

Appendix A-2

Pend Oreille County Voluntary Stewardship Program

Overview and Checklist

May 2018



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Voluntary Stewardship Program Overview

VSP is a non-regulatory, incentive-based approach to protecting critical areas on agricultural lands, while maintaining agriculture viability. VSP allows farmers and ranchers to continue agricultural practices without regulation under Pend Oreille County’s Development Regulations by promoting voluntary conservation and practices by producers that protect critical areas and maintain and enhance agricultural viability.

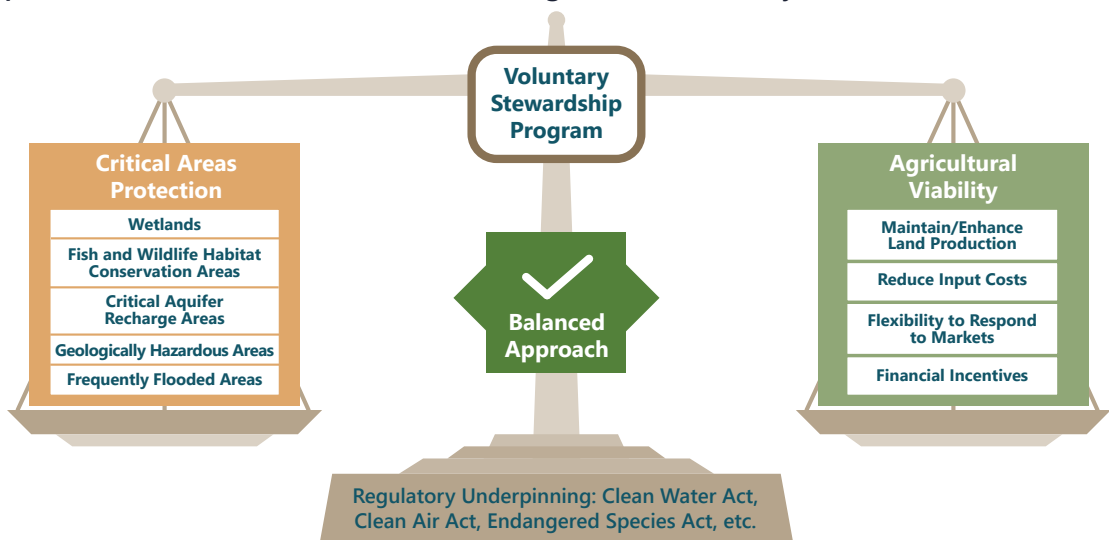
VSP is allowed under a recent change in the Growth Management Act and provides an alternative to traditional approaches to critical areas protection, such as protection buffers. VSP is intended to balance critical areas protection and agricultural viability at the County level through voluntary actions by agricultural producers, as illustrated in Figure 1. VSP is not a replacement for compliance with other laws and regulations, but participation in the program can often help agricultural producers comply with these requirements.

Critical Areas per RCW 36.70A.020(5) include:

- Wetlands
- Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water
- Geologically hazardous areas
- Frequently flooded areas

Under VSP, critical areas on lands where agricultural activities are conducted are managed under this voluntary program. Lands used for non-agricultural purposes are regulated under Pend Oreille County’s Development Regulations.

Figure 1
Balanced Approach of Critical Areas Protection and Agricultural Viability



VSP Work Plan Background and Purpose

The guiding document for the VSP is the Work Plan. The Pend Oreille County VSP Work Plan (Work Plan) was developed by the Pend Oreille County VSP Work Group, which was convened by the County and comprises agricultural producers, local government-elected officials and staff, and agency representatives. This document provides an overview of the VSP Work Plan and a VSP Checklist. The Work Plan includes detailed information intended to fulfill the state requirements outlined under the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A.720(1), which includes several elements, such as protection and enhancement goals, measurable benchmarks, and an implementation, reporting, and tracking framework. See below for a description of the VSP Work Plan organization.

One of the main goals of the Work Plan is to identify conservation practices that are implemented under existing programs or voluntarily implemented

through producer-funded practices, and identify future goals and benchmarks for continued protection and enhancement of the County's critical area functions and values.

Failure of the Work Plan in meeting protection goals will trigger a regulatory approach to protecting critical areas under the Growth Management Act, such as applying buffers and setbacks along streams or wetlands. Additionally, the regulatory approach for protecting critical areas on agricultural lands would not have the equally important VSP goal of maintaining and enhancing agricultural viability. Neither would it necessarily encourage outreach or technical assistance for agricultural operators. Therefore, producer participation is encouraged, through implementing conversation practices, to help ensure the success of VSP.

