

APPENDIX 9 VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP OVERVIEW AND INDIVIDUAL STEWARDSHIP CHECKLIST



WHAT IS THE VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?

The Voluntary Stewardship Program, or “VSP”, was adopted in 2011 under the Washington Growth Management Act as an alternative to traditional critical areas regulations. Communities develop a WORK PLAN that focuses on incentives to encourage good ecosystem stewardship instead of regulatory approaches to protect critical areas on agricultural lands. Important Critical areas generally support clean water, sustainable populations of salmon and shellfish, and healthy populations of plants and wildlife for next generations. Under this Program, farmers can operate successful agricultural businesses while taking the initiative to improve the environment on their land. These initiatives are known as Best Management or Conservation Practices, and are already in use by farmers throughout the County.

Where agricultural intersects with critical areas, the Program provides incentives for agricultural landowners and operators to voluntarily enhance the condition of critical areas through best management practices. A successful stewardship program would enable the community to apply cooperation, innovation, and effective action for the advancement of agriculture and the environment.

THE VSP WORK PLAN

Mason County’s WORK PLAN for the Program that includes goals, benchmarks, monitoring and adaptive management for protecting and enhancing critical areas through voluntary, site- specific stewardship practices. The WORK PLAN is also focused on maintaining and enhancing the long-term viability of agriculture and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses. Specifically the PLAN has four goals:

GOAL 1	protect critical area functions and values on agricultural lands at a watershed level as they existed as of July 22, 2011
GOAL 2	enhance critical area functions and values through voluntary, incentive-based measures.
GOAL 3	ensure the viability of agriculture and reduce the conversion of agricultural land into other uses.
GOAL 4	establish baseline monitoring program to measure benchmarks over a ten year period.

The PLAN also establishes measurable Benchmarks to assess progress toward achieving these goals. Monitoring techniques have been included and are a necessary tool to again illustrate how the Work Plan intends to effectively measure the Benchmarks and meet the Goals throughout its implementation. A threshold for adaptive management has also been established for most of the monitoring techniques to allow the District to evaluate how they are meeting goals and adjust for future decision making.

Fortunately, the majority of work associated with the WORK PLAN, its implementation and monitoring, is the responsibility of the Conservation District. You, the volunteer, are only as obligated as you choose to be utilizing a variety of available best management practices.

Implementation of the Program only requires voluntary stewardship as the primary method of protecting critical areas. It may not require an agricultural operator to discontinue agricultural activities,¹ or to even participate in the Program. Agricultural operators volunteering to participate may withdraw from the program at any time.

Commercial and noncommercial agricultural operators participating in the Program and implementing an individual stewardship plan consistent with the WORK PLAN are presumed to be working toward the protection and enhancement of critical areas. Operators participating in the program may be eligible to receive funding and assistance under watershed programs.

There are many funding opportunities for farmers regardless of whether or not they participate in this program. Some of those are listed later.

WHAT ARE CRITICAL AREAS?

Not everyone is familiar with what or where critical areas are in Mason County. The Program recognizes five different critical areas according to the Growth Management Act, and all five can be found here. These include: critical aquifer recharge areas (CARA), frequently flooded areas, wetlands, fish & wildlife habitat conservation areas, and geologically hazardous areas.

In Mason County, geologically hazardous areas are divided into three subcategories: landslide hazard, seismic hazard, and erosion hazard areas. The following table indicates the total acreage of each critical area in the County and its proportional interface with agricultural lands.

Acres and Percentages of Agriculture and Critical Area Interface

Critical Area "CA"	Total Acres Of CA	Total Acres Of Agriculture	Acres Of Agriculture Interface	% Of Total Agriculture Interface	% Of Total CA Interface
CARA	121,084	8,015	4,254	53%	3%
Flooded Areas	59,535	8,015	3,048	38%	5%

¹Legally existing prior to July 22, 2011

Critical Area "CA"	Total Acres Of CA	Total Acres Of Agriculture	Acres Of Agriculture Interface	% Of Total Agriculture Interface	% Of Total CA Interface
Landslide Areas	82,683	8,015	290	4%	0.3%
Seismic Areas	398,254	8,015	7,589	95%	2%
Erosion Areas	16,856	8,015	108	1%	1%
Fish & Wildlife	27,798	8,015	1,513	19%	5%
Wetlands	54,650	8,015	1,206	15%	2%

Critical areas, as denoted above, support clean water and healthy plant and wildlife populations. Each is different in its make-up and functions, as well as its associated protection measures. Below are brief descriptions of all five:



Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

Surface waters replenish, “recharge”, aquifers through seepage from streams, lakes, and wetlands, and from precipitation that percolates through soil or rock. Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, also called Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas or CARAs.

