

What are the 5 Critical Areas?

- *Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas* are lands and waters that provide habitat to support fish and wildlife species throughout their life stages.
- *Wetlands* are areas inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater for at least part of the growing season and which support vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.
- *Geologically Hazardous Areas* are areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, and other geological events.
- *Frequently Flooded Areas* are 100-year floodplains and floodways.
- *Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas* are areas that have a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for drinking water.

What is meant by protection?

The functions and values of critical areas must be maintained as of the effective date of VSP, July 22, 2011. The Douglas County VSP work plan sets quantifiable benchmarks to measure agriculture's contribution to critical area protection.

Get Involved

To participate, get more information, or get on a VSP contact list for regular updates, please send a message to:

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Calochortus macrocarpus
sagebrush mariposa lily



"Serving the community through quality technical assistance for natural resource stewardship"

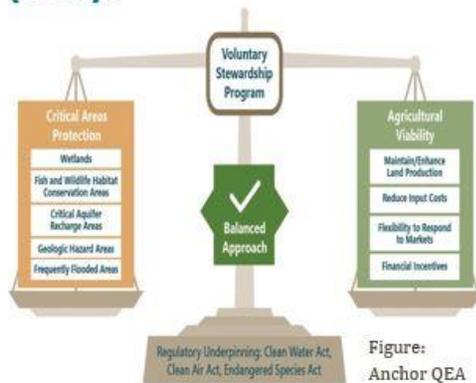
DOUGLAS COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM



*Volunteer or voluntold,
how do you like your
agriculture?*



What is the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)?



VSP aims to balance the protection of critical areas with ensuring the long term viability of agriculture.

The Tagline:

The Voluntary Stewardship Program aims to protect critical areas (wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, geologically hazardous areas, frequently flooded areas, and areas with critical recharging effect of aquifers used for potable water) where they intersect with agricultural activities, through voluntary, incentive-based measures, while at the same time improving the long term viability of agriculture.

The success of VSP depends entirely on the participation of Douglas County agricultural operators. If the Voluntary Stewardship Program should fail to protect critical areas in Douglas County, agricultural operators would be subject to a regulatory approach to critical area protection.

The Alternative to VSP: Critical Area Ordinances

Critical Area Ordinances, which would replace VSP if it fails, protect critical areas through a **regulatory pathway**. For agricultural operations this could include:

- A permit whenever changes are made to an operation
- Damage to a critical area would have to be offset at the operator's expense
- Mandatory no-touch buffers
- It requires protection at the parcel level, meaning regulators stopping by to check on the operation
- **Bottom line:** it means time, money, hassle, and uncertainty

Who can Participate?

All agricultural operators can, and are encouraged to, participate. There will also be plenty of opportunities for the **general public** to participate.

How to Participate

A **VSP producer survey** will be used to collect information about what current conservation activities are being implemented, and what activities producers are interested in receiving cost-share and/or technical assistance to implement.

Multiple types of **farm-scale planning** are available to aid producers in implementing conservation activities.

The **implementation** of voluntary conservation activities in agricultural operations will ultimately be how critical area protection is achieved.

VSP is for everyone! The program will sponsor many **educational events** for both children and adults. There will also be many opportunities to **volunteer** in activities that will protect and enhance critical areas.

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