

# January 2021 VSP Newsletter

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## QUARTERLY REPORT DUE

**JANUARY 10, 2021:** We’ve made it through 2020! Among other things, that means that the [VSP quarterly report](#) for October 1 – December 31, 2020 – is due in ten days on January 10, 2021. Please use the link above to submit your county report.

**FIVE YEAR REPORT TEMPLATE TRAINING WEBINAR RECORDED AND AVAILABLE:** The Commission hosted a third training webinar incorporating all the latest information on the VSP five year report template, on November 5, 2020. In case you missed it, a recording is available [here](#).

The template is intended for county work groups to use for their five year reporting requirements under VSP. The webinar assists county work group members, technical service providers, county staff and others who are

implementing VSP to understand and use the template to provide the Commission with the information needed for success in the five year reporting process.

VSP “MONITORING 101” WEBINAR AVAILABLE: The December 8, 2020

VSP “Monitoring 101” webinar and PowerPoint slides is available for viewing and have been posted under the “*Implementation*” tab on to the Commission’s VSP web page [here](#).

Topics covered included: how to get to your question answered, basic statistics (measurements, sample size, etc.), and simple tools. The purpose of the webinar was to provide a basic introduction to monitoring and statistical analysis in the VSP context, and highlight simple tools that could be used to implement VSP.

If you have questions or comments regarding the webinar, please contact Levi Keesecker by phone at (360) 789-3650 or by email at [lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov](mailto:lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov).

JOINT TECHNICAL PANEL AND STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING: Due to the ongoing pandemic, and to continue protecting the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, and the public, this meeting will be conducted via online web meeting and teleconference. All members of the public are welcome. If you would like to join us online, please

follow the link included in the agenda to receive additional information on how to participate.

The next joint meeting of the Statewide Advisory Committee and Technical Panel will be Wednesday, January 29, 2021, at 8:00 a.m. Links to join are below:

<https://www.gotomeet.me/BillEller/joint-vsp-tech-panel-and-sac-meeting>

**You can also dial in using your phone.**

United States: [+1 \(571\) 317-3122](tel:+15713173122)

**Access Code:** 989-109-653

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/989109653>

The agenda and other materials will be posted on the Commission VSP web page.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE WEBINAR SERIES ON CRITICAL AREA MONITORING: Starting in January 2021, the Washington State Department of Commerce is offering a series of webinars on critical area monitoring and adaptive management of critical areas and shorelines in the regulatory GMA context.

Attendees may find helpful information related to monitoring and adaptive management of critical areas. The webinar series complements the efforts the Commission has made with regard to monitoring and adaptive management under VSP, and, for those workgroups relying on regulatory backstops, may have direct applicability.

Like VSP, counties using a regulatory basis for protection of critical areas for other land uses will eventually focus on watershed or county-level scale for monitoring so some parallel approaches may be relevant, however, the initial focus will be at the parcel and individual permit scale.

The full notice is below. For more information, please direct questions regarding this series of webinars to Genevieve Dial at [gen.dial@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:gen.dial@commerce.wa.gov) and Scott Kuhta at [scott.kuhta@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:scott.kuhta@commerce.wa.gov) with questions or for more information.

Planners and Professionals,

The Washington State Department of Commerce and state agency partners at the Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Ecology invite you to join us for an 11-week webinar series on **monitoring and adaptive management** of critical areas and shorelines. Starting in

January 2021, the series will feature expert guest speakers, opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, tools and resources to develop and enhance critical areas and shorelines monitoring and adaptive management.

See the attached Save-the-Date announcement for a full list of topics covered in the series lineup. Please share this announcement with anyone you think may be interested.

Registration information and further details will be sent in the coming weeks and will be posted on our [project webpage](#) and on the [Commerce website](#).

We look forward to seeing you in the webinars!

Contact Genevieve Dial at [gen.dial@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:gen.dial@commerce.wa.gov) and Scott Kuhta at [scott.kuhta@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:scott.kuhta@commerce.wa.gov) with questions or for more information.

