

# Yakima Voluntary Stewardship Plan Implementation

## 2-Year and 5-Year Report Requirements

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<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Deadlines.....	2
Roles.....	2
<b>Example Reports .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Biennial Report .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Requirements.....	5
Agriculture Conditions and Viability.....	5
Agricultural Land Base.....	6
Agricultural Conservation /Stewardship Practices.....	6
Agricultural Economy.....	6
Critical Areas Conditions and Stewardship.....	6
Critical Area Updates.....	6
Outreach Goals and Status.....	6
Outreach and Engagement - Past and Future.....	7
<b>5-Year Report .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Requirements.....	7
Summary of Biennial Reports.....	8
Producer Outreach and ENGagement.....	8
Benchmark and Results Participation.....	8
Critical Areas Intersect and Condition.....	8
Critical Area Intersect Updates.....	8
Conservation Practices and other Voluntary Enhancements.....	9
Benchmark Evaluation.....	9
Related Efforts.....	9
Related State Monitoring.....	9

# Overview

This document provides an annotated outline of the 2-Year and 5-Year reports that the Yakima County Work Group will need to authorize the County to send on behalf of the Work Group. It is based on the State Conservation Commission's VSP [Policy Advisory #05-18](#).

## DEADLINES

Monitoring deadlines are determined based on when the County was funded for VSP.

- The 2-year biennial report is due August 30, 2019.
- The first 5-year status report is due in January 21, 2021.

## ROLES

Following is an excerpt from the Work Plan on Monitoring Roles in Section 8.2:

...North and South Yakima Conservation Districts (NYCD/SYCD) are lead Technical Service providers in their service areas. Administration of work plan monitoring and implementation will occur under Work Group direction:

Compilation of monitoring, and submittal of reports to Conservation Commission will be the responsibility of the Work Group. RC&D will serve in the fiscal agent role. Work Plan Exhibit 8-2 illustrates ongoing, annual, and biennial and five-year activities by the BCD and other implementers. Details are included in the Adaptive Management Matrix in Work Plan Appendix G.

- Ongoing activities by NYCD/SYCD include conservation practices and voluntary enhancement with willing landowners and VSP Participation events.
- Annually, NYCD/SYCD will evaluate the Tracking Tool statistical output to describe conservation practices and voluntary enhancement projects entered during the prior year and present it to the Work Group. Annually, NYCD/SYCD will prepare a report describing VSP implementation based on the technical assistance agreements with willing landowners and any other grants or programs that implement VSP efforts.
- Biennially and every five years, Yakima County would conduct mapping and the Work Group would commission imagery interpretation, surveys, and convene an expert panel on fish and wildlife conditions.

## Work Plan Exhibit 8-2. Adaptive Monitoring Matrix

Photo Credits: NYCD, SYCD, BERK Consulting

### Expert Panels

The Work Plan indicates expert panels would be convened by the Work Group in Section 7.1.

Effectiveness benchmarks may be evaluated by the area of change, which is supplemented by the nature of the change to understand the effects on critical area functions, or by follow up monitoring of the effectiveness of best management practices. The measurable extent of change may be detected through existing remote sensing information, an expert panel, or through follow-up monitoring by the technical service providers.

Where referenced, expert panels would be convened by the Work Group, and would be made up of qualified professionals and subject matter experts who have demonstrated education, experience, accreditation, and knowledge relevant to the particular matter.

As noted in Chapter 8 expert panels could help interpret mapping or other remote sensing information.

Towards measuring progress on goals and benchmarks in Chapter 7 and Appendix G, the types of information that mapping or imagery interpretation could provide are shown in the table below. The intent is to interpret imagery and maps in combination with other monitoring tools such as rapid watershed assessment or expert panels to provide as complete a picture of critical area functions and values as possible.

