

CHELAN COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM WORKPLAN

Working Draft

Note: Underlined text indicates additions made by the State Farm Bureau since the last meeting draft. Wavy underline is based on discussions with VSP Staff Workgroup, WSU Extension and Cascadia Conservation District on challenges, common practices and economic value. Double underlines indicate added text from consultants.

The purpose of this Working Draft is to prompt the questions necessary to complete the Voluntary Stewardship Plan Work Plan. The Staff Work Team should use this as a guide to the topics for research and discussion. Further drafts may guide the Watershed Work Group in discussion and agreement over the specifics of the plan. Since the January 2015 VSP Staff Work Group Meeting at which an outline was presented, some elements of the Work Plan have begun to be filled in in this February 2015 preliminary draft. Elements where there is progress: summaries of existing watershed plans, summaries of the “regulatory backstop”, voluntary programs and technical assistance providers, and restoration accomplishments that enhance the baseline environmental conditions. Progress is needed on the agricultural viability element. Discussion questions are found throughout the document.

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INTRODUCTION

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an optional, incentive-based approach to protecting critical areas while promoting agriculture. The VSP is allowed under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA; RCW 36.70A.700-760) as an alternative to traditional approaches to critical areas protection, such as “no touch” buffers. VSP applies only where critical areas and agricultural activities overlap.

Chelan County has opted into the VSP, and has reached out to stakeholders to form a VSP Watershed Work Group. The VSP Watershed Work Group has prepared this Work Plan to provide goals, measurable

objectives, and incentives, leveraging existing watershed plans and other programs, to protect critical areas and promote agriculture.

In enacting the Voluntary Stewardship Program (SHB 1886 of 2011), the Legislature intended counties and VSP Work Groups to “Focus and maximize voluntary incentive programs to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship as an alternative to historic approaches used to protect critical areas.” RCW 36.70A.700. As an alternative to litigious and costly regulatory approach of the past, VSP is a voluntary approach to 1) protect critical areas, 2) maintain and enhance the viability of agriculture, and 3) promote the voluntary enhancement of critical areas through incentive-based measures.

Work Group Structure

The Watershed Work Group was convened by invitation from the County. Initial invitees included representatives of tribes, agencies, environmental groups, WRIA basin planning units, and agricultural groups. [List names of groups when complete.] VSP encourages good stewardship, with a statutory goal of fostering cooperation among agricultural, tribal, environmental, and county interests. RCW 36.70A.700.

The Watershed Work Group established including **XXX** representatives. It was open to additional members over time.

Roles

The County. The County has the initial authority to opt-in to the VSP program, designate participating watersheds, recommend priority watersheds, convene and confer with stakeholders, and designate the VSP Watershed Work Group and Administrative Entity. If a VSP Work Plan is not approved within 3 years of initial funding, or if plan goals and benchmarks are not met after adaptive management efforts, the County maintains the responsibility for protecting critical areas.

The VSP Work Group. The VSP Watershed Work Group is responsible for developing and agreeing to this Work Plan, designating technical assistance providers, identifying outreach and implementation approaches, setting goals and benchmarks, establishing a monitoring plan, regular reporting and adaptive management toward those goals. The Work Group is responsible for developing and administering the Work Plan on an ongoing basis throughout implementation and monitoring.

A detailed description of the role of both the County and VSP Work Group is provided in Appendix XX. [Include White Paper Appendix G. VSP Roles Matrix, Washington Conservation Commission] Specific legislative requirements for the program are further described in this document (Page X).

Environmental Context

Chelan County nominated all four watersheds in its boundaries in Resolution 2012-03 in 2012. Watersheds are shown in Exhibit 1. Watersheds, Agriculture, and Rangelands, and include, from north to south:

- Chelan basin, Watershed Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 47,
- Entiat basin, WRIA 46
- Wenatchee basin, WRIA 45, and
- Squilchuck/Stemilt basin, WRIA 40a.

In each basin, significant environmental features include riparian areas supporting wildlife and salmonid resources and extensive forest and shrub steppe resources. Over eighty percent of the County (more than 1.5 million acres) is under federal or state management and therefore protected under separate

regulatory frameworks. The types of public land ownership in Chelan County, by acreage and percentage, are as follows:

Chelan County holds 4,700 acres (<1 % of the County), with 700 acres (15%) of that located in the shoreline area.

State of Washington holds 66,600 acres (3% of the County), with 710 acres (1%) of that located in the shoreline area. Major State Landowners include:

Department of Natural Resources: 38,300 acres (2 %), with 180 acres in the shoreline area.

Department of Fish and Wildlife: 27,000 acres (1 %), with 400 acres in the shoreline area.

Federal Government holds 1,522,000 acres (80% of the County), with 28,900 acres (2%) of that located in the shoreline area. Major Federal landowners include:

US Forest Service: 1,365,000 acres (71%), with 25,000 acres (2%) in the shoreline area.

National Park Service: 134,880 acres (7%), with 3,600 acres in the shoreline area.

US Bureau of Land Management: 20,260 acres (1%), with 158 acres (1%) in the shoreline area.

Private ownership lands (about 272,000 acres or 409 square miles or about 14 percent) are focused along the Wenatchee River, Columbia River, Entiat River, and Lake Chelan.¹ Within this same relatively narrow portion of the landscape, agriculture and range land is prevalent, and a key part of the economy.

Numerous natural resource programs are already in place through each watershed. Each watershed participates in Watershed Planning (under [RCW 90.82](#)) and those programs form a strong basis for the VSP program. Representatives of Watershed Groups include tribal, environmental, agricultural, and governmental interests. Many parties also participate in Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery planning and existing TMDL programs. Review of these watershed efforts is consistent with the legislative directive that the VSP Watershed Group “Leverage existing resources by relying upon existing work and plans” and “programs to the maximum extent practicable to achieve program goals.” (RCW 36.70A.700)

Critical Areas

Critical Areas are specifically defined under the State Growth Management Act ([RCW 36.70A.030](#)) and include fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, wetlands, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, and critical aquifer recharge areas used for potable water. These features make up large proportion of the Chelan County land base.

Draw from nominating resolution: Other primary factors indicating the County’s reasoning for nominating its watersheds, responding to the factors listed under RCW 36.70A.710 (2), include “the role of farming,” “the risk of the conversion of farmland,” “the importance of salmonid resources” and other indicators “of biological diversity” in each basin...

¹ Chelan County. 2014. Chelan County Comprehensive Plan, February 1, 2000. LAST AMENDED BY Resolution 2014-10, effective February 3, 2014. Available: http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/cd/data/comp_plan_amended.pdf. Accessed: June 27, 2014.

Agricultural Context

Value and Extent of Agriculture in Chelan County

In 2012 the US Census of Agriculture reported the market value of agricultural products sold was \$206,479,000. As in prior Censuses, in 2012, the majority of the value was in crops (\$202,854,000) versus livestock (\$3,625,000). The top crop items were pears, apples, and cherries. The County ranked ninth of 39 Washington counties in terms of its crop value. In terms of the acreage in pears, the County ranked first among state counties with that crop and second among United States counties with that crop. It is also in the top counties of the US for its acreage in sweet cherries (5th) and apples (11th).