COMMENTS AND POINTERS ON THE VSP FIVE YEAR REPORT TEMPLATE AND PROCESS:

*The Purpose of the Commission's 5 Year Report Template and how it Relates to Agricultural Viability:*

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) 5 Year Report is the means whereby the county work group asserts whether or not it is meeting the critical area protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks identified in their work plan.

The 5-year report goes beyond providing a summary of what's been done. It is a self-evaluation of how well the actions are working towards meeting the goals and benchmarks of the work plan, and if the plan is adequately showing protection or enhancement of critical area functions and values as indicated by monitoring. The 5-year report should answer the questions:

- “Is our plan doing what we said it would do?” (meeting goals and benchmarks);
- “Is our plan protecting and enhancing critical area functions and values?” and
- “How do we know?” (What evidence do we have to support our answers to the first two questions?).

The Commission designed the 5 year report template and database to meet that specific reporting requirement in the VSP statute. We also believe the template will make reporting easier for counties in the future, decrease costs, expedite review by the Commission, and provide meaningful data on the state of critical areas.

The template does not require reporting on progress towards agricultural viability goals and benchmarks because the statute doesn't require it. However, we expect that relevant aspects of agricultural viability will be incorporated into the work group's answers, data, and explanations in the template.

If, as part of an answer in the five year report, a reference is made to a work plan, appendix of a work plan, or other document, please provide a link to that document, the document title, and the page number as part of that reference.

Work groups are free to develop their own reports, papers and materials related to agricultural viability in the county to showcase their accomplishments, but such a report isn't required for the five year report.

Additional materials, documents, or information a work group would like to make available to support its assertions in the five year report should be retained at the county or work group, and a link to those materials provided within the report when submitted. All information necessary for the Director to decide if they concur, or not, with the work group's determination should be documented and explained in the report.

*How to Address Data or Monitoring Data that Doesn't Fully Cover the Five Year Report Time Period?*

The VSP statute requires that the five year report cover a five year period that begins upon receipt of VSP funds by the county. Each VSP county has their own unique “receipt of funds” date. The Commission has created a table that shows the five year period for each county and has made the table available on the Commission’s VSP web page, but a direct link is [here](#).

The five year reporting period begins upon receipt of funds. Each VSP county is currently in the first five year reporting period. So, for example, a county that received VSP funds on February 1, 2016 would have a reporting period that runs through February 1, 2021.

If a county is using data or monitoring data that doesn’t entirely cover the relevant reporting period, it should (1) look for other sources of data or monitoring data that does cover the time period, (2) use its VSP funds or other fund sources to develop appropriate data or monitoring data that covers the time period.

If there are holes or problems with the data (the data doesn’t cover the time period, sampling sites are not enough to be statistically significant, etc.) as reported in the five year report, the county work group runs the risk of the Technical Panel and Commission executive director not concurring with its assertion that it is meeting the goals and benchmarks of the county work plan.

So, the fewer holes or problems with the data, the stronger the report.

Regardless, any issue with the data should be fully explained in the five year report and may also need to be adaptively managed in the work plan.

#### *Approval of the Five Year Report by the Watershed Work Group Before Submittal*

When the five year report is submitted to the Commission, it should be in final form. The template and database will require verification that the report has been approved by the work group before it can be finalized.

To meet the five year report submittal deadline for each county, work group approval needs to occur before final submittal. Approval is done at an open public meeting.

County staff, conservation district staff, or technical service provider staff who are working on behalf of the VSP work group should present the information, data and materials that are being submitted in the five year report to the work group. This can be done by a variety of means (a PowerPoint presentation, a report, an executive summary, the five year report PDF, a combination of these means, or other means).

The work group then provides any input or direction to the staff prior to submittal, and gives its approval to the staff for submittal of the five year report.

Approval can be done by a variety of means, but typically follows the ground rules of the work group (i.e. roll-call votes, vote by consensus, or other means).

County staff, conservation district staff, or technical service provider staff who are working on behalf of the VSP work group should ensure there is enough time before the submittal deadline for the draft five year report to be reviewed and considered by the work group.