### Work Plan Exhibit 8-4. Use of Imagery/Map Interpretation in Measuring VSP Benchmarks

CRITICAL AREA	TYPES OF INFORMATION FROM IMAGERY/MAP INTERPRETATION
Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas	
Shrub-Steppe	Track: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Composition               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Invasive/native species</li> <li>○ Rock/soils, shrubs, grasses (desirable species)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Cover               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Percent rock/soils, shrubs, grasses (desirable species)</li> <li>○ Percent invasive</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Connectivity: acreage of rock/soils, shrubs, grasses (desirable species)</li> <li>▪ Recognize natural variability</li> </ul>

Riparian	Track cover. See also wetlands below.
Wetlands	Wetland Change Analysis, underway by Ecology. Consider if/when available. Acknowledge the coarse scale. Specific functions could be challenging to measure, particularly in forested areas.
Floodplains	Use available LIDAR as a tool in the future, or changes in FEMA mapping. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where is floodplain disconnection occurring as a result of agricultural activity?</li> <li>Where is water table present?</li> </ul> Pending available LiDAR or improved FEMA mapping, identify where disconnection is occurring as a result of agricultural activities through Technical Provider interface with interested producers, and use of Checklist and Tracking Tool. Example questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there measures that disconnect river from farm? Including roads?</li> <li>Do you experience flooding?</li> <li>Is flooding compatible with agricultural operations?</li> </ul>
Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track cover. Cover helps with water quality.</li> <li>Acres implementing groundwater management practices.</li> </ul> Match with Tracking Tool and Technical Provider review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five percent sampling of completed plans (e.g. producers implementing Groundwater Management Acre toolkit) - what percent are meeting objectives?</li> </ul>
Geologic Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track cover in geologic hazard areas.</li> </ul> Match with Tracking Tool and Technical Provider review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Example conservation practices: See Appendix F Checklist for Soil Health and Erosion Control measures.</li> <li>Promote proper location of farm ponds/detention particularly for those not addressed by regulatory backstop.</li> </ul>

## Example Reports

Chelan and Thurston Counties are working on combined biennial and 5-year reports and will be referenced at the Work Group Meeting. The sections below identify requirements followed by a draft table of contents and annotations for each section regarding the topics and data sources.

## Biennial Report

### REQUIREMENTS

Following from the goals listed in RCW 36.70A.700(2)., the biennial report should include a summary of how plan implementation is affecting each of the following:

1. The protection and enhancement of critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted;
2. The maintenance and improvement of the long-term viability of agriculture;
3. Reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses;
4. The maximization of the use of voluntary incentive programs to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship as an alternative to historic approaches used to protect critical areas;
5. The leveraging of existing resources by relying upon existing work and plans in counties and local watersheds, as well as existing state and federal programs to the maximum extent practicable to achieve program goals;
6. Ongoing efforts to encourage and foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership among county, tribal, environmental, and agricultural interests to better assure the program success;
7. Ongoing efforts to improve compliance with other laws designed to protect water quality and fish habitat; and
8. A description of efforts showing how relying upon voluntary stewardship practices as the primary method of protecting critical areas and does not require the cessation of agricultural activities.

## AGRICULTURE CONDITIONS AND VIABILITY

Addresses the following biennial report topics:

- 2. Viability of agriculture
- 3. Reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses
- 8. Describe voluntary stewardship practices do not require the cessation of agricultural activities

### Agricultural Land Base

- Agricultural inventory (WSDA 2017 versus 2016 in Work Plan - high level comparison of change)
- Development and changes to agriculture (WSDA; County permit trends)
- New agriculture (WSDA 2017 v 2016; County permit trends, definitions, interpretations)

### Agricultural Conservation /Stewardship Practices

- Status of conservation practices (tracking tool input by NYCD and SYCD 2011-current) and summary of benefits to agriculture and critical areas

### Agricultural Economy

- Value of agriculture, support industries, effect on agriculture (high level) - not essential to biennial report - only address if it gives context to changes in land base or stewardship

## CRITICAL AREAS CONDITIONS AND STEWARSHIP

Addresses the following biennial report topics:

- 1. The protection and enhancement of critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted;
- 4. The maximization of the use of voluntary incentive programs to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship as an alternative to historic approaches used to protect critical areas;
- 5. The leveraging of existing resources by relying upon existing work and plans in counties and local watersheds, as well as existing state and federal programs to the maximum extent practicable to achieve program goals;
- 7. Ongoing efforts to improve compliance with other laws designed to protect water quality and fish habitat;

### Critical Area Updates

- New information (if any) on quality or condition of critical areas (e.g. fish presence in Wenas basin)
- Related state or federal initiatives or programs
- Conservation practices and enhancement efforts benefiting riparian areas, water quality, and fish
  - Tracking tool input - NYCD and SYCD
  - WSDA tracking of irrigation efficiencies in 2017 inventory versus 2011
  - Other initiatives in watershed on agricultural lands