Agriculture is the most significant single industry in Chelan County. Over 2013-14, Chelan County farmers produced approximately \$335 million in produce, largely in tree fruit (pers com Smith, March 12, 2015).

- \$100M – apples
- \$75M – process apples
- \$29M – Bartlett pears
- \$0.5M – process Bartlett Pears
- \$118M – winter pears (storage)
- \$75M – cherries
- \$0.7M- peaches, apricots, other
- Totals: \$335M grown in Chelan County

The County has seen annual increases in production consistently. A climate that is cool and dry spring, summer, fall results in high quality fruit with less need for management of disease and pests. The climate together with the demand for organic tree fruit nationally and internationally, has resulted in year over year increases production and value of tree fruit.

Quantifying the total acreage of agriculture varies depending on the method used. As part of the VSP Work Plan development, an aerial survey of active agriculture was produced. The total amount of apparently “active” agriculture in the County is described in Table 1, below. Rangeland acreage was estimated based on known ranges and the presence of public lands that may be used as rangeland.

Table 1. Estimated Agricultural and Rangeland Acres in Nominated Watersheds

WRIA	Agricultural Acreage	Rangeland Acreage*
Chelan	10,102	21,317
Entiat	1,228	17,183
Wenatchee	10,289	22,664
Squilchuck/Stemilt	5,997	15,021
Total	27,616	76,184

*Estimated based on the recent mapping exercise. Census values vary.

Sources: Cascadia Conservation District, 2013: Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), and US Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and BERK Consulting 2014

In 2012 the Census of Agriculture reported 890 farms on 75,820 acres, with 776 of these farms on 31,537 acres consisting of harvested cropland such as orchards. The total number of acres reported in the Census at 75,820 is less than the combined agricultural and range land acres defined for this VSP White Paper at

103,800 acres. Also the acreage of harvested cropland at 31,537 in the Census is higher than the 27,616 acres determined for this VSP White Paper. In 2007, the Census of Agriculture reported 979 farms on 93,883 acres, closer to the estimates of acreage in this White Paper.

In addition to the physical extent of agriculture, its socioeconomic significance to the County is evidenced by the large share of employment in the industry. Nearly one-quarter of all covered employment in the County is in agriculture. Just as significantly, agriculture has long been a large part of the community identity and stability throughout the County. (ESD October 2014)

Typical Tree Fruit Practices

Tree fruit production accounts for the vast majority of agriculture in the County. Because of this predominance and because of the particular nature of the tree fruit industry, some discussion of typical orchard practices is warranted here.

The agricultural landscape of Chelan County is typified by orchards, averaging X acreage, with some very large X acres and small. These are permanent stands of trees, planted with cover crops such as grass or X between rows. The permanent nature of orchards results in little to no land disturbance (e.g., tilling) once an orchard is established.

Local growers have a strong culture of improving agricultural practices. This is driven largely by the need to improve their own businesses, and many improvements also have positive environmental characteristics. Production efficiencies introduced over the last several decades work directly to reduce water usage, chemical inputs, and soil disturbance within orchards. For example, irrigation technologies have shifted from flood irrigation toward the use of overhead and ground-level drip systems, reducing overall water usage and subsequent run-off. Improved nozzle technologies allow for more precise spray application of water and chemical inputs, reducing the quantity and potential waste of both. Soil testing is commonly used (and is sometimes required by food safety plans) and facilitates the targeted and measured application of water and chemical inputs.

Integrated pest management practices have also helped to reduce the amount and frequency of pesticide application. For example, kaolin clay is often applied to the trunks of fruit trees and has been shown to reduce pest (species name?) infestation, support beneficial species, and reduce the number (and cost) of insecticide applications. Chemicals that are used are used in significantly smaller quantities. It is now more common to use four ounces of a nontoxic chemical rather than three pounds of a toxic compound.

Regulatory changes have also spurred new practices. Several environmentally hazardous chemicals have been outright banned from use within the County. Various quality control programs also implement various federal and industry-specific environmental requirements to minimize spraying in proximity to waterways. (See Background Information, Other Plans, and Regulations for information on the regulatory backstop and industry-specific programs.)

[Suggest including a table with NRCS conservation practices that are commonly observed. See separate handout. CCD to provide those NRCS practices they've tracked and funded. Eventually, include diagram and photos of typical orchard and how its practices protect critical areas and contrast with residential.]

Importance of and Challenges to Agricultural Viability

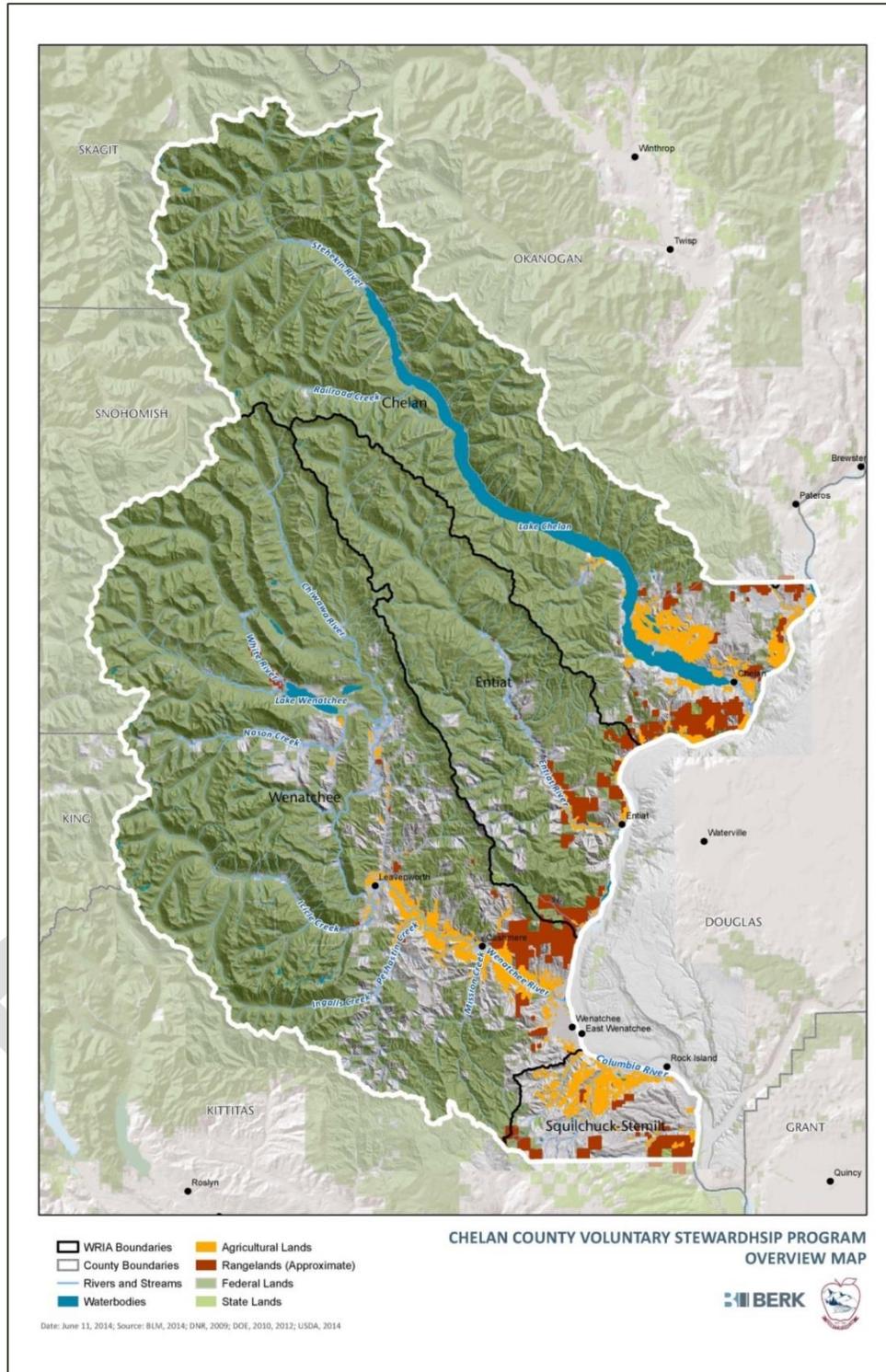
Producer business innovations and efficiencies and other market-based and federal regulatory changes in tree fruit practices instituted over the past decades have had the benefit of boosting production, reducing inefficiencies, and contributing positively to environmental protection and conservation. Overall production has increased, particularly for pears and cherries, and Chelan County has become a nationally significant agricultural region. For example, 85% of the winter pears available in the United States, come from Chelan County.