Photo: Oakland Bay, Courtesy of WA Department of Ecology



Frequently Flooded
Areas

Frequently flooded areas are lands in the flood plain subject to at least a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year, or within areas subject to flooding due to high groundwater.

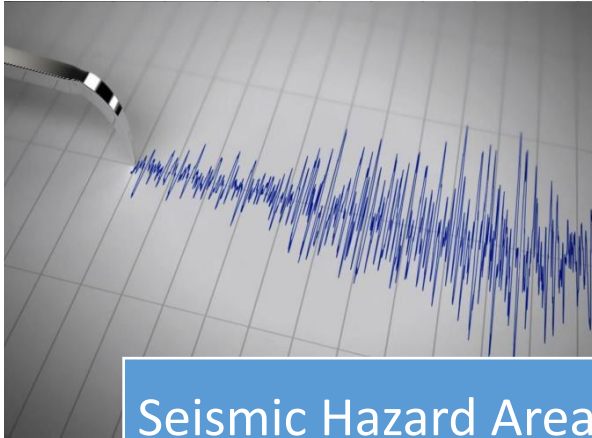
Photo: Tahuya River, Courtesy of The Lunkers Guide

Landslide areas are at risk for a rapid down slope movement of a mass of material such as rocks, soil, or other debris. The occurrence depends on a number of factors including soil vulnerability, slope, and the degree of water saturation.

Photo: Highway 106 Landslide, Courtesy of KOMO 4 News



Landslide Hazard Areas



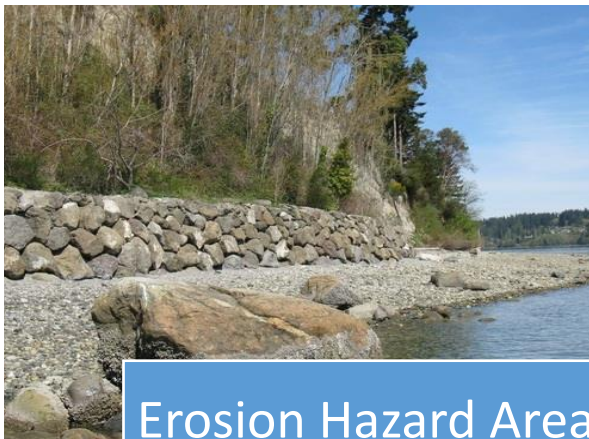
Seismic Hazard Areas

Seismic hazards occur in areas subject to severe risk of earthquake damage as a result of seismic induced settlement or liquefied soils.

*Photo: Courtesy of
www.nbcrighnow.com*

Erosion hazard areas are where the land surface is worn away by the action of water, wind, ice or other geologic processes. The most common cause of erosion is water falling or flowing across the land.

