

March 2019 VSP Newsletter

ADDITIONAL VSP IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING AVAILABLE: The end of the FY 17-19 biennium is fast approaching, and the Commission has additional funds for VSP implementation available to counties that can use it by June 30, 2019. Additional requirements apply. Two categories of projects are available for funding. Both categories must be demonstrably related to VSP implementation:

1. On-the-ground cost-share implementation projects
2. Education and outreach

If you are responsible for VSP implementation in your county, please use [this form](#) to view the requirements and submit your request. **Requests must be submitted no later than 5 pm on Friday, March 22, 2019.**

VSP VOUCHERING: Monthly reimbursement requests for all county VSP contracts (as well as any other contracts) is required. If no expenses have been incurred during a month, a voucher should still be done showing a zero expenses incurred. So, please

remember to voucher monthly for VSP expenses.

QUARTERLY REPORT DUE NEXT MONTH: The [VSP quarterly report](#) is due every quarter as a deliverable in the contract between the Commission and each of the 27 VSP counties. If you are the responsible party for the VSP contract in your county, please remember to set a reminder for yourself to timely submit the quarterly report.

The quarterly report and schedule for submittal can be found on the new [“Implementation”](#) page of the Commission’s VSP web page, under the “Reporting” tab. It can also be found on the [quarterly report form](#) itself.

For your convenience, the remaining quarterly report schedule is reproduced below:

Period of January 1 – March 31, 2019 – **Due April 10, 2019**

Period of April 1 – June 30, 2019 – Due July 10, 2019

UPCOMING JOINT MEETING OF THE VSP TECHNICAL PANEL AND STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

The VSP Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee continue to update their meeting schedules. The most complete and up-to-date meeting schedule and meeting agendas can always be found on the [Technical Panel web page](#) and the [Statewide Advisory Committee web page](#). All meetings will be held at the Farm Bureau building, 975 Carpenter Rd NE #101, Lacey, WA 98516, unless otherwise noted. The next meeting is set for Wednesday, April 10, 2019, from 9 am – 12 pm. The meeting is available by webinar and we encourage webinar attendance.

To register for the April 10th webinar meeting, please use the link below:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2374861949646384897>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

VSP OUTREACH MATERIALS AVAILABLE: The Commission has harvested from each county's VSP work plan outreach materials that can be used as examples during VSP implementation. Those materials are available on the [Commission's VSP implementation web page](#), under the "Outreach Materials" tab.

Those materials include examples of VSP individual stewardship plans, individual stewardship checklists, brochures, overviews, postcards, handbooks, surveys, FAQ's, and press releases. Please continue to check the web page periodically as new information and resources are continually being added to it to assist you with VSP implementation.

Question: *How often should a watershed work group meet during VSP implementation?* **Answer:** As often as it takes to successfully implement the county VSP work plan and meet the other obligations under the VSP Statute, RCW 36.70A.700-760.

[Policy Advisory 03-18](#) identifies the roles of each of the entities responsible for VSP implementation, and further explains that the watershed work group should meet "regularly". Regularly gives each county watershed work group flexibility on how often to meet. When there isn't business to conduct, the work groups shouldn't meet. However, a county watershed work group shouldn't go six months between meetings. This is because there is a lot of business for a work group to conduct related to implementation of the county VSP work plan and meeting the obligations under the statute, and six months without a meeting to monitor progress and take adaptive management actions might lead to failure of the work plan.

The watershed work group has an important oversight role to play during implementation. [Policy Advisory 03-18](#) explains, in summary fashion, that the watershed work group has many different duties during implementation, including

- Overseeing implementation;
- Providing leadership on VSP in the local county;
- Meeting regularly;
- Participating in outreach efforts, fosters and builds partnerships with other natural resource entities;
- Providing direction and oversight to the VSP technical service provider on compliance with VSP goals and objectives;
- Establishing 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;
- Working 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 evaluating (programmatic, economic, and resource) and reporting on the VSP;
- Adaptively managing implementation if not meeting the established goals and benchmarks in the work plan; and
- Every 5 years, reporting to the Commission and the County on whether the work plan’s protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks have been met.

County watershed group members should read the county’s VSP work plan, understand its terms and requirements; receive training in the background and history of VSP, as well as how the work group functions as an entity of the county. Watershed work group meetings are open public meetings under the [Open Public Meetings Act, RCW Chapter 42.30](#), so all volunteer members of the watershed work group will need to be familiar with the OPMA and should undergo the [attorney general’s OPMA training](#). Remember, [OPMA refresher training is required every four years](#).

For more detail on VSP watershed work groups during implementation, please see last year’s [December 2017 VSP regional meeting presentation materials](#) on implementation and [our implementation page on the VSP web page](#). This topic will also be addressed

during the VSP regional meetings December 4 in Chehalis and December 11 in Moses Lake.