The County land use plan designation of agricultural land of long term significance has likely helped maintain the land in Chelan County for agriculture. However, the quantity of actual agriculturally-productive land in the County has reduced over the years. As is true throughout the state, conversion to residential or other uses presents the most obvious threat to agriculture. Local land use regulations help to maintain agricultural designation, however long-term viability is not strictly measured by the presence of zoned agricultural land. Presence of actual agricultural production is necessary in order to maintain the critical mass and economies of scale of product storage and distribution networks. A large labor pool in the Wenatchee area has meant that packing operations have stayed in Chelan County, and Chelan County serves as a hub for fruit packing, serving Okanogan, Douglas, and Grant Counties as well as Chelan County.

In addition to direct conversion, changes in adjacent land uses and management of nearby public lands have resulted in new challenges to agricultural production. Adjacent uses, particularly residential, can impact the methods and timing that farmers may use to maintain their orchards. Recreational uses near orchards, such as trails and parks, also serve to restrain agricultural activity such as limiting the location and timing of pesticide application or tree management. Changes to hunting regulations and herd management practices have in some cases increased the usage of orchards by wildlife (who graze there), leading to potentially negative effects for both wildlife (fences) and orchards (production loss). [Find more documentation.]

This VSP Work Plan recognizes these potential threats to the long-term viability of agriculture in order to ensure that the program design works to maintain such viability. Under this framework, the protection of critical areas and the maintenance of agricultural viability (e.g., prevention of conversion to residential or other land uses) are recognized as complementary goals in Chelan County. The use of existing and consistently improving agricultural practices also work to further both goals: the protection of critical areas and the maintenance and enhancement of agriculture.

Exhibit 1. Watersheds, Agriculture, and Rangelands



Sources: Washington State Departments of Ecology and Natural Resources, US Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land Management, and BERK Consulting 2014

Work Group Duties and Work Plan Requirements under VSP Legislation

The VSP legislation at RCW 36.70A.720 specifically outlines the duties of the Work Group and requirements of this VSP Watershed Work Plan (Plan). These are:

- (a) Review and incorporate applicable water quality, watershed management, farmland protection, and species recovery data and plans;
- (b) Seek input from tribes, agencies, and stakeholders;
- (c) 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;
- (d) Ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed;
- (e) 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 the voluntary, incentive-based measures;
- (f) Designate the entity or entities that will provide technical assistance;
- (g) Work with the entity providing technical assistance to ensure that individual stewardship plans contribute to the goals and benchmarks for protection;
- (h) Incorporate into the work plan any existing developmental regulations relied upon to achieve the goals and benchmarks for protection;
- (i) 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;
- (j) 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;
- (k) Assist state agencies in their monitoring programs; and
- (l) Satisfy any other reporting requirements of the program.

RCW 36.70A.720

Core Elements of the Work Plan

In terms of project management, the VSP Work Group's first core task is meeting the statutory test the Technical Panel, Statewide Advisory Committee and Conservation Commission Director will apply in determining whether or not to approve the VSP Work Plan:

"... 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."

RCW 36.70A.725

According to the VSP statutes, the Work Plan must be approved if the above test is met within three years after receipt of funding, as determined through the VSP Work Plan Approval process.

The Work Group's second core task is to create measurable ten-year benchmarks designed to promote voluntary, incentive-based measures 1) to provide long-term protection of critical areas and 2) to encourage voluntary enhancements to improve critical areas.

Together these voluntary incentive-based efforts reflect the three core "test" elements of an approvable VSP Work Plan: 1) protection of critical areas; 2) maintenance and enhancement of agricultural viability; and 3) voluntary enhancement of critical areas through promotion of incentive-based measures.

Plan Section	Work Plan Requirements (a through l)
Introduction	B
<u>Protect Critical Areas Test</u>	<u>RCW 36.70A.725</u>
<u>Maintain and Enhance Ag Viability Test</u>	<u>RCW 36.70A.725</u>
<u>Create Protection and Enhancement Benchmarks</u>	<u>RCW 36.70A.720</u>
Background Information, Other Plans, and Regulations	a, h
Baselines and Measurable Objectives	c, e, i
Technical Assistance	d, f, g
Monitoring, Reporting, and Adaptive Management	j, k, l

Meet the “Protect Critical Areas” Test

Should these following three sections be merged with the VSP Definitions section (p. 15)?

This Work Plan must detail how Chelan County through VSP will protect critical areas while maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture in the watershed. The definition of protection in the legislation for the Voluntary Stewardship Program indicates that

“Protect” or “protecting” means to prevent the degradation of functions and values existing as of July 22, 2011.

RCW 36.70A.703

Important elements of this definition of “protection” include the terms “degradation”, “functions and values”, and the baseline date of July 22, 2011 and what information is available as of that date.

To help guide how the Work Plan would provide “protection” of critical areas, this section references the Washington Supreme Court’s *Swinomish* decision, which has interpreted “degradation” and other key terms in critical area context of existing agricultural activities under the Growth Management Act (chapter 36.70A RCW). The *Swinomish* court clarified that critical area protection requirements are satisfied where existing agricultural activities do not cause additional harm or degradation to the “functional values” of the critical area. Thus the VSP standard for protection of critical areas is the maintenance of existing conditions.

The 2011 VSP statutes effectively codified the *Swinomish* court’s “no new harm/no further degradation” standard into the VSP sections of the GMA, setting critical area conditions “existing as of July 22, 2011” as the protection baseline. Following *Swinomish*, the VSP statutes encourage but do not require improvements or enhancements to critical areas already in a degraded condition. The VSP requirement “to protect critical areas” is met where a critical area is protected, at the aggregate or watershed level, from new harms or degradations. *Swinomish Indian Tribal Community v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearing Board*, 161 Wn.2d 415 (2007).