*Where to find the Five Year Reporting Guide and Instructions:*

The Conservation Commission (Commission), with the assistance of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee, has completed work on a Five-Year Report Guide and Template for county work groups to use to meet their five year reporting requirements under VSP.

The following documents are now available on the [Commission's VSP Implementation web page](#), under the "Reporting" tab:

The [Five Year Report Guide](#)

The [Five Year Report Template User Instructions](#) (which includes instructions to download the Template)

Access to the Template has been made available to the County official identified as either the county's responsible individual for the VSP contract with the State Conservation Commission, or the Technical Service Provider (TSP) working on behalf of the county to submit the VSP five year report, if the Commission is aware that the county has designated a TSP to submit the Five-Year Report.

Counties and TSP's (as identified above) should have received access to the Template already. If you are the person responsible for submitting the VSP 5 Year Report on behalf of your county work group and have not received an email with access instructions, please contact Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator for the Commission at [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov) or by phone at 509-385-7512.

Our expectation is county VSP work groups will use the Commission developed Guide and Template to submit the five-year report to the Commission, as per RCW 36.70A.720 and RCW 36.70A.730 and your contract with the Commission.

For further information on the Five-Year Report submittal process, please

consult the Guide and Template User Instructions.

*Input on the Five Year Report Template and Process:*

The 5 year report template and the review and evaluation process as a whole is, just like a county work plan, subject to adaptive management.

The Commission has put forth its best effort to anticipate needs, wants and desires of the many partners in VSP, including the Technical Panel, Statewide Advisory Committee, counties, technical service providers, work group members, governmental and non-governmental interests, and the public as they relate to the 5 year review and evaluation process. However, we know there is always room for improvement. Some county work groups have already submitted letters suggesting changes or other areas for improvement with the process.

The Commission welcomes that input and feedback on the review and evaluation process, and on all aspects of VSP. Please direct those comments, in whatever form you choose to make them (email, letter, or phone) to Bill Eller at [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov) or by phone at 609-385-7512.

**REMAINING FIVE YEAR REPORT DUE DATES:**

COUNTY	5 YEAR REPORT DUE
Benton	1.12.21
Skagit	1.19.21
Whitman	1.19.21
Columbia	1.20.21
Yakima	1.21.21
Douglas	1.22.21
Pend Oreille	2.2.21
Franklin	2.24.21
Walla Walla	3.7.21
Stevens	3.10.21
Ferry	3.14.21
Grays Harbor	3.21.21
Lincoln	3.21.21
Lewis	4.18.21
Spokane	4.22.21
Adams	5.23.21

**PROCESS AFTER THE FIVE YEAR REPORT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED:**

The VSP statute says that the VSP Technical Panel reviews and evaluates five year reports submitted by county work groups.

The statute further says that after review, the Commission executive director must decide if she agrees, or not, with the assertion of the work group in the report that they are meeting (or not) the goals and benchmarks of their work plan. If she agrees that they are, then the county and work group keeps implementing VSP. If she does not agree that they are, then she consults with the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee and the county work group to see if improvements can be accomplished within six months. If so,

then the county and county work group continues implementing VSP. If not, then the county and county work group fail out of VSP.

The Commission's [Guide](#) to the five year reporting process sets out in more detail the process described above. Generally, the steps look like this:

- After the report has been submitted to the Commission, the Commission makes the report available to the Technical Panel for their review and evaluation. Technical Panel members have 45 days to complete their review and make comments.
- Once Technical Panel member comments are available, the Commission will make them available by email to the person who submitted the report on behalf of the county work group.
- A public meeting is held where the Technical Panel meets to discuss each members' review and evaluation, and the SAC plays a role in making a recommendation to the Commission executive director. The public meeting schedule for each report review is available on the Commission's [VSP implementation web page](#) and directly [here](#).
- After the public meeting, Commission staff have 30 days to gather together the Technical

Panel comments and Statewide Advisory Committee recommendation and provide that to the Commission executive director for her consideration. The executive director has 30 more days in which to make a decision. Her decision will be communicated to each county by email and by letter.

If you have any questions on where your report is in this process, please contact Bill Eller at [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov) or by phone at 509-385-7512.