VSP, CAO'S AND "NEW AGRICULTURE": The Commission continues to work with the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) and Technical Panel on issuing guidance on how VSP interacts with critical areas, agriculture, and critical area ordinances. More information, as it becomes available, will be published here in the VSP monthly newsletter and on [the Commission's VSP web page](#).

VSP 2 YEAR AND 5 YEAR REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: [Policy Advisory \(PA\) 05-18](#) deals with implementation reporting requirements for VSP. All work groups, county staff, conservation district staff, and other staff responsible for VSP implementation should review [PA 05-18](#) to ensure they understand these two-year and five-year deadlines. The Commission suggests setting up a project management system to track reporting requirements and deadlines. More details and a complete schedule for submittal of two year and five year reports are in [PA 05-18](#). All PA's can be found on the VSP web page [here](#) and on the SAC web page [here](#).

The Commission is working on adding clarity to the VSP statute through the adoption of Washington Administrative Code regulations setting out the 2 year

and 5 year reporting content in more detail so that counties are clear on the expectations for the content of the reports and can satisfy all of the related requirements. Commission staff is working on draft regulations for review by the SAC and adoption as soon as practicable. A public comment period will be available during that process. More information, as it becomes available, will be published here in the VSP monthly newsletter and on [the Commission's VSP web page](#).

VSP AND THE BUDGET: The Governor's budget funds VSP at \$8,456,000. The Commission had sought \$9,925,000. The Governor included funds for implementation for each county, administration of VSP through the Commission and other agencies, and supported funding for the expansion of WDFW's [HRC](#)D to serve all VSP counties. However, the VSP budget won't be set until the Legislature has its say during the current session.

As for the some other VSP budget issues, here are some important points to remember:

For the current fiscal year which ends on June 30, 2019, counties have been allocated up to \$110,000 to support their VSP efforts. One question counties have is, how much, if any of the current fiscal years' funding can be pushed forward into the next biennium? The answer is none.

Another question is, what happens if, after June 30, 2019 there's no additional funding for VSP? The answer is that the Commission will need to make a determination at that time whether the counties have adequate funding for VSP and if not they need to implement one of the four options specified in statute. See [RCW 36.70A.735 \(2\) \(c\)](#).

The failure by the Legislature to adequately fund VSP would affect all 27 counties that have opted in-to VSP as per the provisions of RCW 36.70A.735 (2) (c). Therefore, it is important for counties to inform their local legislators (some of whom may not be aware of the effect of inadequate funding of VSP on their own local county) of the operation of the statute in this instance.

VSP WORK-GROUPS AND THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT: Some VSP work groups have requested information related to the Open Public Meetings Act and VSP work groups.

The Commission's position is that the VSP work-groups are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) ([RCW 42.30](#)).

As such, there are some requirements that need to be met, such as the requirement for training of Work-group members ([RCW 42.30.205](#)), for posting of agendas on a county's website 24

hours in advance ([RCW 42.30.077](#)), for taking meeting minutes ([RCW 42.30.030](#)) (as per county policy and in compliance with the OPMA), and conducting meetings that are open for the public to attend ([RCW 42.30.030](#)). For more information, please refer to the Municipal Research and Services Center ([MRSC](#)) [web page](#) on the OPMA.

In 2014 the Legislature passed [Engrossed Senate Bill 5964](#) which requires agency governing boards and committees established to take action on their behalf to receive training on the [Open Public Meetings Act](#). The training is in the form of a video from the Attorney General's office. By viewing this video, you will have received the training that is now required by law. After Work-group members have been established by the Board of County Commissioners, it is our recommendation that each Work-group view the video at a Work-group meeting soon thereafter. By viewing these video, you will have received the training that is now required by law every 4 years or within 90 days of becoming a Work-group member. The link to the video is here:

Follow this link to view the [Open Public Meetings Act video](#) (17 min)

Note: *an internet connection and audio capability will need to be available in*

order for the video link to function properly.

It is our recommendation that each Work-group keep a list of the Work-group members who have taken the training, already taken the training in some other capacity, and when the training was completed. Videos may also be viewed by Work-group members on their own, but then the viewing of the videos will need to be documented by the Work-groups. So, there are essentially three options for viewing the videos:

Option 1 – Each Work-group member views the video on their own

Option 2 – Viewing the video at a Work-group meeting

Option 3 – Documenting that a Work-group member has already received this training

Based on how each individual member of the Work-group has or will receive the training, one of the three options should be selected and documented by the Work-group.

For more information, MRSC has two flyers available for download that provide a one-page summary of OPMA compliance and notice requirements:

[General OPMA compliance practice tips](#)

[OPMA notice requirement practice tips](#)

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