A reference to the *Swinomish* case was recently made in a Washington Court of Appeals decision regarding *Whatcom County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearing Board* (February 23, 2015; No. 70796-5-1 [consolidated with Nos. 72132-1-1 and 70896-1-1]). The case addressed GMA provisions

regarding the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas. The Court of Appeals indicated: “The requirement under the GMA to “protect” critical areas is met when local governments prevent new harm to critical areas; the ‘no harm’ standard protects critical areas by maintaining existing conditions.”

Meet the “Maintain and Enhance Agricultural Viability” Test

The VSP Work Plan must “maintain and enhance” agricultural viability to receive approval. RCW 36.70A.725.

Some VSP statutory sideboards implicitly help to maintain viability. For instance. The VSP Work Plan is to rely on voluntary stewardship “as the primary method of protecting critical areas and not require cessation of agricultural activities.” RCW 36.70A.700. And the County, and the VSP Work Plan, may not “require an agricultural operator to discontinue agricultural activities legally existing before July 22, 2011.” RCW 36.70A.702.

Also, VSP statutes do not grant counties or state agencies any additional regulatory authority to protect critical areas on lands used for agricultural activities. RCW 36.70A.702. In order to promote producer participation and productive discussion among Work Group members, VSP statutes prohibit county promulgation of new critical area regulations related to Ag activities during the VSP process (narrow exceptions apply). RCW 36.70A.130(8)(a). Further, nothing in the VSP statutes requires participation from agricultural operators, which is voluntary only. RCW 36.70A.705.

With regard to conservation programs, VSP is not to be administered in a manner that prevents operator eligibility for environmental incentives (RCW 36.70A.702), and volunteer “agricultural operators implementing an individual stewardship plan consistent with a work plan are presumed to be working toward the protection and enhancement of critical areas.” RCW 36.70A.750. Ag operators volunteering to participate may withdraw from the program at any time. RCW 36.70A.702. Also, VSP may not require participating operators who voluntarily enter conservation contracts to protect or enhance critical areas to continue such voluntary measures after expiration of the applicable contract. RCW 36.70A.760.

Create and Meet Protection and Enhancement Benchmarks

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).

Ag Viability Maintenance and Enhancement Questions to the Workgroup:

For each major Ag activity:

- What was the baseline for Ag viability as of July 22, 2011?
- How will VSP maintain that agricultural viability baseline?
- How will VSP enhance or improve agricultural viability above the baseline?
- How should technical assistance providers assist with this plan element?

The VSP legislation further states the “Program shall be designed to protect and enhance critical areas on lands used for agricultural activities through voluntary actions by agricultural operators.” RCW 36.70A.705(1). Failure to meet a goal or benchmark set in the Work Plan will result in plan failure and will trigger a regulatory approach to critical areas protection. RCW 36.70A.720(2); RCW 36.70A.735; RCW 36.70A.130(8).

Though critical area enhancement is not part of the initial Program Approval test, the Work Plan must also include benchmarks for promotion and implementation of voluntary actions *designed to protect and enhance critical areas*. The definition of “protection” is provided above. The VSP legislation’s definition of “enhancement” establishes that:

“enhance” means “to improve the processes, structure, and functions existing, as of July 22, 2011, of ecosystems and habitats associated with critical areas.” RCW 36.70A.703

Critical Area Voluntary Enhancement Questions for Workgroup:

For each pertinent critical area:

- Are voluntary enhancements needed or desired above protection baseline?
- If so, where should voluntary enhancement efforts be focused?
- Is additional funding needed to implement these actions?
- How should technical assistance providers assist with this plan element?
- What incentives will most effectively encourage agricultural operators to implement voluntary enhancements?

Setting Pragmatic Goals and Benchmarks for Protection and Enhancement

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.

The five-year “goal and benchmark” testing and reporting process is separate from the “plan approval” test and reporting process. If goals and benchmarks are not met as described in the Work Plan, the Work Group must go through an adaptive management process. Regulatory enforcement may be part of the adaptive management process: “Following approval of a work plan, a county or watershed group may request a state or federal agency to focus existing enforcement authority in that participating watershed, if the action will facilitate progress toward achieving work plan protection goals and benchmarks.” RCW 36.70A.720. If adaptive management is not successful, the county must comply with the regulatory requirements for critical area updates and agricultural activities under RCW 36.70A.735.

Protection and Enhancement Goal and Benchmark Questions for Workgroup:

For each pertinent critical area:

- What protection goals should be set?
- What protection benchmarks should be set?
- What enhancement goals should be set?
- What enhancement benchmarks should be set?
- How should technical assistance providers assist with this plan element?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION, OTHER PLANS, AND REGULATIONS

To leverage existing resources and avoid redundancy with ongoing watershed efforts, the Work Group performed a comprehensive review of existing plans, regulations, and activities, consistent with the requirements of RCW 36.70A.700. The aim of this review was to identify what critical areas exist within each watershed, the scope and extent of the critical area protection baseline and ongoing protection activities, and what areas may need further attention from this Workgroup to promote voluntary enhancement of critical area functions and values (above the critical area protection baseline) through incentive-based measures.

Existing Watershed Plans

All four Chelan County watersheds have undertaken Watershed Planning processes under [RCW 90.82](#), and have established implementation and monitoring plans for those basins. Watershed plans focus on issues relating to water quality, water quantity, and habitat. Through this process, each basin planning unit has identified areas where water resources and habitats are functioning well, local issues of concern, objectives and strategies, and methods to monitor progress toward those objectives.

Several of the issues and objectives identified through watershed planning also serve to address critical areas, particularly wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, and fish and wildlife habitat. Issues identified within each watershed plan are summarized below, with strategies related to agricultural production specifically highlighted.

The purpose of referencing these watershed planning documents is to help the Work Group develop a Work Plan that reflects VSP objectives to “maximize voluntary incentives” and “encourage good stewardship.” RCW 36.70A.700. In reviewing existing watershed plans and documents it is also important to recognize that the VSP Work Plan may not “require an agricultural operator to discontinue agricultural activities legally existing before July 22, 2011.” RCW 36.70A.702.

The Work Plan is to rely on voluntary stewardship “as the primary method of protecting critical areas and not require cessation of agricultural activities.” RCW 36.70A.700. Nonetheless, existing watershed planning documents can help the Work Group identify where to focus efforts to promote voluntary enhancement of critical area functions and values (above the critical area protection baseline) through incentive-based measures.

One statutory VSP objective is the incentive-based promotion of enhancements to “improve compliance with other laws designed to protect water quality and fish habitat.” RCW 36.70A.700. In context of the

TMDL approaches described below, voluntary VSP enhancements can also support agricultural viability by reducing regulatory risks and increasing regulatory certainty for agricultural operators.