THOUGHTS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE COMMISSION'S FIVE YEAR REPORT TEMPLATE AND PROCESS: A few counties have completed their submittal of their five year report – congratulations to those who have done so. As of this writing, that includes Kittitas, Mason, Garfield, Asotin, Grant and Pacific.

The Commission is aware of a lot of interest from county work groups, technical service providers, and others about the five year report template and its utility. We welcome any comments any have along those lines. Comments should be send or emailed to Bill Eller at [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov) or mailed to the Commission at PO Box 47721 Olympia, WA 98504-7721.

The Commission has always anticipated the need to make adjustments to the

template, so those comments will help inform us during that process.

We also anticipate, after this first round of reviewing and evaluating five year reports is complete, that we will bring together a committee of stakeholders to review how the process went, including looking at the template for areas of improvement. That effort should begin sometime next fall, after the last public meeting on the county five year reports on September 9, 2021.

So, keep watching this space in the VSP monthly newsletter as that times gets closer for calls to serve on that committee.

**ADAPTIVELY MANAGING YOUR COUNTY WORK PLAN:** County work groups are directed by the VSP statute (RCW 36.70A.720 (1) (j)) to “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....”

So yes, anytime you have adaptively managed your work plan, you should send that adaptive management plan to the Commission. Similarly, if during the five year reporting process a county asserts that it isn't meeting its work plan goals and benchmarks, then the Commission's Five Year Report Guide directs the county to submit an adaptive

management plan along with the five year report.

In either case (adaptively managing as part of the overall management of your work plan, or as part of the five year reporting process), the county should send to the Commission the adaptive management plan.

That plan should be a document separate from the five year report and template. It should tell the Commission the following:

1. *What change(s) were made to your work plan?* Please include both what was changed and the new change. Cite to the location of the item to be changed in the original work plan. For example, a goal in your work plan was “to protect all steep slopes in the county,” and that goal was changed to read “to protect all geologically hazardous areas in the county,” include both statements - the original and the change - in the plan. This lets the Commission and the public see easily what was changed. Citing the location of the item to be changed in the original work plan lets everyone quickly find the item that was changed. So, in the example above, if the goal that is to be changed was “to protect all steep slopes in the county,” list what page number and section of the work plan that goal was found in the original work plan - “Appendix B, page 30”, for example.

2. *Why was that change made?* In the example above, the reason could be as simple as “the change was made because the words “steep slopes” in the original wasn’t as inclusive as the term “geologically hazardous areas”. The explanation should make it clear to the Commission and the public why this change was needed, the purpose of the change, and what the change hopes to accomplish.

The format of the plan document and its length are up to each county, so long as the two questions above are addressed. Short, clear, and concise statements and descriptions are encouraged. The adaptive management plan should be dated so that it is clear when the changes were made. The adaptive management plan should also be approved by the county work group, since the county work group is the entity required by the VSP statute to implement the VSP county work plan. The adaptive management plan is a public document and will be made available by the Commission to the public.

Adaptive management plans should be emailed to the Commission at [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov).

Also, when a county adaptively manages its VSP work plan, the county should keep a record of that change so that it is clear to the county, the county work group, and those implementing the

county VSP work plan what changes have been made, and when, to the original county VSP work plan.

**VSP IN THE GOVERNOR’S BUDGET:** The Governor’s proposed budget does include carry-forward funding for the Commission for VSP, but is slightly less than our request and what we received this past biennium. The Governor proposes to fund VSP at \$8,410,000 for FY 21-23, down \$46,000 from our \$8,456,000 request. The legislature will have its say during the upcoming session, and the final VSP budget allocation might also be affected by possible wage reductions. Our original request was as follows:

**Implementation of 27 local county VSP work plans**

**(\$6,750,000).** VSP counties have developed work plans describing the application of VSP. All work plans have been completed and were approved by the end of the 2017- 19 biennium. Counties are now implementing their work plans, which includes outreach to landowners, developing individual landowner stewardship plans, monitoring the progress of implementation of these individual plans, and monitoring the status of protection and enhancement of critical areas.