## OUTREACH GOALS AND STATUS

Addresses the following biennial report topics:

- 6. Ongoing efforts to encourage and foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership among county, tribal, environmental, and agricultural interests to better assure the program success;

### Outreach and Engagement - Past and Future

- Work Group meetings and composition
- Joint projects (e.g. Wenas basin, others)
- Work plan outreach goal
  - Status of outreach to date (e.g. website, mailings, etc.)
  - Outreach plan for 2019-2021 biennium

# 5-Year Report

## REQUIREMENTS

The five-year status report should include a summary of how plan implementation is satisfying the following plan elements through VSP implementation per statutes at RCW 36.70A.720(2)(b)(i) and (c)(i) and RCW 36.70A.720(1):

1. Develop goals for participation by agricultural operators conducting commercial and noncommercial agricultural activities in the watershed necessary to meet the protection and enhancement benchmarks of the work plan;
2. Ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed;
3. Create measurable benchmarks that, within ten years after the receipt of funding, are designed to result in (i) the protection of critical area functions and values and (ii) the enhancement of critical area functions and values through voluntary, incentive-based measures;
4. Work with the entity providing technical assistance to ensure that individual stewardship plans contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the work plan;
5. Incorporate into the work plan any existing development regulations relied upon to achieve the goals and benchmarks for protection;
6. Establish baseline monitoring 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;
7. Conduct periodic evaluations, institute adaptive management, and provide a written report of the status of plans and accomplishments to the county and to the commission within sixty days after the end of each biennium;
8. Assist state agencies in their monitoring programs; and
9. Satisfy any other reporting requirements of the program.
10. VSP cost-share projects that are funded using any amount of Commission VSP funds shall be reported in the five-year report under RCW 36.70A.720 (2) (b) (i) and (c) (i).

## SUMMARY OF BIENNIAL REPORTS

- Agricultural viability trends
- Other highlights from biennial reports that provide context for 5-Year Report

## PRODUCER OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Address:

- 1. Develop goals for participation by agricultural operators conducting commercial and noncommercial agricultural activities in the watershed necessary to meet the protection

and enhancement benchmarks of the work plan;

- 2. Ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed;
- 4. Work with the entity providing technical assistance to ensure that individual stewardship plans contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the work plan;

## Benchmark and Results Participation

- Identify Work Plan benchmark for each watershed
- NYCD outreach activities and results; number of stewardship plans (checklists) or technical assistance meetings; indirect VSP participation in watersheds
- SYCD outreach activities and results; number of stewardship plans (checklists) or technical assistance meetings; indirect VSP participation in watersheds

## CRITICAL AREAS INTERSECT AND CONDITION

Address:

- 3. Create measurable benchmarks that, within ten years after the receipt of funding, are designed to result in (i) the protection of critical area functions and values and (ii) the enhancement of critical area functions and values through voluntary, incentive-based measures;
- 5. Incorporate into the work plan any existing development regulations relied upon to achieve the goals and benchmarks for protection;
- 6. Establish baseline monitoring 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;
- 7. Conduct periodic evaluations, institute adaptive management, and provide a written report of the status of plans and accomplishments to the county and to the commission within sixty days after the end of each biennium;
- 10. VSP cost-share projects that are funded using any amount of Commission VSP funds shall be reported in the five-year report under RCW 36.70A.720 (2) (b) (i) and (c) (i).

## Critical Area Intersect Updates

- Updated mapping or imagery results - has intersect changed for each critical area
- Professional review of results

## Conservation Practices and other Voluntary Enhancements

- Cost-share projects and other projects that implement VSP goals

- Voluntary stewardship plans and projects and the effects on critical areas
- Tracking tool output for NYCD and SYCD

### Benchmark Evaluation

- For each benchmark show whether expected trend is met in each watershed
- Describe source of data and any field review to confirm mapping or other remote sensing results (report at watershed scale)
- If adaptive management thresholds are negatively crossed identify adaptive management measures

### RELATED EFFORTS

Address:

- 8. Assist state agencies in their monitoring programs; and
- 9. Satisfy any other reporting requirements of the program.

### Related State Monitoring

- Report on related state efforts or informative initiatives (e.g. water quality)
- Other topics as needed