Lake Chelan Watershed (WRIA 47). Lake Chelan is located in north-central Washington State. It is the longest and deepest natural lake in the state. Lake Chelan collects water from a watershed that is 924-square-miles. Most of the watershed is under Federal management, primarily by the US Forest Service and National Park Service. The watershed includes glaciers and rugged mountains at the highest elevations, dense fir and open ponderosa pine forests, wide expanses of shrub-steppe, and narrow riparian zones in lower elevations. The largest communities have developed along the lake shoreline, and nearby hillsides are irrigated for orchard and pasture. WRIA 47 is distinct among other central Washington watersheds for its inclusion of Lake Chelan, a very large lake/reservoir that is managed for multiple uses including power, recreation, irrigation, potable supply, historic and cultural preservation, fisheries, wildlife and habitat. Lake levels and flows are strictly managed by the Chelan County PUD under FERC license to balance the water demands for each use. Power generation, tree fruit agriculture and recreation are the predominant land uses in the basin, followed by year-round and seasonal residential use. The Lake Chelan Planning Unit identified poor water quality including elevated concentrations of pesticide residues (resulting from a number of contributing factors and pollution loadings). A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program is in place for the lake and surface water monitoring is ongoing. Activities specific to agricultural production include the voluntary implementation of best management practices (BMPs) regarding soil erosion and irrigation practices. The WRIA 47 plan also mentions habitat degradation in the highlands and riparian areas due to long-established grazing. In the WRIA 47 plan, long-established agriculture and grazing was identified as a potential source of impacts resulting in a loss of scrub-shrub, wetland, and riparian habitat; pesticide and fertilizer use; and sedimentation and erosion impacting habitat and water quality functions. Strategies, including the use of voluntary conservation and habitat restoration practices (e.g., restoring riparian function), are identified in watershed plans and have been implemented in some locations to address those issues.

Entiat Watershed (WRIA 46). The upper Entiat watershed is primarily forested and has undergone substantial management activities. Lower reaches of the principal streams within each of the subbasins are almost completely privately owned and primarily managed through agricultural practices. Habitat conditions range from pristine to severely altered. The Entiat Planning Unit has identified concerns mostly regarding water quality and subsequent impacts on endangered fish populations. Improvement strategies include minimizing the effect of livestock within riparian corridors. Several agriculture-related enhancements are recommended for the lower and middle basin reaches, including the re-establishment of riparian vegetation, reduction of livestock access to streams, and potential adapted use of irrigation ditches for additional rearing habitat. [Progress/participation? CCD and others have implemented some riparian restoration and livestock fencing and other measures captured below]

Wenatchee Watershed (WRIA 45). The 1370 square mile Wenatchee Watershed is unique. The WRIA extends from the snowfields, glaciers and steep, forested Cascade Mountains through orchards in the Wenatchee River Valley, to the shrub-steppe of the eastern watershed at the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia Rivers. The different climatic zones within the watershed are important because the largest irrigation and domestic water demands occur in the drier, lower valley near Wenatchee where streamflow can be limited in dry years. Generally the watershed is in excellent condition; however, there are pressures to develop the lower elevations and valley bottoms in particular. Areas of challenge in the basin include instream flows, water quantity, growth and land use, water quality and habitat. The Wenatchee Watershed Management Plan addresses water quantity, instream flows, water quality, and habitat within the basin and is consistent with the TMDL program strategies. Specific implementation actions have been developed for each of the nine sub-basins of the watershed. Strategies in the watershed plan address water quality, water quantity and habitat, such as riparian restoration to address water

temperature and fish habitat, improved irrigation practices, and others. Some specific examples include reducing unnatural sediment recruitment to the stream by restoring riparian habitat and improving road maintenance (e.g. Mission Creek) or reducing nutrient inputs on agricultural lands near Icicle Creek through conservation practices. [Note: There are multiple TMDLs here. Need to summarize agricultural specific implementation strategies being implemented.]

Stemlit-Squilchuck Watershed (WRIA 40a). WRIA 40A is made up of the drainage areas for Stemilt and Squilchuck Creeks in the Malaga area. This area is dominated by fruit orchards and is world famous for the cherries that are grown here. The need for reliable water supplies in order to irrigate the agricultural lands and provide some domestic water is vital for this area which only receives on average 8 inches of precipitation in the lower elevations. The area relies heavily on the snowpack for the majority of its water. Watershed planning objectives in the Stemlit-Squilchuck are focused primarily on water quantity and storage issues. Recommended enhancement strategies relevant to agricultural producers refer to increasing efficiencies in irrigation, for example, by reducing leakage and evaporation from ditches, or by updating pipe and sprinkler systems.

Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Plan

The Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board is a local program addressing the voluntary restoration and management of salmon, steelhead, and other at-risk fish species. The regional approach includes the Lake Chelan, Entiat, and Wenatchee WRIAs as well as portions of Okanogan, Methow, and Crab Creek Subbasins. The Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan recommends several enhancement and implementation measures to restore and protect habitat throughout the region [Relate more specific stats to agricultural land and to number of participating ag producers.]

Regulatory Backstop

In addition to watershed-level plans, the VSP Watershed Work Group delineated the existing regulatory structures and agriculture-specific programs to which agricultural producers are already in compliance.

It is important to note that VSP does not “limit the authority of a state agency, local government, or landowner to carry out its obligations under any other federal, state, or local law.” RCW 36.70A.702. One statutory VSP objective is the incentive-based promotion of enhancements to “improve compliance with other laws designed to protect water quality and fish habitat.” RCW 36.70A.700. Voluntary enhancements can also support agricultural viability by reducing regulatory risks and increasing regulatory certainty for agricultural operators.

Relevant Federal Regulations

Federal laws including the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and the Food Quality Protection Act regulate use of pesticides. The Clean Water Act (CWA), Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), and National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulate water quality, though most regulatory actions are the responsibility of Washington State.

- **FIFRA.** Label use restrictions and registration requirements from EPA put limitations on pesticide usage, storage, and disposal.
- **Clean Water Act (CWA) NPDES.** National Pollution Discharge Elimination Permits are required for concentrated animal feeding operations, Dredge and Fill permits for activities on wetlands, etc. A federal general NPDES permit restricts pesticide application near waterbodies. No federal biosolid application permit is required, though state requirements and water quality standards do apply. Farms must meet regulatory requirements for pollutant limits, reporting, and other requirements.

- **Endangered Species Act (ESA).** ESA prohibits the “take” of species listed as threatened or endangered and protects their habitats. Specific limitations imposed through ESA consultation requirements include pesticide no-spray buffers of twenty to one hundred yards (depending on application) from salmon bearing waterways. In Chelan County, this rule applies to propargite application.
- **Farm Bill.** The 2014 Agricultural Act (formerly 1985 Food Security Act) includes a “Swampbuster” conservation compliance provision to prohibit agricultural land owners participating in Farm Bill programs from converting wetlands to cropland. A “Sodbuster” provision also requires participating producers to maintain specified levels of conservation. The CWA also prohibits wetland conversion, however agricultural operations farming wet areas converted to cropland prior to the act are generally exempt from federal permitting requirements under “prior converted cropland” provisions.

Relevant State Regulations

State of Washington programs implement CWA requirements for waterways regarding nonpoint source pollution. The Department of Ecology has developed water quality improvement projects (TMDLs) for Lake Chelan and the Wenatchee River Basin. Water quality issues relating to pesticide use have been specifically noted within these watersheds, and implementation strategies including use of best practices in agricultural settings have been developed. Numerous state regulations address agriculture specifically. [Lee/Mike, do you have any details as to what current TMDL implementation activities are like in these programs? We specifically want to identify any programs in which ag producers are actively involved.]

[Comment from FB: Producers plans can change significantly from the initial time of filing over a span of years. We are concerned about identifying programs that not all farms may be participating in. That could be used against one farm by saying you're not using the same plan as your neighbor. VSP needs to persuade with incentives no coercion.]