Photo: Bulkhead, Courtesy of Mason CD



Erosion Hazard Areas



Fish & Wildlife Habitat
Conservation Areas



Wetlands

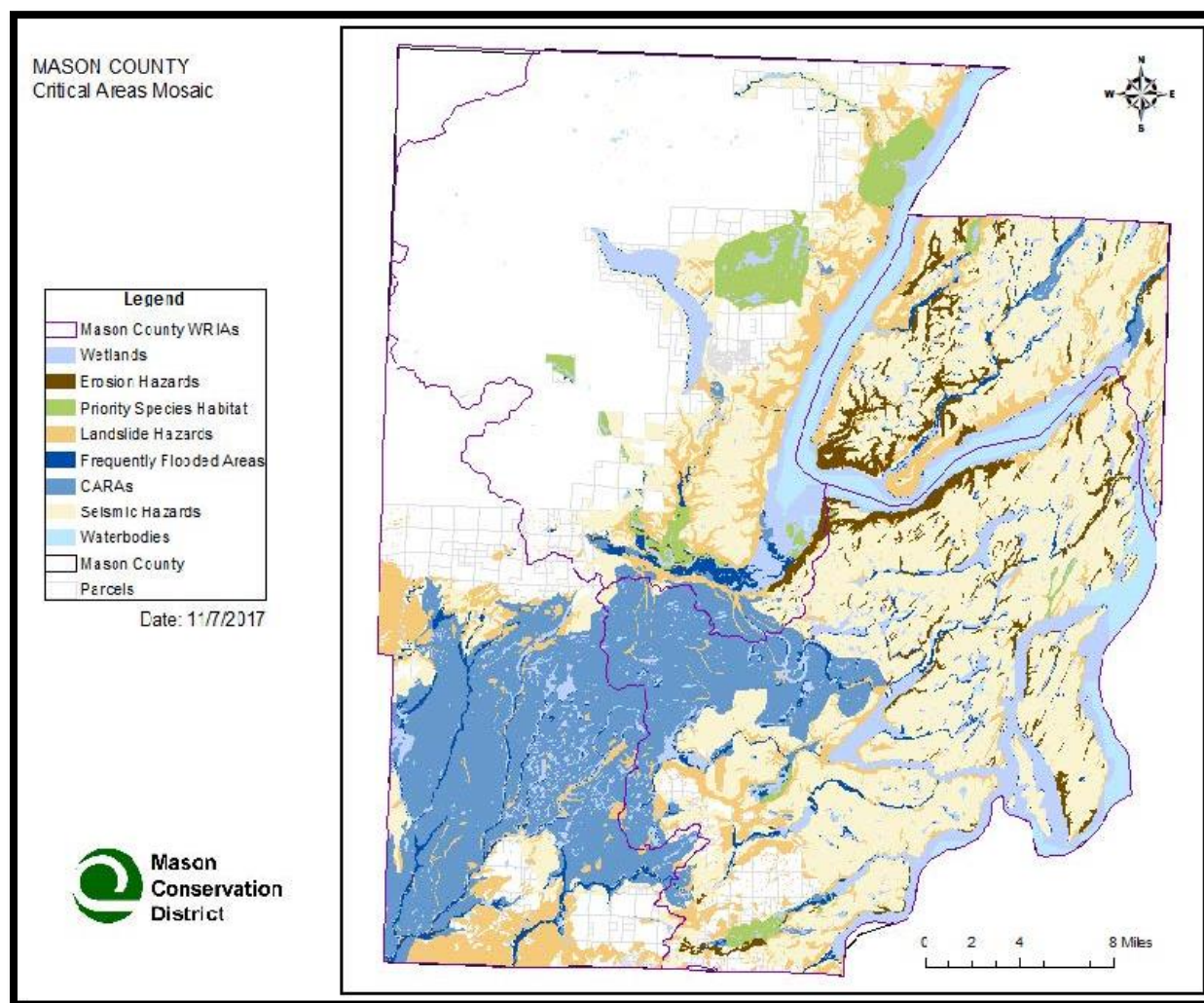
Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA) are recognized for maintaining species in suitable habitats within their natural geographic distribution so that isolated populations are not created. They are both aquatic and terrestrial areas within the County.

*Photo: Courtesy of
BeautifulWashington.com*

Generally, wetlands are areas inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions..

*Photo: Thelar Wetlands, Courtesy of
Trevor.com*

To give you an idea of where these areas are, this Critical Areas Mosaic Map illustrates a pattern of these areas across the County.



To find out if your agricultural operation has a critical area located on it, and to learn more about voluntary practices, the District has created a Checklist² that evaluates the **WORK PLAN's** goals together with the needs and objectives of the individual operator.

² The Mason County VSP ISP checklist contains a compilation of original and borrowed materials from checklists approved for other jurisdictions, including Pacific, Thurston, Yakima, and Grant - our thanks and acknowledgement of their work.

PROPERTY INFORMATION

The following checklist can be used to initiate an Individual Stewardship Plan³ (ISP) under the Voluntary Stewardship Program. This is a site-specific plan for individual agricultural operations that identifies agricultural activities and conservation practice options based on the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) conservation planning procedures. The ISP details conservation practices that promote agricultural business viability while protecting and voluntarily enhancing critical areas. Completion of this survey is the first step to helping the agricultural community in Mason County to meet its participation standards under the Program. This ISP survey will be used to assess trends in implementation of practices that support agricultural viability and critical area protection, and the individual results of this survey will be held in confidentiality by the Mason Conservation District. External reporting of the ISP results will only occur at the watershed scale.

