



User's Guide To The Land Use Permit Process Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)

Yakima County Planning Division ◆ 128 N. 2nd Street 4th Floor Courthouse - Yakima, Washington 98901 ◆ Phone (509) 574-2300

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)?

The VSP is an optional, incentive-based approach to protecting critical areas while promoting agriculture. The VSP is allowed under the Growth Management Act as an alternative to traditional approaches to critical areas protection. The VSP is locally prepared and monitored at a watershed scales by agricultural and environmental stakeholders participating in a VSP Work Group. The VSP is voluntarily implemented by individual agricultural producers to protect critical areas and improve agricultural viability through conservation practices.

When does VSP apply?

VSP applies only where critical areas and agricultural activities overlap in unincorporated areas of Yakima County as of July 22, 2011, or before. All other uses and activities, including new agricultural activities, effecting critical areas must comply with the Yakima County Critical Areas Ordinance (16C).

If I am eligible for VSP, who do I need to talk too?.

All activities qualifying for VSP will need to talk with either the North Yakima Conservation District or the South Yakima Conservation District, depending upon which Conservation District the activity is located in.

North Yakima Conservation District:

1606 Perry St #C
Yakima, WA 98902
(509) 454-5736

South Yakima Conservation District:

200 Cheyne Road
Zillah, WA 98953
(509) 829-9025

Are there other agencies that I will still need to get permits from?

Yes. When an activity qualifies for VSP it is only exempt from the Yakima County Critical Area Ordinance. You will still need to obtain all other necessary permits from other Local, State and Federal agencies. These agencies include:

- Yakima County Public Services (Land Use Permit, Building Permits, Storm water Permits)
- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington State Department of Ecology
- United States Army Corp of Engineers
- United States Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (National Flood Insurance Program)



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What is an agricultural activity?

In April of 2019 the Statewide Advisory Committee and Conservation Commission issued Policy Advisory #04-19 as it relates to Critical Area Ordinances and Counties in the Voluntary Stewardship Program. In this document the Conservation Commission defined Agricultural activities as:

"Agricultural activities" means agricultural uses and practices including, but not limited to: Producing, breeding, or increasing agricultural products; rotating and changing agricultural crops; allowing land used for agricultural activities to lie fallow in which it is plowed and tilled but left unseeded; allowing land used for agricultural activities to lie dormant as a result of adverse agricultural market conditions; allowing land used for agricultural activities to lie dormant because the land is enrolled in a local, state, or federal conservation program, or the land is subject to a conservation easement; conducting agricultural operations; maintaining, repairing, and replacing agricultural equipment; maintaining, repairing, and replacing agricultural facilities, provided that the replacement facility is no closer to the shoreline than the original facility; and maintaining agricultural lands under production or cultivation;

...

Certain terms in the definition of agricultural activities (agricultural products, agricultural equipment, and agricultural land) are further defined in the SMA (RCW90.58.065(2)(b),(c)and (d):

(b) "Agricultural products" includes but is not limited to horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, vegetable, fruit, berry, grain, hops, hay, straw, turf, sod, seed, and apiary products; feed or forage for livestock; Christmas trees; hybrid cottonwood and similar hardwood trees grown as crops and harvested within twenty years of planting; and livestock including both the animals themselves and animal products including but not limited to meat, upland finfish, poultry and poultry products, and dairy products;

(c) "Agricultural equipment" and "agricultural facilities" includes, but is not limited to: (i) The following used in agricultural operations: Equipment; machinery; constructed shelters, buildings, and ponds; fences; upland finfish rearing facilities; water diversion, withdrawal, conveyance, and use equipment and facilities including but not limited to pumps, pipes, tapes, canals, ditches, and drains; (ii) corridors and facilities for transporting personnel, livestock, and equipment to, from, and within agricultural lands; (iii) farm residences and associated equipment, lands, and facilities; and (iv) roadside stands and on-farm markets for marketing fruit or vegetables; and

(d) "Agricultural land" means those specific land areas on which agriculture activities are conducted.

Anything not included in the above definition is subject to regulation under the county CAO and any other applicable regulation (e.g. developmental regulations, environmental regulations, etc).

Yakima County will make reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all of its programs, services, and activities. Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a program, service or activity of Yakima County, should contact the Yakima County ADA Coordinator at 509-574-2210 as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the schedule event.