



# Voluntary Stewardship Program



Washington State's Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) provides an optional approach for counties to address Growth Management requirements on agricultural lands. The program uses a watershed-based, collaborative stewardship planning process, and relies on incentive-based practices for protecting critical areas, promoting viable agriculture, and encouraging cooperation among diverse stakeholders.

**Background** Conflicts surrounding the protection and enhancement on agricultural lands of environmentally critical areas under Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) have resulted in years of legal battles.

To resolve this issue, the 2011 Washington State Legislature created the Voluntary Stewardship Program (HB1886, RCW 36.70A.700)—a new framework of policies and practices that uses incentive-based programs to support BOTH critical areas and viable agriculture.

**Action Needed** Twenty-eight counties have opted into VSP. However, they are not required to implement VSP unless funding is made available. If no VSP funding is available by July 31, 2015, counties will revert to the traditional GMA requirements, which could take us back to more divisive processes to protect critical areas associated with agricultural activities.

Federal agencies and the congressional delegation are supportive of VSP, but they have made it clear that state funds to initiate the program are necessary to receive federal assistance for stewardship activities.

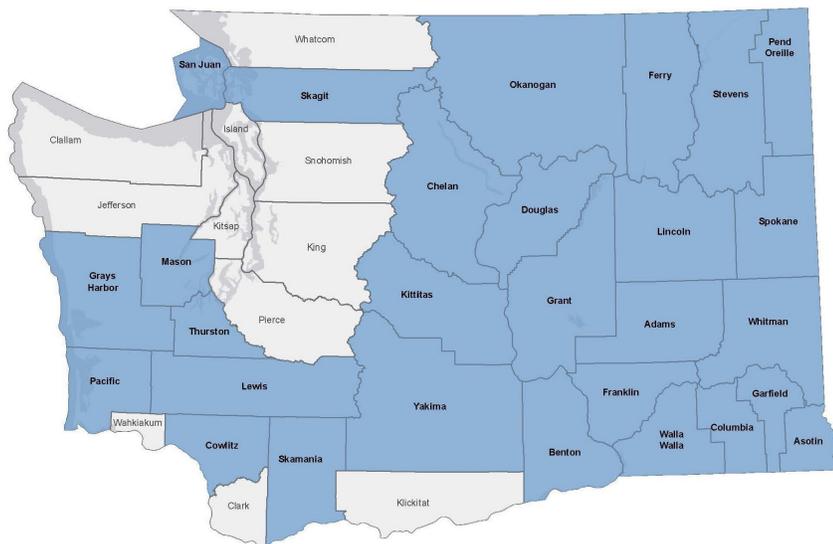
## Funding Details

ENTITY	ACTIVITY	REQUEST
26	Establish watershed groups and technical assistance entities, develop watershed work plans (subject to technical review), monitor and evaluate progress, and report.	\$6,500,000 / \$250,000 per county
Conservation Commission	Program administration and technical assistance. Coordination of the state-wide advisory committee. Coordination and participation in technical review process. Priority watershed designation/oversight. Review and evaluation of program success and report to Legislature.	\$240,000
Commerce	Technical assistance to counties. Code review and coordination with GMA activities.	\$120,000
WDFW WSDA Ecology	Provide technical assistance to counties and watersheds, participation on technical review panel, and implementation monitoring.	\$230,000
	<i>Total Request</i>	<i>\$7,090,000</i>

Stakeholders are requesting \$7,090,000 to implement Washington State's Voluntary Stewardship Program



## Twenty-eight counties have opted into the Voluntary Stewardship Program



**How it Works** Once funding is available, the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) will administer funding for counties to implement the program. Counties then designate a work group to develop a watershed-scale plan that will:

- Identify critical areas and resource concerns.
- Identify agricultural activities in the critical areas.
- Create a plan for targeted outreach to assist landowners in developing farm plans that address agricultural impacts to critical areas on their property.
- Identify and maintain economically viable agriculture while protecting and restoring critical areas (if funding is available).

A county has 18 months to develop a work plan and submit it to the WSCC for approval. The WSCC then submits the plan to a state technical review panel for review and recommendation on approval.

Every five years counties must submit progress reports to the WSCC on program implementation and resource conditions. If progress is not being made, the work group must adaptively manage to reach program and natural resource goals.

Implementation of practices by landowners to address impacts to critical areas would be funded through existing federal and state programs.

### Voluntary Stewardship Program Partners



Washington State  
Conservation  
Commission

### Contact Information

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