Pend Oreille County VSP Work Plan Organization

Detailed information outlining the background, existing conditions, goals and benchmarks, and implementation is found in the Pend Oreille County VSP Work Plan. See below for an overview of what is included in the Work Plan:

- **Introduction:** Background on VSP regulation and how it applies to Pend Oreille County.
- **Regional Setting:** Overview of Pend Oreille County conditions, including description of critical areas and associated key functions.
- **Baseline Conditions:** Description of county-wide critical areas presence and functions and values as of 2011 (effective date of VSP; see Frequently Asked Questions).
- **Protection and Enhancement Strategies:** Description of currently implemented conservation practices that protect and enhance critical areas functions and values.
- **Goals, Benchmarks, and Adaptive Management:** Description of VSP goals for each critical area, measurable benchmarks, and indicators and methods for adaptive management.
- **Implementation:** Detailed plan outlining implementation of VSP actions by the VSP Coordinator and Work Group.
- **Appendices:** Additional detailed information referenced by the above sections.

Stewardship Activities and Conservation Practices

Examples of practices that protect critical area functions and values and promoting agricultural viability include:

- Forest Understory Management
- Grazing Management
- Fencing
- Weed Management
- Pest Management

See the VSP Checklist for additional examples of voluntary stewardship practices and resources for additional information and potential incentive funding.

To meet the goals of the Work Plan, VSP implementation will include agricultural producer participation and outreach, technical assistance, program performance tracking and reporting, and adaptive management. Commodity groups, the Pend Oreille Conservation District, and others can help in performing these responsibilities.

Work Plan Implementation

Agricultural producers are continually improving agricultural practices, applying new science and technology, and implementing conservation practices that reduce agricultural impacts on critical areas, while maintaining and increasing the viability of farms and ranches and the larger Pend Oreille County agricultural economy.

Work Plan implementation is expected to continue largely through producer-funded activities, existing programs, and organizations that provide technical support to producers. Many producers are already implementing conservation actions throughout the County that are protecting critical areas and supporting agricultural viability. VSP aims to:

1. Better identify and document producer-funded and other conservation practices implemented since 2011
2. Increase agricultural producer participation in implementing conservation practices

VSP Checklist

The VSP Checklist is a helpful tool to help assess how the VSP could support individual agricultural producers. It includes additional examples of stewardship practices that protect and enhance critical areas and promote agricultural viability.

Participation in Programs

Private, federal, state, and local government programs and opportunities are available to support producers in addressing agricultural and resource concerns. See the VSP for additional resources and technical assistance available to agricultural producers on a voluntary basis. **Participation in a government-funded program is not required to be a VSP participant.**

Privacy Note: Information collected by producers using this checklist will be used to quantify, at the County-level, stewardship measures that have been implemented, associated critical area protections and enhancements, and agricultural viability benefits. VSP Checklists can also assist producers in developing an “individual stewardship plan” in coordination with the Pend Oreille Conservation District. “Individual stewardship plans” that a conservation district helps a producer develop are confidential and exempt from disclosure, similar to farm plans developed by conservation districts. Conservation practices information shared by producers with the Conservation District will be reported for VSP at the watershed and County scales.

Pend Oreille County Voluntary Stewardship Program Checklist

This Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) checklist is intended to help farmers and ranchers contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the Pend Oreille County VSP Work Plan. Many farmers and ranchers in the County are already conducting conservation practices that promote agricultural viability while also providing protections to critical area functions.

Help keep critical areas protection voluntary.
Working together, farmers and ranchers can use voluntary efforts to avoid additional regulatory controls.

This VSP checklist intends to:

- Identify and document existing conservation practices you have implemented since 2011 (effective date of VSP), either through existing publicly funded programs or voluntarily implemented through producer-funded practices.
- Identify opportunities to:
 - Maintain or improve existing conservation practices
 - Implement additional conservation practices on your land and connect you with technical service providers for implementing these practices
- Encourage high producer participation, through implementation of voluntary conservation practices to help ensure the success of VSP. Failure of the County to meet protection and associated participation goals will trigger the traditional regulatory approach to critical area protection under the County's Critical Areas Ordinance process.

Conservation Practices on Your Farm or Ranch

Conservation practices are broadly defined as any practice that, when implemented, further protects critical areas directly or indirectly, and maintains or improves agricultural viability, whether or not they meet a Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation practice or other standard. Conservation practices may fall under multiple categories; please include each implemented practice **only once**.

