

August 2017 VSP Newsletter

This is the monthly installment of a Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) informational newsletter. Please sign up to receive the newsletter [here](#). Feedback is welcome - please direct it to [Bill Eller](#).

SKAGIT, PACIFIC AND WHITMAN COUNTY VSP WORK PLAN APPROVED: Skagit County's VSP work plan was approved on July 6, 2017, and Pacific and Whitman's plans on August 7, 2017. VSP work plans can be found on the Commission's VSP web page [here](#). Congratulations to Skagit, Pacific and Whitman County work groups for all their hard work and efforts!

VSP 2017-2019 BIENNIUM BUDGET AND COUNTY CONTRACT: During the last legislative session, the state legislature continued to provide additional funding (\$7.602 million for the biennium) for the VSP into this current fiscal year (2017-2019).

As a result, funding for VSP continues to be available to those counties that have opted-into VSP. For the 2017-2019 biennium, the amount available to counties for VSP reimbursement is \$220,000.

The Conservation Commission sent out 2017-2019 biennium contracts to all 27 VSP counties on July 20, 2017, by regular mail and email. **If your county did not receive one, please contact Bill Eller immediately at 509-385-7512 or beller@scc.wa.gov in order to remain eligible to be reimbursed for VSP expenses.**

If you are interested about the specific funding status of a particular VSP county, please contact that county directly. County VSP contacts can be found by clicking on the appropriate county on the map [here](#).

AMENDMENT TO VSP STATUTE: During the last legislative session and as part of the operating budget bill ([SSB 5883](#), [5961](#)), the legislature amended RCW 36.70A.725 (2) to change the time period in which the Technical Panel conducts a review of a work plan formally submitted to the Conservation Commission. The Technical Panel now has ninety days (instead of forty-five) to review the work plan and report to the Commission whether or not at the end of ten years after receipt of funding, the work plan, in conjunction with other existing plans and regulations, will protect critical areas while maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture in the watershed. This important change will give the Technical Panel some breathing room in which to conduct work plan reviews.

SUBMITTAL OF VSP WORK PLANS TO THE COMMISSION: The Commission has set up a schedule for the formal submittal of VSP work plans. Two plans can be reviewing in any given month. Plans must be formally submitted no later than the first of the month in which the

review meeting is set for that plan. Counties wishing to formally submit work plans must contact [Bill Eller](#) at the Commission before submitting their work plans so that the plan can be assigned a meeting. [Bill Eller](#) can be reached at 509-385-7512 or by email at beller@scc.wa.gov. *Action by Work Group on Work Plan:* remember, the action the VSP work group needs to take in sending the work plan to the Commission is that the work group should move to submit the work plan to the Commission and VSP Technical Panel, not “approve” the work plan.

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE VSP TECHNICAL PANEL: The VSP Technical Panel has revised its meeting schedule. The most complete and up-to-date meeting schedule can always be found on the Technical Panel web page [here](#). All meetings will be held at the Farm Bureau building, 975 Carpenter Rd NE #101, Lacey, WA 98516, unless otherwise noted. A summary of the revised meeting schedule is below:

Friday, August 25, 2017, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm - Agenda TBD. *This is a joint meeting with the Statewide Advisory Committee.* To register for this webinar, use this link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/947245044634120705>

Friday, Sept 29, 2017, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm - Agenda TBD. To register for this webinar, use this link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7567335286241042433>

STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE POLICY ADVISORIES: The Statewide Advisory Committee has been meeting over the last few weeks in order to provide guidance to the Conservation Commission on some aspects of the VSP. The Commission, after consultation with the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee, has created two policy advisories for county work groups to use. The first addresses the confidentiality of VSP individual stewardship plans and landowner checklists, and the second advises VSP county work groups on the schedule of the remaining VSP work plans to be reviewed by the VSP Technical Panel. Both advisories can be found on the VSP web page [here](#) and on the Statewide Advisory Committee web page [here](#).

STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING: The Statewide Advisory Committee will be jointly meeting with the Technical Panel on August 25, 2017 from 9 am - 3 pm. For information on that meeting (agenda, etc.), please see the topic above “*Upcoming meetings of the VSP Technical Panel.*”

HOW TO FIND VSP WORK PLANS: To find VSP Work Plans that have been submitted to the Commission, please go to the main VSP web page [here](#). Once there, click on the map the county that you are interested in. An informational box will appear that has the link to the county work plan (if it has been received by the Commission) and whether any public comment was received by the Commission on the plan.

