

CHELAN COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP

Creating VSP Benchmarks and Objectives

From the Draft Work Plan (p. 10)

VSP statute requires the Work Group to:

“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.”

RCW 36.70A.720(2)(b).

Setting Pragmatic Goals and Benchmarks for Protection and Enhancement (p. 11)

Goals and benchmarks need to be practical, achievable and reasonable to measure and meet. Metrics potentially affected by non-agricultural activities or factors should be avoided. The Work Group also needs to account for potential VSP participant withdrawals when establishing goals and benchmarks: “If the watershed group determines that additional or different practices are needed to achieve the work plan's goals and benchmarks, the agricultural operator may not be required to implement those practices but may choose to implement the revised practices on a voluntary basis and is eligible for funding to revise the practices.” RCW 36.70A.750.

Conversely, if voluntary critical area enhancements have been implemented since July 22, 2011, the county can take credit for such improvements. These credits can help the county meet its statutory obligation to protect critical areas and keep the aggregate level of critical area protection from degrading below the July 22, 2011 VSP protection baseline.

Other Notes (p. 20)

- Avoid setting overly broad goal or benchmark metrics like improved water quality, habitat and species numbers where factors beyond agriculture’s control affect outcomes.
- Metrics reflecting implementation of positive actions designed to help in accomplishing an objective (as described in the table above) are more easily measured.
- Positive actions producers implement to help achieve an enhancement or protection objective may not improve outcome metrics at all due to countervailing negative actions beyond the scope of VSP.

CHELAN COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP *EXAMPLE* OBJECTIVES

Draft

Voluntary Participation in VSP Program	Agriculture Viability	Critical Areas Protection
<p>Direct participation increases over XX years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit growers • Range and forest land <p>Indirect participation in conservation practices is maintained or increased over XX years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover crops • Irrigation water management • Soil moisture monitoring • Pesticide and nutrient management • Pasture and grazing management • Livestock fencing • Forest management • Others (see NRCS Practice Sheet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased agricultural crop production annually • Priority funding made available – score higher for VSP • Tax incentives sought (e.g. reduced County taxes on farm equipment?) • Recognition, branding for marketing purposes (farmers markets, CSAs, other?) • Strong support for Ag infrastructure – packing houses, etc. • Land kept in farming – transition plans, leasing, other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or increase Conservation Practices (see Participation Objectives) • Stems per acre (tree/shrub density) in critical areas (riparian, wetlands, other?) and adjacent buffer areas • Riparian areas restored in acres or miles (watershed planning unit objective?) • Miles of fencing for wildlife exclusion – allow letdown in winter where feasible