VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

OVERVIEW OF STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCY PARTNER ROLES

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) is the lead state administrator of VSP, but other state and federal agencies are supporting the program, too.

The Washington Departments of Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Agriculture join the SCC on the VSP Technical Panel and may participate on local VSP workgroups. Agency staff will also respond to requests for data and information from local workgroups.

Partner agency roles are summarized below. Click the agency name to visit their VSP page (if available) or agency website:

The **DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY** is interested in helping VSP Workgroups achieve clean water and protect and enhance critical areas. Ecology has limited capacity to engage with VSP work plans, technical committees, or routinely attend meetings, but is able to provide the following support:

- ◊ Current information on wetlands, aquatic habitat, frequently flooded areas, groundwater protection, and water quality that Ecology recommends be included as VSP work plans are developed.
- ◊ GIS data layers useful for wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, and frequently flooded areas.
- ◊ Respond to technical questions and review draft VSP sections on wetlands, frequently flooded areas, aquifer recharge areas, and clean water requirements.
- ◊ Provide information on existing technical resources that may be helpful as plans are developed, such as TMDLs, groundwater and surface water studies, and information on known water quality impairments.

Contact: VSP.Coordinator@ecy.wa.gov. *Staffing in progress for VSP engagement work.*

The **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (WSDA)** is interested in helping VSP Workgroups promote and enhance the viability of agriculture while protecting and enhancing natural resources. They will assist as much as possible at the local level with the development of work plans as well as assessments of available and relevant data sets. WSDA will:

- ◊ Participate in as many work plan meetings as possible, either in person or on the phone
- ◊ Provide every county with an ArcGIS online map that includes wetland, stream, and agricultural land use data. This can be used as a starting point for assessments or in conjunction with other data sources.
- ◊ Respond to technical questions and review draft work plan sections on agricultural viability and enhancement, monitoring and assessment benchmarks, etc.
- ◊ Provide information on existing technical resources that may be helpful as plans are developed, such as WSDA-led groundwater and surface water studies, agricultural research on BMPs, and ag water quality impairments

Contact: Kelly McLain, senior Natural Resource Scientist and land use policy lead, kmclain@agr.wa.gov. Please contact for access to maps, datasets, and participation on workgroups.

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The **DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (WDFW)** is interested in helping agricultural producers understand how best to achieve conservation while maintaining agricultural viability. They plan to be active throughout the state as technical experts for conservation of fish and wildlife:

- ◊ Providing a technical expert to watershed groups that can identify where and how Priority Habitat and Species overlap with agricultural activities and what activities might be impactful. WDFW plans on attending as many technical meetings as possible.
- ◊ Providing useful GIS layers for Priority Habitat and Species
- ◊ Technical review of VSP drafts on fish and wildlife
- ◊ Help with understanding elements of successful monitoring including baseline conditions, benchmarks and goals. In addition, we can provide expertise on adaptive management to ensure long term success of local plans.

Contact: Please refer to this directory of WDFW habitat biologists (by region)

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) personnel can comment and provide input on the following issues related to VSP:

- ◊ Information on NRCS conservation practices and associated standards
- ◊ Application of NRCS conservation practices on private agricultural, range, forested land
- ◊ NRCS conservation and voluntary incentive programs
- ◊ Input and guidance on development of watershed level conservation plans as they relate to conservation on private agriculture, range, or forest land
- ◊ Discuss ecosystem stewardship as it relates to voluntary conservation
- ◊ Information on NRCS's planning initiatives and pilots such as the Voluntary Natural Resources Conservation Plan or Resource Stewardship Pilot

Due to limited staff availability and some limitations on federal participation in county governmental matters, NRCS personnel will not be able to:

- ◊ Serve in an official capacity on any VSP committee or work group
- ◊ Vote on any resolutions or participate in any polls that may be before the County Commissioners with regard to VSP
- ◊ Provide an opinion on the County's designation of critical areas
- ◊ Comment on determination of best available science
- ◊ Review or comment on non-NRCS best management practices that may be under consideration
- ◊ Review or comment on regulations pertinent to agriculture/forestry or use of natural resources

Contact: For more information on the extent of NRCS involvement in VSP,
please contact Larry Johnson, (509) 323-2955.