Your name:

Phone number or email address:

Today's date:

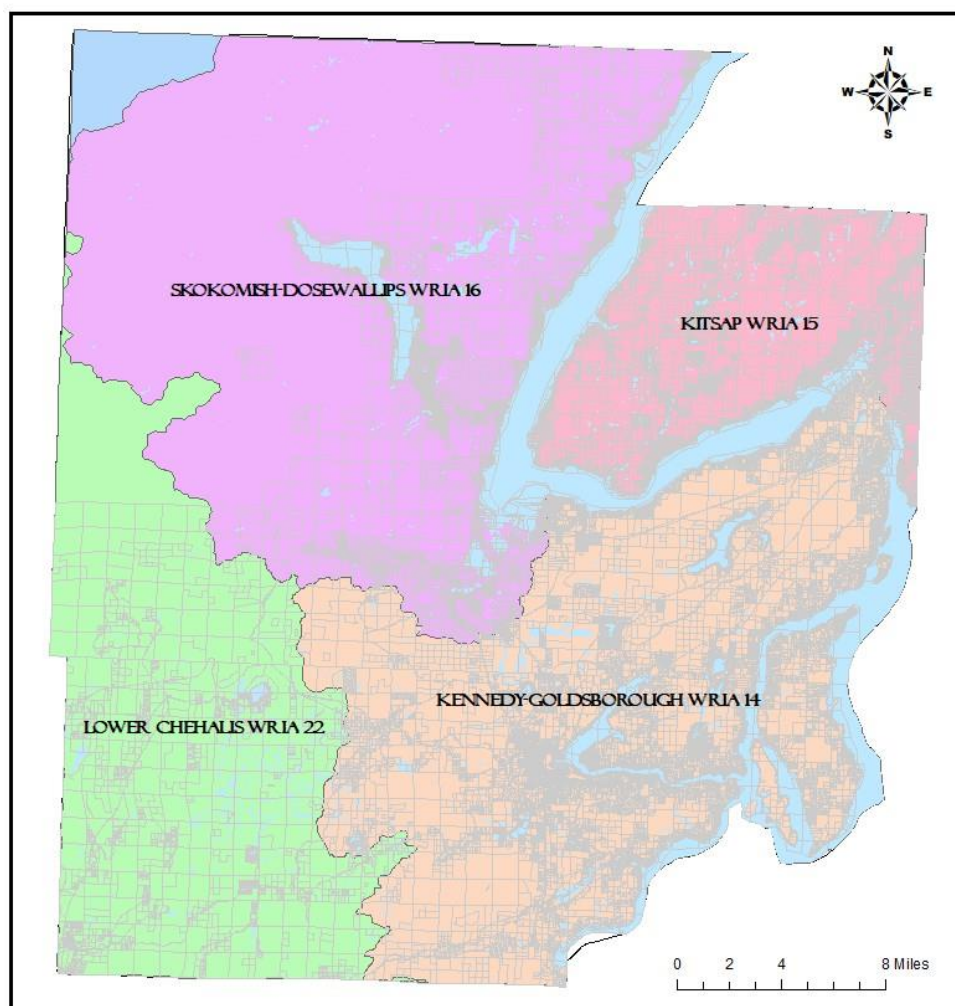
Agricultural business address:

Name of person who manages your farm:

Number of acres in agricultural production:

What products do you produce?

³The Washington State Conservation Commission believes that Individual Stewardship Plans are similar to Farm Plans developed by Conservation Districts and are confidential and exempt from disclosure. Policy Advisory #01-17 RCW 42.56.270(17)



WHAT WRIA IS YOUR AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN?

