2 years, periodically evaluates (programmatic, economic, and resource) and reports on the VSP;

- Adaptively manage implementation if not meeting the established goals and benchmarks in the work plan; and
- Every 5 years, report to the Commission and the County on whether the work plan's protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks have been met.

The County Work Group must continue to seek out broad representation of key watershed stakeholders to serve on the work group. At a minimum, there should be representatives from agricultural, environmental, and tribes that agree to participate serving on the work group.

County Commissioners

County Commissioners should ensure that they understand the background, history, and reason for VSP in their county. They should provide the proper guidance and oversight to the county staff responsible for the administration and fiscal requirements of VSP. They should be available to provide information and education to the public on VSP to their constituents and member of the public. They should ensure that the County VSP Work Group has the resources necessary to meet their obligations under the VSP work plan. They should ensure that the timelines identified in Table I above that pertain to the County are being met.

County Staff Responsible for the County – Commission VSP contract

County staff responsible for VSP should coordinate with their county financial staff for the County – Commission VSP contract administration. They should ensure that all the deliverables in the contract are being met. They should also ensure that new county staff, financial staff, and County VSP work group members have sufficient training in the VSP so that they know, understand, and can perform the duties required of them.

They should read the county's VSP work plan and understand its terms and requirements. They should identify county resources necessary to implement the work plan and designate any staff necessary to implement the work plan. They should supervise any county staff or financial staff with VSP implementation requirements. They should identify any county staff, financial or otherwise, who are to interact with the VSP work group and VSP technical service provider and identify the operations they are

to perform. They should ensure that the timelines identified in Table I above that pertain to the County are being met.

County Financial Staff Responsible for the County – Commission VSP contract

County financial staff responsible for VSP have a number of different duties. First, they should obtain, if they don't already have, a copy of the VSP contract between the County and the Commission. That contract will have deliverables and timelines for when those deliverables have to be done. They should review that contract for their responsibilities under it, in particular the contract deliverables, and create any necessary timelines or other protocols to achieve those deliverables under the contract.

They should also obtain copies, if they don't already have them of any ancillary VSP agreements, perhaps with technical service providers, consultants, or others involved in VSP implementation. Copies of those agreements need to be provided to the Commission as per the County-Commission VSP contract terms.

Financial staff should coordinate with Commission financial staff on VSP billing and fiscal reporting requirements. To that end, they should contact Karla Heinitz, VSP Contract Manager, Washington State Conservation Commission, P.O. Box 47721, Olympia, WA 98504 and send invoices to: sccgrants@sccgrants.wa.gov. For billing questions, contact: kheinitz@scc.wa.gov; phone: 360-407-6212.

They should coordinate with the VSP technical service provider to ensure there is a proper budget established to meet the obligations under the contract and work plan. They should ensure that the timelines identified in Table I above that pertain to the fiscal responsibilities of the County are being met.

VSP Technical Service Providers

VSP Technical Service Providers specifically designated as such in the County VSP work plan have a number of different duties under the VSP and the County VSP work plan. First, they should read the County VSP work plan and determine the deliverables, timelines, and project management items they are responsible for. Then they should create a project management plan to ensure they meet those obligations.

They should ensure that the timelines identified in Table I above that pertain to the County work group and / or technical service providers are being met. They should coordinate with the County financial staff to ensure there is a proper budget established to meet the obligations under the contract and work plan.

They should meet any obligations they have under their contract with the County. If they are going to be responsible for any financial aspects of VSP implementation on behalf of the County, they should coordinate with Commission financial staff on VSP billing and fiscal reporting requirements. For example, vouchers must be filed each month, regardless of activity. For complete details, fiscal staff should contact Karla Heinitz, VSP Contract Manager, Washington State Conservation Commission, P.O. Box 47721, Olympia, WA 98504 and send invoices to: sccgrants@sccgrants.wa.gov. For billing questions, contact: kheinitz@scc.wa.gov; phone: 360-407-6212.

Washington State Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is to review and evaluate the program's success and effectiveness and make appropriate changes to policies and procedures for implementing the program, in consultation with the statewide advisory committee and other affected agencies. In conjunction with the technical panel, review and evaluate biennial¹² and five year status reports.¹³

The Conservation Commission is also to:

- Report to the legislature on the general status of program implementation;
- Conduct a review of the program, in conjunction with the statewide advisory committee, beginning in 2017 and every five years thereafter, and report its findings to the legislature by December 1st; and
- Report to the appropriate committees of the legislature as required.

¹² [RCW 36.70A.720\(1\)\(j\)](#)

¹³ [RCW 36.70A.720\(2\)\(b\)\(i\) and \(c\)\(i\)](#)

Other State Agencies

Various state agencies have different ongoing obligations under VSP. The WSDA, WDFW, ECY and Commission are required to maintain the VSP Technical Panel and that panel is to evaluate VSP County work group reports submitted under RCW 36.70A.720(2)(b). Commerce is required to establish and maintain the Washington Administrative Code Chapter 365-191.

Special Note on the Interrelationship between the VSP County Work Group, County Commissioners, County Staff, and VSP Technical Service Providers

Included in the roles described above for each of these entities during VSP implementation is the understanding that the continued success of VSP depending upon on-going communication, cooperation, understanding, and drive to achieve the goals and objectives of the VSP.

Each of you must strive to maintain a productive relationship with each other and continue to support each other during VSP implementation.

Each county work group has created a work plan that has specifically designated a VSP technical service provider to assist with technical assistance, education and outreach.¹⁴ Each county work group is specifically tasked to “work with the entity providing technical assistance to ensure that individual stewardship plans contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the work plan.”¹⁵

Each county work group, working in conjunction with the county commissioners and staff, should formalize that relationship with the VSP TSP through a contract or agreement so that each knows the duties, responsibilities, and obligations of the other. The deliverables identified in the county work plan should drive that agreement between the county and the TSP, and the reporting obligations of the VSP statute should also be included.¹⁶

¹⁴ [RCW 36.70A.720\(1\)\(d\) and \(f\)](#)

¹⁵ [RCW 36.70A.720\(g\)](#)

¹⁶ [RCW 36.70A.720\(1\)\(j\)](#) and [RCW 36.70A.720\(2\)\(b\)\(i\) and \(c\)\(i\)](#)

The county work group, so designed by the county¹⁷, must have an ability to interact with the work product of the county staff and TSP¹⁸ or else it will not be able to meet its various obligations under the statute and the county risks failing out of VSP. Similarly, the TSP must know what is required of it under the VSP statute and work plan deliverables so that it can meet its obligations.

Passive interactions between the county work group, county staff and the TSP will not result in success. Directing one of these partners to a web site where VSP materials are housed is an example of passive communication techniques that are unsuccessful given the nature of VSP implementation.

Open, continuous, meaningful and effective communication among the county, county commissioners, county staff, county work group and the TSP is key to successful VSP implementation.

¹⁷ [RCW 36.70A.715\(b\)](#)

¹⁸ [RCW 36.70A.720\(1\)](#)