Funding to accomplish this is calculated at \$250,000 per VSP

county for the biennium. Last biennium's funding was at \$240,000 per VSP county. The increase is based on feedback from the VSP counties as to the resources needed for implementation. Many counties requested more, but the SCC believes the \$250,000 amount is a reasonable state contribution. The SCC encourages each VSP county to make their own financial contribution to local VSP implementation.

The use of these funds is up to each VSP work group, but includes meeting statutory reporting requirements and ensuring progress on their plans.

**SCC administration of the VSP (\$531,000).** The SCC is charged by the VSP statute to oversee and administer the VSP. The administrative tasks include formulating the VSP Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee, conducting their meetings, having staff serve on the Technical Panel, creating a five-year reporting template and process, serving as the statewide clearinghouse for VSP information, policy and procedure, assisting counties with monitoring and data collection, conducting outreach and education events, meetings,

and webinars, and creating and managing a VSP web page.

Additionally, SCC staff provide critical scientific guidance to local VSP work groups in relation to monitoring approaches, analysis, and reporting to assess both environmental quality and agricultural viability.

**Other agency participation in VSP (\$600,000).**

The WDFW, WSDA, and ECY join with the SCC to serve on the VSP Technical Panel, which approves all plans. Now that all VSP counties are implementing their plans, the Panel's role shifts to the review and evaluation of five year reports of the VSP work groups for the on-going success of the plans and their adaptive management actions. Agencies will also be coordinating with counties on VSP monitoring in the field.

**WDFW's High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD)**

**(\$575,000).** VSP counties must monitor and document their work plan implementation so that, at a minimum, their plan protects and does not impact critical areas. Monitoring these potential impacts allows the VSP work groups to adaptively manage their plans to achieve the

resource protection goals. This is a requirement of VSP not found in non-VSP counties. A key tool for many VSP work groups is the use of High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD) technologies at WDFW. HRCD is visual imagery from the air that allows technicians to determine whether changes are happening on the ground. Some VSP county work plans rely on this technology to support their outreach and landowner assistance work. Although WDFW has used this technology in a few counties, more resources are needed to support the use of HRCD in VSP work plan implementation. WDFW requests \$575,000 per biennium for High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD) for counties using VSP.

Total funding request for VSP for the 2021-23 biennium is \$8,456,000.

NRCS RESOURCES FOR DETERMINING HOW EFFECTIVE NRCS PRACTICES ARE AT PROTECTING WETLANDS: Rick Mraz, VSP TP member for the Department of Ecology, brought to our attention that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a webpage titled: *Determining How Effective NRCS Conservation Practices are at Protecting Wetlands*. The link is:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/porta/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=NRCEPRD1696229>

Some counties already know about this resource, but we wanted to provide the link for those who might not be aware as the effectiveness of NRCS practices at protecting wetlands may be a factor in determining if you are meeting your work plan goals and benchmarks. For more information, please go to [the web page](#) or contact [your local NRCS office](#).

COMMISSION SEEKS ENVIRONMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SAC: An important part of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is the Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) appointed by the director of the Conservation Commission (Commission).

The SAC is comprised of environmental, agricultural, and county members, and tribal representation is also sought. The SAC serves to advise the director of the Commission on a variety of policy and programmatic aspects of VSP.

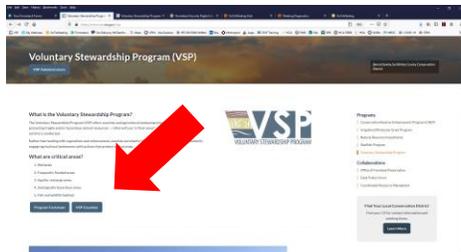
The Commission is currently seeking an environmental representative to serve on the SAC. The term is for two years. Meetings are generally held every month or every other month. Members serve as volunteers to help the Commission achieve the goals of VSP,

which include protecting critical areas while maintaining agricultural viability.

More information on the SAC can be found at the [Commission's VSP web page](https://www.scc.wa.gov/vsp). If interested in serving contact Ron Shultz, Director of Policy and Inter-governmental Relations, [rshultz@scc.wa.gov](mailto:rshultz@scc.wa.gov) or by phone at 360-407-7507.