[Suggested Discussion Topic from Consultants: Presuming the plan is working toward county-wide/watershed-wide goals (p.16), individual farm practices shouldn't be under that sort of scrutiny. We would think getting credit for growers who are participating shouldn't be punitive toward growers who are not participating in a voluntary program.]

Revised Code of Washington

- **RCW Title 15 – Agriculture and Marketing.** Regulates agricultural practices generally, with specific reference to pest and disease control, fertilizers, and crop-specific commissions.
- **RCW Title 16 – Animals and Livestock.** Regulates livestock practices generally, including stock on state or federal lands, fence practices, etc.
- **RCW Title 17 – Weeds, Rodents, and Pests.** Establishes and regulates pest control, agricultural pest districts, etc.
- **RCW Title 77 – Fish and Wildlife.** Establishes Department of Fish and Wildlife and enforcement code, hydraulic project approval permits, salmon recovery, invasive species, etc.
- **RCW Title 87 – Irrigation.** Establishes and regulates irrigation and rehabilitation districts.
- **RCW Title 89 – Reclamation, Soil Conservation, and Land Settlement.** Establishes conservation districts, watershed restoration, agricultural conservation, farm plans, etc.

- **RCW Title 90 – Water Rights-Environment.** Regulates water rights, water use and flow levels, water pollution, nutrient management, wetlands mitigation, shoreline management, aquatic rehabilitation, and Columbia River basin waters.

Washington Administrative Code

- **WAC Title 16 – Department of Agriculture.** Regulates many aspects of agriculture including marketing, standards, fertilizer and pesticide use, nutrient management, etc. WACs 16-200 through 16-232 set general and location-specific standards for fertilizer and pesticide usage. Regulations of particular importance to Chelan County include:
 - Chapters 16-228-1238, 16-228-1264, and 16-228-1266 outline the restrictions and requirements for use of pesticides specific to fruit orchards and vines.
 - Chapter 16-231-800 restricts specific herbicide usage within Chelan and Douglas counties.
- **WAC Title 173 – Department of Ecology.** Responsible for regulation of numerous relevant environmental features including floodplains, shorelines, ground and surface waters, biosolids, and air quality.
 - Chapters 173-18 through 173-27 define and designate the Shoreline Management Act (SMA). The County currently implements a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) and will be updating it in the next couple of years. The County’s critical areas regulations will become part of the SMP; likely the VSP Work Plan would be referenced as well, and also considered in the voluntary restoration plan that is part of the SMP process.
 - Chapter 173-152 and 173-153 regulate water rights; chapters 173-166, 173-170 and 173-173 describe drought relief, agricultural water supply, and water use reporting requirements.
 - Chapter 173-158 regulates floodplain management and includes restrictions regarding farm infrastructure within floodplains and recommendations for wetland management.
 - Chapter 173-201A regulates water quality and application of best management practices (BMPs) to comply with water quality regulations under the federal Clean Water Act.
 - Chapter 173-430 regulates agricultural burning.
 - Water resource and instream management regulations for state waterways including the Columbia and Wenatchee rivers are described in chapters 173-500 through 173-591.
- **WAC Titles 220 and 232 – Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).** Responsible for regulating marine and freshwater fisheries (220) and other wildlife (232) throughout the state.
 - Chapter 220-110 WAC – Now Replaced with Chapter 220-660 as of December 2014. WDFW regulates construction projects or activities (e.g. bank protection, culvert replacement, outfalls, water diversions) in or near state waters through an environmental permit called the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA).
 - Chapter 220-140 defines Voluntary Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Programs, including the Upper Columbia Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group.
 - Chapter 232-36 describes wildlife interaction rules, including those governing commercial crop and livestock damage.
- **WAC Title 246 – Department of Health.** Includes water quality requirements for Group A and B public wells and regulation over greywater use for irrigation purposes.

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Pesticide Compliance Program

The WSDA Pesticide Compliance Program regulates application of pesticides throughout the state. Several currently used orchard pesticides have label statements that restrict their use near water. [These restrictions](#) are legal requirements that must be followed.

Voluntary Programs

- **Global G.A.P.** is a voluntary certification program for agricultural producers around the world. The program encourages use of safe and sustainable agricultural practices. Specific certification requirements include waste management protocols and the development of wildlife and habitat conservation plans, though the measures are broadly stated. [Do we have any info on program participation within the County? Follow up comment from FB: Some producers may use global GAP and others may not use global GAP. Statistical use of Global GAP by producers is not helpful or needed in the VSP. These programs and names are subject to change, especially with the new Food Safety Modernization Act pending.]
- **Safe Quality Food Institute (SQF-I)** provides certification in food safety and quality. The [code](#) includes requirements for several relevant good agricultural and livestock practices including water management, the storage of hazardous chemicals, soil management and use of fertilizers, and waste disposal. [Participation database on line]
- **PrimusLabs GAP** provides tools and audit programs (checklists) to support good agricultural practices relating to site selection, adjacent land use, fertilizer usage, water sourcing and usage, pest control and pesticide monitoring, and harvesting practices.
- **USDA Harmonized Produce GAPs** consist of audit checklists to ensure food safety standards. Relevant topics include water quality and chemical use.
- **Others?**

Question to the Workgroup:

What other regulatory or voluntary programs in place may address critical areas within the County? What voluntary programs are in actively used by producers in the County?

VSP DEFINITONS

Protect is defined in the legislation for the Voluntary Stewardship Program as follows:

"Protect" or "protecting" means to prevent the degradation of functions and values existing as of July 22, 2011. Enhance is defined in the legislation for the Voluntary Stewardship Program as follows:

"enhance" means "to improve the processes, structure, and functions existing, as of July 22, 2011, of ecosystems and habitats associated with critical areas." RCW 36.70A.703

Functions and Values is not a phrase defined in GMA itself, but is defined in various State rules (WAC 365-196-830(6)) and scientific and professional literature. State rules that implement GMA indicate that functions are "the conditions and processes that support the ecosystem." The conditions and processes referenced in the definition can "operate on varying geographic scales ranging from site-specific to watershed and even regional scales." Wetland protection guidance (see attachment) offers a definition of values that can be generalized to other critical areas: "wetland *processes, characteristics, or attributes that are considered to benefit society.*" Some values of critical areas could be promoted in the Work Plan as a way to promote participation, e.g. water quality as benefiting agricultural operators and the

community more broadly. **Agricultural Activities** is defined in the legislation for the Voluntary Stewardship Program as follows:

"Agricultural activities" means all agricultural uses and practices as defined in RCW 90.58.065."

Baseline Date of July 22, 2011: This (the effective date of the VSP legislation) is the statutory date for identifying the applicable baseline for county requirements related to protecting a particular critical area, and for maintaining and enhancing agricultural viability. This baseline also delineates the assessment line between critical area protection and voluntary enhancement that may be promoted where needed, through incentive-based measures, to improve critical area functions and values above the July 22, 2011 protection baseline. RCW 36.70A.703.

This is also the date from which the County will measure progress in implementing the Work Plans' measurable benchmarks and objectives. VSP programmatic assessments should occur at the watershed scale (not farm by farm or ranch by ranch), as all VSP participation by agricultural operators is voluntary. "Program shall be designed to protect and enhance critical areas on lands used for agricultural activities through voluntary actions by agricultural operators." RCW 36.70A.705(1).

