

## March 2020 VSP Newsletter

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**M**EETING OF THE VSP STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE: The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Statewide Advisory Committee continues to update its meeting schedule. The most complete and up-to-date meeting schedule and meeting agendas can always be found on the [Statewide Advisory Committee web page](#). All meetings are 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 30, 2020, from 9:00 am – 11:00 am. The meeting is available by webinar and we encourage webinar attendance.

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

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2604457578342716171>

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

### INPUT REQUESTED ON APPLICATION OF VSP AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES:

The Commission is working on updating its guidance in [PA #04-19](#) related to the practical application of the VSP definition of agricultural activities in local planning decision-making, and is seeking your input. If you are a county planner, county commissioner, or VSP technical service provider and have encountered instances where it has been difficult to apply the definition to proposed land use actions, please contact Bill Eller by phone (509-385-7512) or email ([beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov)) so that we can bring specific examples to the Statewide Advisory Committee for consideration. Ongoing discussion at the meetings of the Statewide Advisory Committee and with state agencies and counties has highlighted some difficulties that the Committee would like to discuss.

**FIVE YEAR REPORT GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATE:** The Commission, with the assistance of the VSP Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee, is currently working on a guidance

document and template for county work groups to use for their five year reporting requirements under VSP. We hope to have a final version of the guidance and template available soon. Watch this space for updates!

#### FIVE YEAR REPORT DUE DATES:

All VSP counties and their technical service providers should be well into implementing their VSP work plans.

An important part of implementation is monitoring of critical areas functions and values, and assessing whether the data gathered is enough to determine if work plans 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.

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. The Commission is working on a guidance and template for counties to use to submit their reports, and the due dates are coming up later this year.

As a reminder, the due dates are as follows (Chelan and Thurston counties, as the original pilot counties in VSP, have already submitted their five-year reports):

COUNTY	5 YEAR REPORT DUE
Chelan*	7.20.19
Thurston*	7.20.19
Kittitas	11.17.20
Mason	11.24.20
Garfield	11.30.20
Asotin	12.14.20
Grant	12.14.20
San Juan	12.21.20
Cowlitz	12.22.20
Pacific	12.22.20
Okanogan	12.28.20
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

**NOT MEETING YOUR WORK PLAN GOALS AND BENCHMARKS?** While gathering data, monitoring critical areas and otherwise implementing your VSP work plan, what should you do if you discover that you are not on track to meet a goal or benchmark in your work plan? You should bring that to the attention of your VSP work group right away.

[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.

#### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

OUTREACH TO COUNTIES: the Commission's new natural resource scientist, Levi Keesecker, is busy meeting or about to meet with Douglas, Thurston, Ferry, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Whitman, Garfield, and Spokane County technical service providers and/or work groups to provide them with assistance with monitoring design, issues and

analysis. You may have already made contact with him, but if not, his contact information is [lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov](mailto:lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov) and phone number is 360-789-3650. He is housed in the Spokane Conservation District, so his physical address is 210 North Havana, Spokane, WA 99202-4724. Please contact him as you gather monitoring data for inclusion in your five-year report later this year.

NEW COUNTY WORK GROUP MEMBERS? With the end of winter, many county work groups are meeting more frequently and seeking new members as current members leave. 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.

For more detail on VSP watershed work groups during implementation, please see the [December 2017 VSP regional](#)

[meeting presentation materials](#) on implementation and [our implementation page on the VSP web page](#).

TRAINING RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON VSP WEB PAGE: The Commission has established a place on our VSP web page for training materials related to VSP. It can be found on [our web page here](#), under the “Training Resources” tab. It will serve as the place to find materials for state agency, county, and work group member resources related to VSP topics. Look for new materials to be posted there periodically.

INTRODUCTORY VSP TRAINING FOR STATE AGENCY STAFF: The Conservation Commission hosted a training for state agency staff last month entitled an “*Introduction to the Voluntary Stewardship Program*.” The [webinar recording](#) is available on the [Commission’s web page](#).

QUARTERLY REPORT DUE APRIL 10, 2020: April will be here before you know it! Just a friendly reminder that the [VSP quarterly report](#) for January 1 through March 31, 2020, is due April 10, 2020.

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 that 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.

#### VSP WORK GROUP MEETINGS:

Please add Bill Eller ([beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov)) and Levi Keesecker ([lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov](mailto:lkeesecker@scc.wa.gov)) to your email notices for your local VSP county work group meetings. Commission staff want to attend as many of those meetings as we can in order to be a resource to you and your work group as you move forward with VSP implementation. Not all counties list their work group meetings on their county web site, so the easiest way to get notice of the meetings is to join your email list. Thank you!

#### VSP EVENTS AND SUCCESS

STORIES: Do you have an upcoming VSP outreach event in the next month or two scheduled? Have you flown a drone or gathered stream data while monitoring critical area functions and values? Has your technical service provider put on any trainings for local cooperator groups on VSP? The Commission would like to highlight your county’s VSP event or success story in our monthly VSP newsletter. Please submit the event or success story to Bill Eller at [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov) for possible inclusion into our newsletter.

Photographs accompanying submittals are much appreciated!

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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.

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