Kennedy-Goldsborough - WRIA 14 ☐

Kitsap - WRIA 15 ☐

Skokomish-Dosewallips - WRIA 16 ☐

Lower Chehalis - WRIA 22 ☐

For online maps and to look up your parcel you can go to <http://www.geodata.org/>

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL CRITICAL AREAS ON, OR NEAR, PROPERTY:

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas ☐

Wetlands ☐

Frequently Flooded Areas ☐

Geologically Hazardous Areas

- Landslide Hazard ☐
- Seismic Hazard ☐
- Erosion Hazard ☐

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas ☐

VSP is a voluntary and non-regulatory program. Checking one or more critical areas that may potentially be located on or adjacent to the property does not constitute an official determination of such a feature. It is helpful in filling out the rest of the checklist. If you are unsure you can contact the *VSP Coordinator* at (360) 427-9436, ext. 104 or you can email Badkins@masoncd.org for assistance.

IDENTIFY YOUR CURRENT PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY:

- EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program ☐
- CStP - Conservation Stewardship Program ☐
- EWP - Emergency Watershed Protection Program ☐
- EWP FPE - Floodplain Easement ☐
- FRPP - Farm & Ranchland Protection Program ☐
- CREP - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program ☐
- ECP - Emergency Conservation Program ☐
- Disaster Assistance Program (includes LFP- Livestock Forage Program) ☐
- Mason County Open Space Tax Program ☐
- Existing farm plan through the conservation district or NRCS ☐

Other: _____

Try your best to answer the questions and Mason Conservation District Staff can help you with the rest. District staff can perform a site visit to verify the actual extent and location of critical areas on your property and help you develop an ISP for implementing conservation practices and maintaining or improving the long-term viability of your agricultural operation. This can be done through the use of online mapping tools and visual identification.

Using the examples below, begin identifying conservation practices that you are already doing or that you are interested in discussing with the District to meet objectives of the VSP. The examples are only a few of those commonly used that might be implemented in an ISP. Please indicate which conservation

practices you are already doing (after the July 22, 2011 baseline) or that you would like to implement, or if it is not applicable to your operation.

For more information, criteria, and other practices please use the link in the footnote below to view the conservation practice standard in the Field Office Technical Guides.⁴

Fencing



Facilitates conservation objectives by providing means to control movement of animals and people, including vehicles.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Heavy Use Protection Area



Provides a stable, non-eroding surface for areas frequently used by animals, people, and vehicles; protects/improves water quality.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

⁴<https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov>

Subsurface Drain



A pipe installed beneath the ground surface to collect and/or convey excess water.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Composting Facility



Reduces pollution potential and improves handling characteristics of organic waste solids; produce soil amendments that add organic matter and beneficial organisms, provides slow release plant available nutrients, and improves soil condition.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Access Control



Monitor, manage intensity of use by animals, people, vehicles, equipment with other practices of conservation plan.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Filter Strip



Reduces suspended solids and dissolved contaminants in runoff; reduces suspended solids and contaminants in irrigation tailwater.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Waste Storage Structure Facility

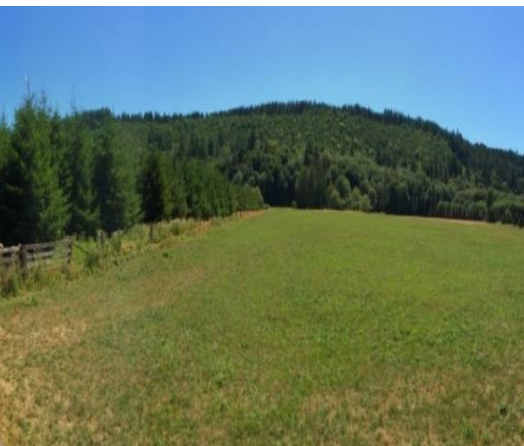


Temporarily store wastes as storage function component of agricultural waste management system.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Pasture/Hayland Planting



Improve/maintain livestock nutrition and health; provide/increase forage supply; reduce soil erosion and improve soil and water quality; produce feedstock for biofuel or energy production; increase carbon sequestration.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Micro-Irrigation System



Efficiently and uniformly apply irrigation water and maintain soil moisture.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Prescribed Grazing



Improve/maintain desired plant species composition; improve/maintain quantity and quality of forage, water, riparian and watershed functions, and food/cover for wildlife, reduce accelerated soil erosion; manage fine fuels loads.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Field Border



Reduce wind/water erosion; protect soil/water quality; provide wildlife food and cover and pollinator or other beneficial organism habitat; increase carbon storage; improve air quality.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Sprinkler Irrigation System