The dates of information collected are as follows:

- **VSP Agricultural mapping** prepared in conjunction with the VSP White Paper June 2014 is based on aerial photography, Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) datasets as of approximately 2013. Google Earth provides aerial photography at various years, and the data set developed to date can be compared to 2011.
- **Critical areas data layers:** Per Appendix B of the VSP White Paper, the dates data was available varies from federal, state, and county sources, ranging from 2006-2014. The intent was to employ the best available data. One map set that could provide a reference for the present VSP work is the Shoreline Master Program Analysis Report, June 2011; however the base data too was collected between 2008 and 2011. However, a comparison can be made for differences. SMP and VSP updates need to be matched up to ensure that the stringency of one does not exceed the stringency of the other.

[See discussion guide on definition of protection attached to Staff Work Group Packet.]

Table 2 details the approximate acreage of agriculture and potential rangeland intersecting with critical areas throughout Chelan County. Agricultural lands were estimated as of 2013 using a combination of Chelan County Assessors records, WSDA agricultural census data, and high-resolution aerial images. Potential rangelands were determined using data from DNR, Department of Ecology, US Bureau of Land Management, and information provided from local technical assistance providers.

Table 2. Intersection of Agriculture and Critical Areas in Chelan County

Critical Area	Total Acreage		Percentage of Intersection	
	Agriculture	Rangeland	Agriculture	Rangeland
Total	27,616	76,185	--	--
WETLANDS	63	616	0%	1%
FREQUENTLY FLOODED AREAS				
100-year Floodplain	564	1,259	2%	2%

Critical Area	Total Acreage		Percentage of Intersection	
	Agriculture	Rangeland	Agriculture	Rangeland
FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION AREAS				
<i>Priority Habitats and Species Area</i>	11,227	68,968	41%	91%
<i>100-ft Hydrologic Study Area ¹</i>	1,050	2,691	4%	4%
GEOLOGICALLY HAZARDOUS AREAS				
<i>Landslide Hazard Areas</i>	2,941	7,579	11%	10%
<i>Channel Migration Zones</i>	557	1,378	2%	2%
<i>Steep Slope Areas (>15%)</i>	18,561	73,962	67%	97%
<i>Erodible Soils</i>	2,125	53,157	8%	70%
CRITICAL AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS				
<i>Possible CARA Area</i>	7,260	3,847	26%	5%
<i>Wellhead Protection Area</i>	3,904	1,989	14%	3%

Notes: ¹ Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas include lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers. For the purposes of the GIS analysis, hydrologic study areas include the waterbodies, wetlands, and lands within 100 feet of these water bodies. See Wetlands above – the acres are relatively small.

Source: Chelan County Code; WAC 365-190; BERK, 2014

[Table above is updated to match sub-categories to the main critical area; see County and state definitions and mapping criteria]

BASELINES AND MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

[See White Paper Appendix H. Chelan County VSP Performance Measurement Framework for examples.]

Participation

Baseline, metrics (existing and potential), goals/benchmarks for the VSP

- Example baseline information: census of agriculture; user groups.
- Example benchmarks: number of operators/farms participating in stewardship.

Stewardship Activities

This section to include: Baseline, metrics (existing and potential), goals/benchmarks for the VSP.

Numerous voluntary stewardship activities are already occurring throughout Chelan County as a result of the work of Watershed Planning Units, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery, Water Quality Improvement Programs (TMDLs), the Chelan County Natural Resources Department, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Cascadia Conservation District, as well as individual landowners. Table 3 accounts for restoration and conservation actions taken since 2011 as documented in the Habitat Work Schedule data system.

These results illustrate implementation of some of the watershed plan strategies that have implicit enhancement objectives (applying the pertinent VSP baseline) – aim, direction of the measure, and method:

Decrease water temperatures and improve water quality by restoring riparian vegetation along the stream (Wenatchee Watershed Plan, example strategy for Chumstick Creek) (see table below for measurable action ideas)

These stewardship activities represent voluntary restoration measures that are encouraged by the VSP law. These stewardship activities are an illustration of the Watershed Plans’ strategies and can be a source of ideas for what kinds of measurable actions can be included in the VSP Work Plan. These activities are also a credit to the baseline demonstrating protection of critical areas.

Table 3. Restoration and Conservation Actions Since 2011

	Metric	Critical Area
Habitat Restoration		
Riparian Acres Planted	12.15	Riparian & PHS
Wetland Acres Planted	1.5	Wetland & PHS
Riparian Buffer Acres Planted	5.83	Riparian & PHS
Trees Planted	> 300	Riparian & PHS
Other Plants Installed	2,735	Riparian & PHS
Feet of Debris Removed from Riparian Areas	370	Riparian & PHS
Miles Restored (Riparian)	4.8	Riparian & PHS
Miles of Livestock Exclusion Fencing Installed	0.12	Water Quality
Irrigation and Streamflow Enhancement		
Increased Streamflow (cfs)	18.2	Water Quantity
Structures Installed for Fishery Habitat	40	PHS
Culverts Replaced	11	PHS
Land Acquisition and Conservation Easements		
Acres Acquired	273.15	Riparian & PHS
Feet of River Bank Acquired (both sides)	15,070	Riparian & PHS
Feet of River protected via Conservation Easement (both sides)	18,280	Riparian & PHS

Source: Habitat Work Schedule (<http://hws.ekosystem.us/>), Chelan County Natural Resources Department, BERK, 2015.

- Example baseline information: number of conservation projects; participation in Global Gap or other certification programs; number of NRCS clients; number properties participating in stewardship programs.
- Example measurable objectives: acres conserved or involved in particular programs; number of individual stewardship plans produced.
- Should include existing programs and practices from the Background, Other Plans, and Regulations section.
 - Follow up comment from FB: Avoid setting overly broad goal or benchmark metrics like improved water quality, habitat and species numbers where factors beyond agriculture’s control affect outcomes.
 - Follow up comment from FB: 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.

- Follow up comment from FB: Metrics reflecting implementation of positive actions designed to help in accomplishing an objective (as described in the table above) are more easily measured.

Critical Areas

Baseline, metrics (existing and potential), goals/benchmarks for the VSP. Source of measurable objectives: Consider WRIA Plans, Salmon Recovery Plans, and others.

- Example baseline information: County shoreline inventory and assessment; mapped critical areas; DOH well-monitoring data;
- Example measurable objectives: no net loss of riparian habitat. Follow up comment from FB: While a great objective, such a broad hard-to-meet metric may cause plan failure if set as a formal goal or benchmark of the plan.
 - Example measurable objectives in Lake Chelan Watershed Plan (2004)

Habitat

- Habitat Objective 3: Maintain and/or enhance habitat function (i.e., focal habitat attributes) by improving silviculture, agricultural practices, fire management, weed control, livestock grazing practices, and road construction and maintenance on and adjacent to existing riparian wetlands.
- Strategy: Implement habitat stewardship projects with private landowners.
- Example Action: Similar to those in Table 3 above.

Mule Deer

- Biological Objective 3: Maintain and enhance mule deer populations consistent with state/tribal herd management objectives. Follow up comment from FB: While a great objective, such a broad hard-to-meet metric may cause plan failure if set as a formal goal or benchmark of the plan.
- Strategy: In addition to implementing federal and state management plans, the following is relevant to agriculture: Maintain mule deer populations within private landowner tolerances.
- Example Action: CCPUD Removed old, abandoned fence lines and collected bitterbrush seed for future plantings.

