
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION

POLICY ADVISORY #05-18

APPROVED VSP WORK PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & PROCEDURE

Revised July 2020

SUMMARY

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

TWO-YEAR STATUS REPORT 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 FY 17-19 biennia, the two-year status report is 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 style="text-align: center;">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	

TWO-YEAR STATUS REPORT CONTENT

Each written two-year 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 REVIEW AND EVALUATION REPORT

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 REVIEW AND EVALUATION REPORT CONTENT

The five-year review and evaluation 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 five 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 REVIEW AND EVALUATION REPORTS

In conjunction with the VSP Technical Panel, the Conservation Commission will review and evaluate the five-year review and evaluation reports.⁵ After review and evaluation of these five-year 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 six 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 six 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 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

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

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\(2\)\(b\)\(iii\)](#).

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 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

†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.

Voluntary Stewardship Program Two-Year Status Report versus Five-Year Review and Evaluation Report

In our VSP outreach efforts, the Conservation Commission (Commission) has become aware of some confusion over the difference between the two-year status report and the five-year review and evaluation report.

Each county in the VSP has recurring reporting requirements. These reporting requirements are set out in detail in this policy advisory. A summary is below.

Both reports, when submitted, should abide by the guidance given in Policy Advisory 05-18 and otherwise meet the reporting, adaptive management, and monitoring requirements in the VSP statute.

Two-Year Status Report

The first reporting requirement is the two-year status report. The VSP statute says that in implementing the work plan, the watershed group must “*provide a written report of the status of plans and accomplishments to the county and to the Commission.*”¹⁶

The two-year status report provides the County and VSP work group with a forum for updating the public on the VSP implementation progress made during each biennium. These status reports should provide a snapshot of what’s been done during each two-year period and should answer the questions:

- “How far along are we with our planned implementation?” (“*status of plans*”) and
- “What have we done?” (“*accomplishments*”).

The two-year status report is not reviewed and evaluated by the Commission, the VSP Technical Panel, or the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee. There is no statutory authority in the VSP statute for the Commission, Technical Panel, or Statewide Advisory Committee to review and evaluate the two-year status report. None have any statutory authority to review or evaluated the two-year status report. Monitoring results are not required to be reported in the two year status report unless a county wants to share those as part of demonstration of progress and results of the VSP.

¹⁶ [RCW 36.70A.720 \(1\) \(j\)](#)

This two-year report is due to the county and to the Commission “*within sixty days after the end of each biennium...*”¹⁷ Therefore, no later than August 30 at the end of each biennia, a two-year report is due. All VSP counties have the same deadline for submitting two-year status report.

The two-year status report should be sent as a PDF by email to Commission staff member Bill Eller at beller@scc.wa.gov, and should be cc'd to Commission staff member Alicia McClendon at AMcClendon@scc.wa.gov. Upon receipt by the Commission, a confirmation email will be sent back to the sender to confirm receipt. The two-year status report will be posted on the Commission's VSP web page.¹⁸ The two-year status report should also be sent to the county, as that is required by statute.

Five-Year Review and Evaluation Report

The second reporting requirement is the five-year review and evaluation report. During implementation of the work plan, “*the watershed group must report to the director and the county on whether it has met the work plan's protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks.*”¹⁹

The five-year review and evaluation report's purpose is different. It is reviewed and evaluated by the Commission, in conjunction with the Technical Panel and the Statewide Advisory Committee.²⁰ VSP county work groups use the five-year review and evaluation report to assert that they are (or are not) meeting their VSP work plan goals and benchmarks.

The Commission, as part of its review, determines through an analysis of the five-year review and evaluation report whether or not it concurs with the assertion of the work group. As a result, the five-year review and evaluation report must include specific information related to the county work plan goals and benchmarks, as well as monitoring and adaptive management plans. There are statutory requirements related content for the five-year review and evaluation report.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ <https://scc.wa.gov/vsp/>

¹⁹ [RCW 36.70A.720 \(2\) \(b\) \(i\) and \(c\) \(i\)](#)

²⁰ [RCW 36.70A.705 \(e\)](#) and [RCW 36.70A.730 \(1\)](#)

²¹ See Ibid., above

The five-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 plan, and if the plan is adequately showing protection or enhancement of critical area functions and values as indicated by monitoring. The five-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 is working on guidance and a template for submitting the five-year review and evaluation report. When that guidance and template is ready, the Commission will provide informational sessions on its use.

To follow the progress of the development of the guidance and template, please attend (or listen to the webinar recording) the meetings of the Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee. Meeting schedules and materials can be found on the Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee web pages.²²

This five-year report is due to the director and the county “*not later than five years after the receipt of funding for a participating watershed...*”²³ Each county has their own unique deadline for submitting five-year review and evaluation report, tied to the date they originally received VSP funding.

Summary of Differences	
Two-year Status Report	Five-year Review and Evaluation Report
Due at the end of every biennium, no later than August 30	Due every five years from the date a county initially received VSP funds
Reports on the status of “plans and accomplishments:	Reports on whether or not the county work group believes the VSP work plan is meeting its goals and benchmarks
Is not reviewed by the Commission, Technical Panel or Statewide Advisory Committee	Is reviewed and evaluated by the Commission, Technical Panel, and Statewide Advisory Committee
No requirement to include details on monitoring, cost-share projects, or adaptive management	Must include details on monitoring, cost-share projects, and adaptive management (if an adaptive management plan is required)
Cannot trigger statutory provisions leading to a county failing out of VSP	May trigger statutory provisions leading to a county failing out of VSP
Commission guidance complete in Policy Advisory 05-18	Commission guidance and template for report not yet complete

²² <https://scc.wa.gov/vsp-techpanel/> and <https://scc.wa.gov/vsp-state-ac/>

²³ Ibid.