
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION

POLICY ADVISORY #05-18

APPROVED VSP WORK PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & PROCEDURE

Revised September 2018

SUMMARY

The VSP statute sets two main reporting requirements during the implementation of an approved VSP work plan: one report at the end of each biennia, and a five year status report. The Conservation Commission, Technical Panel, and Statewide Advisory Committee reviews, evaluates, and consults on the reports. The purpose of this advisory is to set forth the content requirements and timing for these reports.

REPORTS DUE EVERY BIENNIA

Within sixty days after the end of the state of Washington's biennium, each county work group must "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."¹ In

¹ [RCW 36.70A.720\(1\)\(j\)](#)

Washington, our biennium is the timeframe from July 1 through June 30 two years later. A state fiscal year is July 1 to June 30 the following year.

The biennial report is informational in nature. ***Important: At the end of each biennia, beginning at the end of the current biennia (FY 17-19), these reports are due. The first report is due no later than 60 days from June 30, 2019, and subsequent reports due at two year intervals from that date.***

COUNTY	DUE DATE
Adams	<p>No later than August 30, 2019 (and at the end of each biennia on August 30 thereafter)</p>
Asotin	
Benton	
Chelan	
Columbia	
Cowlitz	
Douglas	
Ferry	
Franklin	
Garfield	
Grant	
Grays Harbor	
Kittitas	
Lewis	
Lincoln	
Mason	
Okanogan	
Pacific	
Pend Oreille	
San Juan	
Skagit	
Spokane	
Stevens	
Thurston	
Walla Walla	
Whitman	
Yakima	

BIENNIA REPORT CONTENT

Each written biennial report must provide the status of plans and accomplishments of the work plan to the county and Commission.

The biennial report should include a summary of how plan implementation is affecting each of the following:²

1. The protection and enhancement of critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted;
2. The maintenance and improvement of the long-term viability of agriculture;
3. Reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses;
4. The maximization of the use of voluntary incentive programs to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship as an alternative to historic approaches used to protect critical areas;
5. The leveraging of existing resources by relying upon existing work and plans in counties and local watersheds, as well as existing state and federal programs to the maximum extent practicable to achieve program goals;
6. Ongoing efforts to encourage and foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership among county, tribal, environmental, and agricultural interests to better assure the program success;
7. Ongoing efforts to improve compliance with other laws designed to protect water quality and fish habitat; and
8. A description of efforts showing how relying upon voluntary stewardship practices as the primary method of protecting critical areas and does not require the cessation of agricultural activities.

² Summarized from the goals listed in [RCW 36.70A.700\(2\)](#).

FIVE YEAR STATUS REPORTS

At five year intervals from the date of receipt of funding, each county work group must submit a report to the director of the Commission and the county on whether it has met the work plan's protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks.³

FIVE YEAR STATUS REPORT CONTENT

The five year status report should include a summary of how plan implementation is satisfying the flowing plan elements through VSP implementation:⁴

1. Develop goals for participation by agricultural operators conducting commercial and noncommercial agricultural activities in the watershed necessary to meet the protection and enhancement benchmarks of the work plan;
2. Ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed;
3. Create measurable benchmarks that, within ten years after the receipt of funding, are designed to result in (i) the protection of critical area functions and values and (ii) the enhancement of critical area functions and values through voluntary, incentive-based measures;
4. Work with the entity providing technical assistance to ensure that individual stewardship plans contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the work plan;
5. Incorporate into the work plan any existing development regulations relied upon to achieve the goals and benchmarks for protection;
6. Establish baseline monitoring for: (i) Participation activities and implementation of the voluntary stewardship plans and projects; (ii) stewardship activities; and (iii) the effects on critical areas and agriculture relevant to the protection and enhancement benchmarks developed for the watershed;

³ [RCW 36.70A.720\(2\)\(b\)\(i\) and \(c\)\(i\)](#)

⁴ [RCW 36.70A.720\(1\)](#)

7. 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 sixty days after the end of each biennium;
8. Assist state agencies in their monitoring programs; and
9. Satisfy any other reporting requirements of the program.
10. VSP cost-share projects that are funded using any amount of Commission VSP funds shall be reported in the five year report under RCW 36.70A.720 (2) (b) (i) and (c) (i).

Special note regarding revised VSP work plans:

If at any time after initial approval of a work plan by the Washington State Conservation Commission Executive Director, the county work group revises or otherwise changes the work plan, the work plan must be submitted to the Technical Panel during the next upcoming 5 year reporting process cycle for review and evaluation. Amended or revised work plans official adopted by a work group are subject to appeal to the Growth Management Hearings Board.

PROCEDURE UPON RECEIPT OF FIVE YEAR VSP STATUS REPORTS

In conjunction with the VSP Technical Panel, the Conservation Commission will review and evaluate the five year status reports.⁵ After review and evaluation of these five year status reports, the executive director of the Conservation Commission (“director”) must consult with the Statewide Advisory Committee (“SAC”).⁶

If in the five year report the county work group has determined the protection goals and benchmarks have been met, and the director, after consultation with the SAC, concurs with the work group, the work group shall continue to implement the work plan.⁷

⁵ [RCW 36.70A.705 \(e\)](#)

⁶ [RCW 36.70A.730\(1\)](#).

⁷ [RCW 36.70A.730\(1\)](#) and [RCW 36.70a.720\(2\)\(c\)\(i\) and ii\)](#).

If in the five year report the county work group has determined the protection goals and benchmarks have not been met, the director must consult the SAC to determine whether or not the work group can meet the goals within 6 months. If not, then the work group is informed they are deemed to have “failed out” of VSP for the watershed.