Agriculture

Baseline, metrics (existing and potential), goals/benchmarks for the VSP

[See Appendix F. Compendium of Agriculture and Critical Area Intersection Tables plus Appendix A Maps.]

- Example baseline information: VSP mapping; census of agriculture; data from producer groups;
- Example of an agricultural viability protection objective: no net loss of agricultural land; Follow up comment from FB: Descriptions of this problem should include loss of ag lands due to purchases or other actions by government agencies that result in the removal of agricultural activities from the land, including grazing allotments. While a great objective and an indicator of Ag viability, creating a “no net loss” metric/benchmark that is hard to meet because it is too broad or unreachable or uncontrollable will result in plan failure.

- Follow up comment from FB: VSP goals and benchmarks have teeth. Failure to meet a goal or benchmark set in the Work Plan will result in plan failure and return to regulatory CAO approach. RCW 36.70A.720(2); .735; .130(8). Avoid goals and benchmarks that may be difficult to measure or meet.

[See handout for example objectives based on input above.]

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The VSP legislation places emphasis on outreaching to technical assistance providers that support agricultural operators in the watersheds as a work plan is prepared to develop goals and benchmarks to protect critical areas and maintain and enhance agriculture. In creating Work Plans under the program Work Groups are in turn required to designate one or more entities to provide technical assistance to help operators develop or implement individual stewardship plans to contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the work plan. (RCW 36.70A.720). Though their participation and completion of a stewardship plan is entirely voluntary, “Agricultural operators implementing an individual stewardship plan consistent with a work plan are presumed to be working toward the protection and enhancement of critical areas” RCW 36.70A.750.

Technical assistance should be tailored for the particular area and funded appropriately to reflect the mix of goals and benchmarks set. Some of the goals and benchmarks will address producer participation. Some will address protecting critical areas (avoiding further degradation of critical area functions and values existing as of July 22, 2011 for a particular critical area). Some will address promotion of voluntary incentive-based critical area enhancements (to improve upon the July 22, 2011 protection baseline). And some will address maintaining and enhancing a viable agricultural industry. Key federal, state, county, and nonprofit technical providers operating in Chelan County, include, but are not limited to:

- Cascadia Conservation District
- Chelan County Natural Resources Department
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Washington State University Extension

These providers provide direct assistance to agricultural operators in the County to address conservation practices that improve the environment and help productivity. The following table summarizes the key technical assistance the listed agencies provide.

Table 4. Summary of Key Technical Assistance Providers in Chelan County

Agency	Highlighted Technical Assistance Programs
<u>Cascadia</u> Conservation District(CCD) http://cascadiacd.org/	Landowner Assistance Program - Countywide: <u>CCD</u> can pay up to 50% of the total project cost for irrigation-related projects and up to 75% of the total project cost for forest health and riparian practices. Wenatchee Watershed Water Quality Improvement Program: Soil testing and associated technical assistance for nutrient planning for citizens with livestock, agricultural land or residential lawns; riparian plantings of native trees and shrubs; pasture health and riparian livestock exclusion fencing.

Agency	Highlighted Technical Assistance Programs
<p>Chelan County Natural Resources Department (CCNRD) http://www2.co.chelan.wa.us/nr/</p>	<p>Chelan County is the designated Lead Agency for administering and coordinating the watershed planning processes for the Stemilt/Squilchuck (WRIA 40a), Wenatchee (WRIA 45) and Chelan (WRIA 47) Watersheds.</p> <p>CCNRD develops and implements with willing landowners fish passage barrier removal and habitat complexity projects coordinated with Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Planning Board.</p>
<p>Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome</p>	<p>NRCS offers the voluntary Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program, where its staff work with agricultural operators to assess conditions on their property, help identify conservation practices that can ameliorate environmental conditions affecting the operation (e.g. erosion), and monitor practices.</p> <p>Conservation practices are designed for local property conditions following a site specific assessment. The NRCS has developed objectives and standards for numerous conservation practices addressing common agricultural activities or environmental conditions.</p> <p>NRCS offers financial assistance to help agricultural producers install and maintain conservation improvements on their land.</p>
<p>Washington State University Extension (WSU) http://county.wsu.edu/chelan-douglas/agriculture/Pages/default.aspx http://county.wsu.edu/chelan-douglas/agriculture/treefruit/Pages/default.aspx</p>	<p>WSU Extension maintains a local office in Chelan County. WSU provides the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and research, turning results into best practices regarding irrigation, weed management, pesticide application, pest management, • Opportunities for certifications, such as pesticide application certification, online certificate in organic farming, and • Training and outreach such as Hort Days.

Additionally, there are industry associations and state commissions providing education and training as well as advocacy for the local agricultural industries. These include:

- Washington State Tree Fruit Association
- Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission
- [Washington Association of Conservation Districts](#)
- [Washington Conservation Commission](#)
- Washington Association of Wheat Growers
- [Washington Cattlemen’s Association](#)
- [Washington Dairy Federation](#)
- [Washington Farm Bureau](#)

These agencies, associations and others could be outlets by which participation in the VSP program in Chelan County can be encouraged.

Appendix **XX** provides more information on the key technical assistance providers and other associations that assist landowners with practices that could benefit critical areas protection and agricultural production. [See discussion guide on technical providers as part of the Staff Work Group Packet.]

[Task: Contact technical assistance providers to discuss what they currently do (approach and methods, specific practices), who/where/how many producers they serve, what their staff and expertise capacity is like, how they see themselves able to assist in the process, etc. Some contacts have been initiated but the information request could be advanced at the Staff Work Group Meeting.]

What methods can be used to provide outreach to agricultural operators?

How will Individual Stewardship Plans be developed to relate to the VSP benchmarks?

MONITORING, REPORTING, AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Requires understanding baseline conditions as of July 22, 2011, developing practical metrics from the benchmarks set above, identifying who will be responsible for ongoing monitoring, biennial reporting, etc., and establishing a process the Workgroup will use for ongoing adaptive management.

Participation

Monitoring methods and responsibilities

Stewardship Activities

Monitoring methods and responsibilities

Critical Areas

Monitoring methods and responsibilities

Agriculture

Monitoring methods and responsibilities

PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The Conservation Commission Director must approve the Work Plan within 3 years of funding (insert funding receipt date here) or the county must comply with the non-VSP (regulatory) critical area protection requirements of RCW 36.70A.735.

The Work Group submits the VSP Work Plan to the Conservation Commission Director, who gives it to the Technical Panel for review. RCW 36.70A.720(2)(a). The Technical Panel has 45 days to make a recommendation. If the Technical Panel says the Work Plan doesn't pass the statutory Work Plan Approval test, the Work Group must modify and resubmit the Work Plan.

If the Conservation Commission Director does not approve the Work Plan within 2 years and 9 months of the county's receipt of funding, the Director must submit the Work Plan to the Statewide Advisory Committee for resolution. If the Statewide Advisory Committee has final say. If the Statewide Advisory Committee recommends Work Plan approval, the Conservation Commission Director must approve.

APPENDIX

Include baseline information summaries and other matter as needed.