**LOOKING FOR VSP 5 YEAR COUNTY REPORTS:** The Commission posts 5 year reports submitted by counties are posted on the Commission's VSP web page. Steps in the process to find the reports are as follows:

1. Go to the [Commission's VSP web page](https://www.scc.wa.gov/vsp) (<https://www.scc.wa.gov/vsp>)
2. Scroll down to the "[VSP Counties](https://www.scc.wa.gov/vsp/directory)" tab (<https://www.scc.wa.gov/vsp/directory>)



3. Click on the "[VSP Counties](https://www.scc.wa.gov/vsp/directory)" tab. That brings you to an alphabetical list of the 27 VSP counties in VSP.
4. Scroll down until you find the name of the county you are interested in. If the Commission has received a 5 year report from that county, it will appear in the folder labeled "Reports" under that county's name.



5. Click on the "*Reports*" tab under the county you are interested in to gain access to the five year report (if the Commission has received it).

**MEETING WORK PLAN GOALS AND BENCHMARKS:** An important part of implementation is monitoring of critical area functions and values, and assessing whether the data gathered is enough to determine if work plan goals and benchmarks are being met.

Presenting this information to the work group by those gathering the data is an important piece to gauge how well goals and benchmarks are being met. If existing data and approaches are not sufficient to assess critical area functions and values, such as due to gaps in data, monitoring should be augmented via adaptive management.

Don't hesitate to have those meetings as the work group is responsible for submitting in the five-year review and evaluation reports of each county work plan.

Questions about VSP monitoring and data gathering should be directed to [Levi Keesecker](mailto:Levi.Keesecker@scc.wa.gov). He can be reached by

phone at (360) 789-3650 or by email at [lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov](mailto:lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov).

[Policy Advisory 03-18](#) identifies the roles of each of the various entities responsible for VSP implementation. County work groups should be meeting regularly to meet statutory obligations, monitor progress, and take adaptive management actions.

Overseeing implementation, providing direction and oversight to the VSP technical service provider on compliance with VSP goals and benchmarks, and adaptively managing implementation if those goals and benchmarks are not being met are among the most important duties of the work group.

Each county work group should be regularly communicating with the technical service provider(s) implementing the VSP work plan to address any issues that arise. Perhaps a benchmark was set to high, or new information renders a goal insufficient to meet needs. Review of the benchmarks and goals is part of the adaptive management process.

**NEW COUNTY WORK GROUP MEMBERS:** Some county work group have designed their work group member service terms to end with the five year reporting cycle. This creates opportunities for new volunteers to serve on the VSP county work group.

With the arrival of new work group members, it is important to provide them with the background, history, work group function, and current state of VSP in your county, so that they can be effective work group members.

County watershed group members should read the county's VSP work plan, understand its terms and requirements. Work group meetings are open public meetings under the [Open Public Meetings Act, RCW Chapter 42.30](#), so all volunteer members of the 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 for all members every four years.

The Watershed Work Group Members have an important oversight role to play during VSP implementation. [Policy Advisory 03-18](#) explains that the watershed work group members have many different duties during implementation, so it is important that they read and understand [the county's VSP work plan](#), receive training in the [background and history of VSP](#), as well as how the work group functions as an entity of the county.

**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.

VSP VOUCHERING: Remember, the Commission’s agency policy requires

monthly reimbursement requests for all VSP contracts (as well as any other contracts). However, we have noticed some counties are sending in reimbursement requests quarterly. Monthly reimbursement requests allow entities to stay on top of expenses and contract end dates. So, please remember to voucher monthly for VSP expenses as stated in your VSP contract.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE VSP NEWSLETTER: New subscribers should access this link and choose the subscription for the “*Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)*” under the *Programs and Policy* tab:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WASCC/subscriber/new>.

If you have any questions on how to sign up, please contact Bill Eller ([beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov)) or Laura Johnson ([LJohnson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:LJohnson@scc.wa.gov)) at the Commission.

Bill Eller | [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov) | 509-385-7512 | Washington State Conservation Commission