Efficient, uniform water application; improve plant condition, productivity, health, vigor; improve soil condition; reduce particulate matter emissions; reduce energy use.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Water Conveyance Pipeline



Conveyance of water from a source of supply to an irrigation system or storage reservoir, reduce energy use, develop renewable energy systems.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Recreation Trail and Walkway



A Trail is a constructed path with a vegetated or earthen surface. A walkway is a contrasted path with an artificial surface. A trail/walkway is used to facilitate the movement of animals, people, or off-road vehicles.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Surface Drainage - Field Ditch

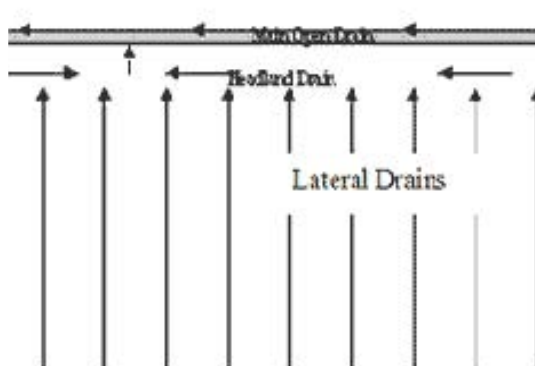


Intercept excess surface and shallow subsurface water from a field, conveying it to a surface main or lateral; collect excess irrigation water for a tailwater reuse system.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Surface Drainage - Main or Lateral



Convey excess surface or shallow subsurface water from field ditch to safe outlet; convey excess subsurface water from subsurface drain to safe outlet.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Waste Facility Cover



Protect clean water in existing or planned animal waste handling or storage area; improve waste management and utilization; protect clean water by excluding it from a chemically contaminated area.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Watering Facility



Supply daily water requirements; improve animal distribution; provide water source as alternative to sensitive resource.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Hedgerow Planting



Establishment of dense vegetation in a linear design to achieve a natural resource conservation purpose.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Herbaceous Weed Control



Enhance accessibility, quantity, quality of forage and/or browse; restore or release plant communities and wildlife habitats consistent with the ecological site; protect soils, control erosion; reduce fine-fuels fire hazard and improve air quality.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Riparian Forest Buffer



Create shade to lower, maintain water temperatures; reduce excess sediment, organic material, nutrients and pesticides in runoff; reduce pesticide drift; restore riparian plant communities; increase carbon storage in plant biomass and soils.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Stream Habitat Management



Provide suitable aquatic habitat; maintain stream corridor ecological processes and hydrological connections of diverse stream habitat types important to aquatic species.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Tree/Shrub Establishment



Establish woody plants for: forest products, habitat, long-term erosion control and water quality, treat waste, store carbon in biomass, reduce energy use, develop renewable energy systems, improve and restore natural diversity, and enhance aesthetics.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation



Encourage natural regeneration; permit artificial establishment of wood plants.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Wetland Restoration



Restore conditions conducive to hydric soil maintenance, wetland hydrology, native hydrophytic vegetation, original fish and wildlife habitats.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Roof Runoff Structure



Protect surface water quality by excluding roof runoff from contaminated areas; protect structure foundation from water damage or soil erosion from excess water runoff; increase infiltration of runoff water; capture water for other uses.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

Stream Crossing



Access to another land unit; improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrient, organic and inorganic loading; reduce streambank and streambed erosion.

I did this after July 22, 2011 ☐

I am interested in this ☐

The VSP is designed to promote the viability of agriculture over the long term and to avoid unnecessary local critical area regulations due to the prevalence of conservation practices undertaken by willing producers. Farmer and agricultural operators may find funding programs, as previously discussed, and request a field visit to obtain advice on improving viability and to recommended conservation practices.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

If you have any questions or would like more information on how to get involved, contact the VSP Coordinator or visit the VSP website at www.masoncd.org/vsp. Critical areas exist throughout the County. You can direct questions about the presence of critical areas on your property or any questions on how to get involved to the Mason County VSP Coordinator:

Barbara Adkins, AICP
Special Programs Manager
Mason Conservation District
450 W. Business Park Road
Shelton, WA 98584 (360) 427-9436, ext 104
Badkins@masoncd.org