VSP WORK PLAN “PRACTICE POINTERS”: The VSP Work Plan practice pointers have been updated. All of them can be found at this [link](#). Three new practice pointers have been added. They are listed in no particular order. The three new ones are provided below.

The practice pointers were identified by the Voluntary Stewardship Program’s Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee after reflection on the VSP work plan approval process

during March 2017-July 2017. The pointers can be used by VSP county work groups to help in the creation and successful submittal of their work plans to the Technical Panel.

- When attempting to comply with the directive in RCW 36.70A.720 (1) (a) to “*review and incorporate applicable water quality, watershed management, farmland protection, and species recovery data and plans,*” be sure to identify the data and other plans and include why that data or plans were incorporated into the work plan.
- When attempting to comply with the directive in RCW 36.70A.720 (1) (i) to “*establish baseline monitoring,*” be sure to include actual numbers 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.*” If actual numbers cannot be provided, then a detailed narrative describing the baseline monitoring for each should be provided in the work plan.
- Clearly identify in the work plan the audience the work plan is written for and be sure to write the work plan to meet the needs of that audience.

VSP MONTHLY CONSULTANT Q&A: The next scheduled consultant webinar is Thursday, September 14, 2017, from 9:00 am - 9:30 am. Please register for Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Monthly Q&A on Sep 14, 2017 9:00 AM PDT at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6181637274857322242>

The conference call is meant to be a Q & A on VSP for all 27 VSP opt-in counties. The purpose of the call is to be a forum to disseminate information about VSP on a statewide level and to answer VSP related questions. It is open to any who want to phone in, but mainly directed at County staff, Conservation District staff, and consultants and facilitators responsible for VSP.

Links to past webinar recordings are available on the [VSP Workgroups web page](#).

VSP WORK-GROUPS AND THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT: First presented in the April 2016 VSP Newsletter and reprinted in February 2017’s Newsletter, the Commission wants to again remind counties and county work groups that the Commission has taken the position that the VSP work-groups are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) ([RCW 42.30](#)). As members transition out of the work group (especially over the summer months), new members come on, and some of those new members will need this training.

As such, there are some requirements that need to be met, such as the requirement for training of Work-group members ([RCW 42.30.205](#)), for posting of agendas on a county’s website 24 hours in advance ([RCW 42.30.077](#)), for taking meeting minutes ([RCW 42.30.030](#)) (as per county policy and in compliance with the OPMA), and conducting meetings that are open for the public to attend ([RCW42.30.030](#)). For more information, please refer to the Municipal Research and Services Center ([MRSC](#)) [web page](#) on the OPMA.

In 2014 the Legislature passed [Engrossed Senate Bill 5964](#) which requires agency governing boards and committees established to take action on their behalf to receive training on the [Open Public Meetings Act](#). The training is in the form of a video from the Attorney General’s office. By viewing this video, you will have received the training that is now required by law.

After Work-group members have been established by the Board of County Commissioners, it is our recommendation that each Work-group view the video at a Work-group meeting soon thereafter. By viewing these video, you will have received the training that is now required by law every 4 years or within 90 days of becoming a Work-group member. The link to the video is here:

Follow this link to view the [Open Public Meetings Act video](#) (17 min)

Note: *an internet connection and audio capability will need to be available in order for the video link to function properly.*

It is our recommendation that each Work-group keep a list of the Work-group members who have taken the training, already taken the training in some other capacity, and when the training was completed. Videos may also be viewed by Work-group members on their own, but then the viewing of the videos will need to be documented by the Work-groups. So, there are essentially three options for viewing the videos:

Option 1 - Each Work-group member views the video on their own

Option 2 - Viewing the video at a Work-group meeting

Option 3 - Documenting that a Work-group member has already received this training

Based on how each individual member of the Work-group has or will receive the training, one of the three options should be selected and documented by the Work-group.

For more information, MRSC has two flyers available for download that provide a one-page summary of OPMA compliance and notice requirements:

[General OPMA compliance practice tips](#)

[OPMA notice requirement practice tips](#)

Bill Eller | beller@scc.wa.gov | 509-385-7512 | Washington State Conservation Commission