If in the five year report the county work group has determined the protection goals and benchmarks have been met, and the director, after consultation with the SAC, does not concur with the work group, the director shall consult with the SAC on how to proceed. The options for the next steps are to either provide for 6 months to achieve the goals, or deem the work group to have “failed out” of VSP.⁸ Any watershed that fails to meet its goals and benchmarks for protection within the **six-month** time extension under subsection (2) of this section is subject to [RCW 36.70A.735](#).⁹

If either the director or the work group, following receipt of a five year status report, concludes that the work plan goals and benchmarks for protection have not been met, the director must consult with the SAC for a recommendation on how to proceed.¹⁰

If the work group determines the protection goals and benchmarks have not been met, it must propose and submit to the director an adaptive management plan to achieve the goals and benchmarks that were not met.¹¹ If the work group determines the enhancement goals and benchmarks have not been met, the work group must determine what additional voluntary actions are needed to meet the benchmarks, identify the funding necessary to implement these actions, and implement these actions when funding is provided.¹²

If the director does not approve the adaptive management plan, the county is considered to have “failed out” of the VSP for the watershed. The county must then adopt one of four options for addressing agricultural lands and critical areas. These options can be found at [RCW 36.70A.735](#).¹³

⁸ RCW 36.70A.730(2).

⁹ [RCW 36.70A.730\(3\)](#).

¹⁰ [RCW 36.70A.730\(2\)](#).

¹¹ [RCW 36.70A.720\(2\)\(b\)\(iii\)](#).

¹² [RCW 36.70A.720\(2\)\(b\)\(iv\)](#).

¹³ [RCW 36.70A.720\(2\)\(b\)\(iii\)](#).

If the director, acting upon recommendation from the SAC, determines that the watershed is likely to meet the goals and benchmarks with an additional six months of planning and implementation time, the director must grant an extension.¹⁴ If the director, acting upon a recommendation from the SAC, determines that the watershed is unlikely to meet the goals and benchmarks within **six months**, the watershed is is considered to have “failed out” of VSP. The county must then proceed to adopt one of the options identified in statute to proceed under the Growth Management Act to protect critical areas near agriculture activities. See RCW 36.70A.735 for these options.

If a participating watershed does not have a work plan approved by the director or the work plan's goals and benchmarks for protection have not been met, then within **18 months** the county must develop its own work plan, adopt regulations previously adopted by another local government to protect critical areas, adopt Department of Commerce critical area regulations, or review, and if necessary, revise development regulations certified by the department as protective of critical areas in areas used for agricultural activities.¹⁵

¹⁴ [RCW 36.70A.730\(2\)](#).

¹⁵ [RCW 36.70A.735](#).

SCHEDULE FOR SUBMITTAL OF FIVE YEAR REPORTS

COUNTY	RECEIPT OF FUNDING DATE	5 YEAR	10 YEAR	15 YEAR	20 YEAR
Adams	5.23.16	5.23.21	5.23.26	5.23.31	5.23.36
Asotin	12.14.15	12.14.20	12.14.25	12.14.30	12.14.35
Benton	1.12.16	1.12.21	1.12.26	1.12.31	1.12.36
Chelan*	1.20.14	7.20.19	7.20.24	7.20.29	7.20.34
Columbia	1.20.16	1.20.21	1.20.26	1.20.31	1.20.36
Cowlitz	12.22.15	12.22.20	12.22.25	12.22.30	12.22.35
Douglas	1.22.16	1.22.21	1.22.26	1.22.31	1.22.36
Ferry	3.14.16	3.14.21	3.14.26	3.14.31	3.14.36
Franklin	2.24.16	2.24.21	2.24.26	2.24.31	2.24.36
Garfield	11.30.15	11.30.20	11.30.25	11.30.30	11.30.35
Grant	12.14.15	12.14.20	12.14.25	12.14.30	12.14.35
Grays Harbor	3.21.16	3.21.21	3.21.26	3.21.31	3.21.36
Kittitas	11.17.15	11.17.20	11.17.25	11.17.30	11.17.35
Lewis	4.18.16	4.18.21	4.18.26	4.18.31	4.18.36
Lincoln	3.21.16	3.21.21	3.21.26	3.21.31	3.21.36
Mason	11.24.15	11.24.20	11.24.25	11.24.30	11.24.35
Okanogan	12.28.15	12.28.20	12.28.25	12.28.30	12.28.35
Pacific	12.22.15	12.22.20	12.22.25	12.22.30	12.22.35
Pend Oreille	2.2.16	2.2.21	2.2.26	2.2.31	2.2.36
San Juan	12.21.15	12.21.20	12.21.25	12.21.30	12.21.35
Skagit	1.19.16	1.19.21	1.19.26	1.19.31	1.19.36
Spokane	4.22.16	4.22.21	4.22.26	4.22.31	4.22.36
Stevens	3.10.16	3.10.21	3.10.26	3.10.31	3.10.36
Thurston*	1.20.14	7.20.19	7.20.24	7.20.29	7.20.34
Walla Walla	3.7.16	3.7.21	3.7.26	3.7.31	3.7.36
Whitman	1.19.16	1.19.21	1.19.26	1.19.31	1.19.36

Yakima	1.21.16	1.21.21	1.21.26	1.21.31	1.21.36
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†All timelines subject to continued Legislative funding.

* Special note on Chelan and Thurston County: Both Chelan and Thurston County were pilot projects that received funding much earlier than all the rest of the counties that opted-into VSP. As such, their timelines are substantially different. Other counties have later deadlines based on when additional funding was made available to them.