Privacy Note:

Information collected by producers using this checklist will be used to quantify, **at the County-level**, stewardship measures that have been implemented, as well as associated critical area protections and enhancements, and agricultural viability benefits. VSP Checklists can also assist producers in developing an "individual stewardship plan" in coordination with Pend Oreille Conservation District. "Individual stewardship plans" that a conservation district helps a producer develop are confidential and exempt from disclosure, similar to farm plans developed by conservation districts. Conservation practices information shared by producers with the Pend Oreille Conservation District will be reported for VSP at the watershed and County scales.

For more information about VSP, please visit:

<http://www.pocd.org/voluntary-stewardship-program>

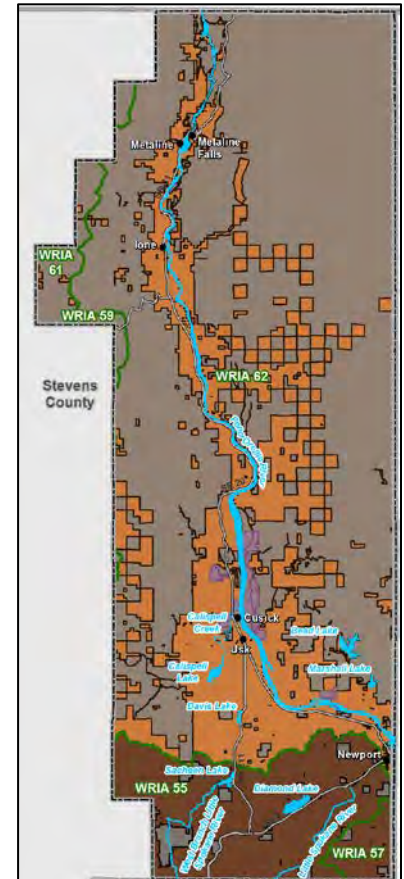
Or email:

davidm@pocd.org

General Location (Voluntary information)

If you are inclined to share, what area is your farm or ranch located within?

- ☐ ■ Pend Oreille (WRIs 59, 61, and 62)
- ☐ ■ Spokane (WRIs 55 and 57)



Land Management and Agricultural Viability

What types of land management or agricultural viability concerns do you have on your property?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forest understory management | <input type="checkbox"/> Erosion/landslide risks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wildfire risk | <input type="checkbox"/> Flooding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weed and pest management | <input type="checkbox"/> Other(s) - please list: |

Weed Management



Noxious weed management efforts are being conducted with Weed Board funds that are available throughout the County in coordination with the Pend Oreille Conservation District re-seeding efforts.

Forest Understory Management



Forest understory management is a key practice for maintaining grazing access and conditions in forested rangelands while also reducing wildfire hazards, improving soil composition, and providing habitat and forage access to wildlife.

What conservation practices are being implemented on your farm or ranch?

Example Conservation Practices	I do this	I'm interested in this	Does not apply	Not interested	Average units/year (acres/feet/other)
Livestock/Range Management					
Reseeding Mixed-Use Pasture Land	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Prescribed Grazing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Heavy Use Protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Pumping Plant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Spring Development and Watering Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Fencing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other(s): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Forest Understory Management					
Woody Residue/Forest Slash Treatment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Tree/Shrub Pruning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Forest Stand Improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other(s): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Nutrient and Pest Management					
Pest Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Nutrient Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other(s): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Soil Management					
Deep Tillage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Conservation Crop Rotation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Cover Crop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other(s): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Irrigation Management					
Irrigation System, Sprinkler or Microirrigation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Irrigation Water Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other(s): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Habitat Management					
Riparian Forest Buffer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Access Control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Structure for Water Control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Tree/Shrub Establishment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Fish and Wildlife Structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other(s): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Additional Information and Assistance

If you have questions or would like more information on how to get involved, contact the VSP Coordinator or visit the Pend Oreille County VSP website at <http://www.pocd.org/voluntary-stewardship-program>. Critical areas exist throughout the County. You can direct questions about the presence of critical areas on your property to the Pend Oreille County VSP Coordinator by using the contact information below. You can also visit the VSP website for critical area maps for Pend Oreille County.

Pend Oreille County Conservation District Technical Assistance Provider:

David Marcell, District Manager and VSP Coordinator
davidm@pocd.org
509-447-1155
121 N Washington Ave
Newport, WA 99156

Other Resources:

- Pend Oreille County: <https://pendoreilleco.org/>
- Washington State Farm Bureau: <https://wsfb.com/>
- Washington Cattlemen's Association: <http://www.washingtoncattlemen.org/>
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>
- Washington State University Extension: <http://extension.wsu.edu/pendoreille/>



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Prepared by Anchor QEA, LLC for the
Pend Oreille County Work Group

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