



Washington State Conservation Commission

Voluntary Stewardship, Shellfish & Dairy Loan Programs

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Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)

➤ Program Background

- 2007- Legislature charged the Ruckelshaus Center to examine the conflict between protecting agricultural land and protecting critical areas under the Growth Management Act (GMA)
- 2010- Agreement is reached and legislation introduced in 2011 - ESHB 1886
 - No new state funding provided, SCC implemented within existing funds, sought federal funding
 - Under VSP statute, counties not obligated to implement VSP until funding provided
- 2011- Legislation created the Voluntary Stewardship Program at the Conservation Commission

VSP Overview

➤ Purposes of VSP include:

- Leverage 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;
- Encourage and foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership among county, tribal, environmental, and agricultural interests to better assure the program success;
- Improve compliance with other laws designed to protect water quality and fish habitat.

VSP Overview

➤ Purposes of VSP continued:

- Promote plans to protect and enhance critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted, while maintaining and improving the long-term viability of agriculture in the state of Washington and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses;
- Focus and maximize voluntary incentive programs to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship as an alternative to historic approaches used to protect critical areas;
- Rely upon RCW 36.70A.060 for the protection of critical areas for those counties that do not choose to participate in this program;

How does VSP fit with existing regulatory programs?

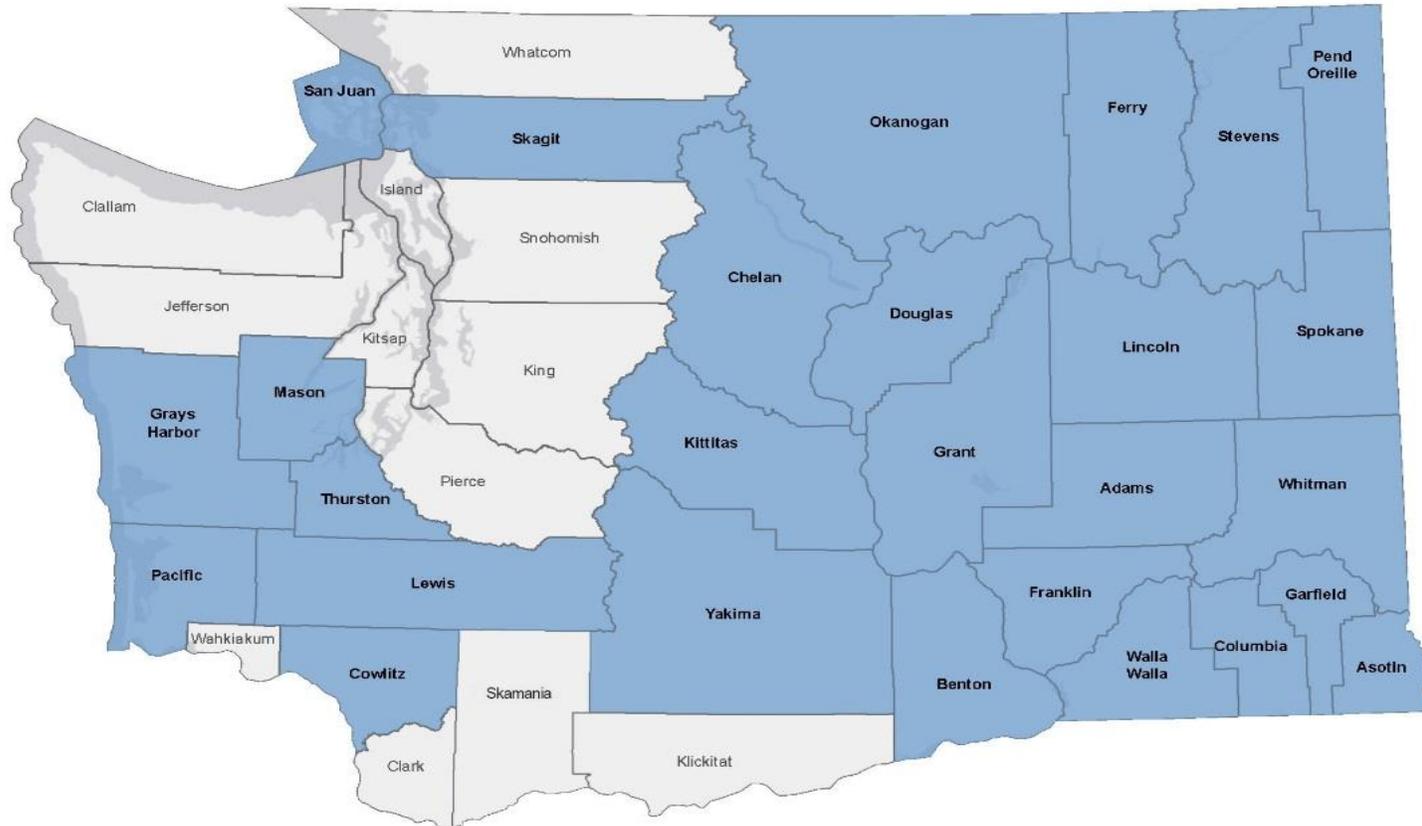
- Engagement in VSP is voluntary - for the county to opt-in, and for the landowner to participate.
- For an opt-in county, protection of critical areas from ag activities must be done through voluntary stewardship plans.
- Landowner not doing a stewardship plan is not subject to other local critical area regulations.
- But - other laws and regulations do still apply. State water quality laws, local clearing and grading ordinances, etc.

Voluntary Stewardship Program

- Program is an alternative approach for counties to protect critical areas on agricultural lands.
- Counties given two options
 - Opt-in to the Voluntary Stewardship Program or
 - Continue under existing law in GMA to protect critical areas on agricultural lands
 - Counties had 6 months from effective date to select if they wanted to opt-in to the program.
- By the opt-in date of January 21, 2012
 - 28 of 39 counties opted in

Voluntary Stewardship Program

COUNTIES OPTING-IN TO THE VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

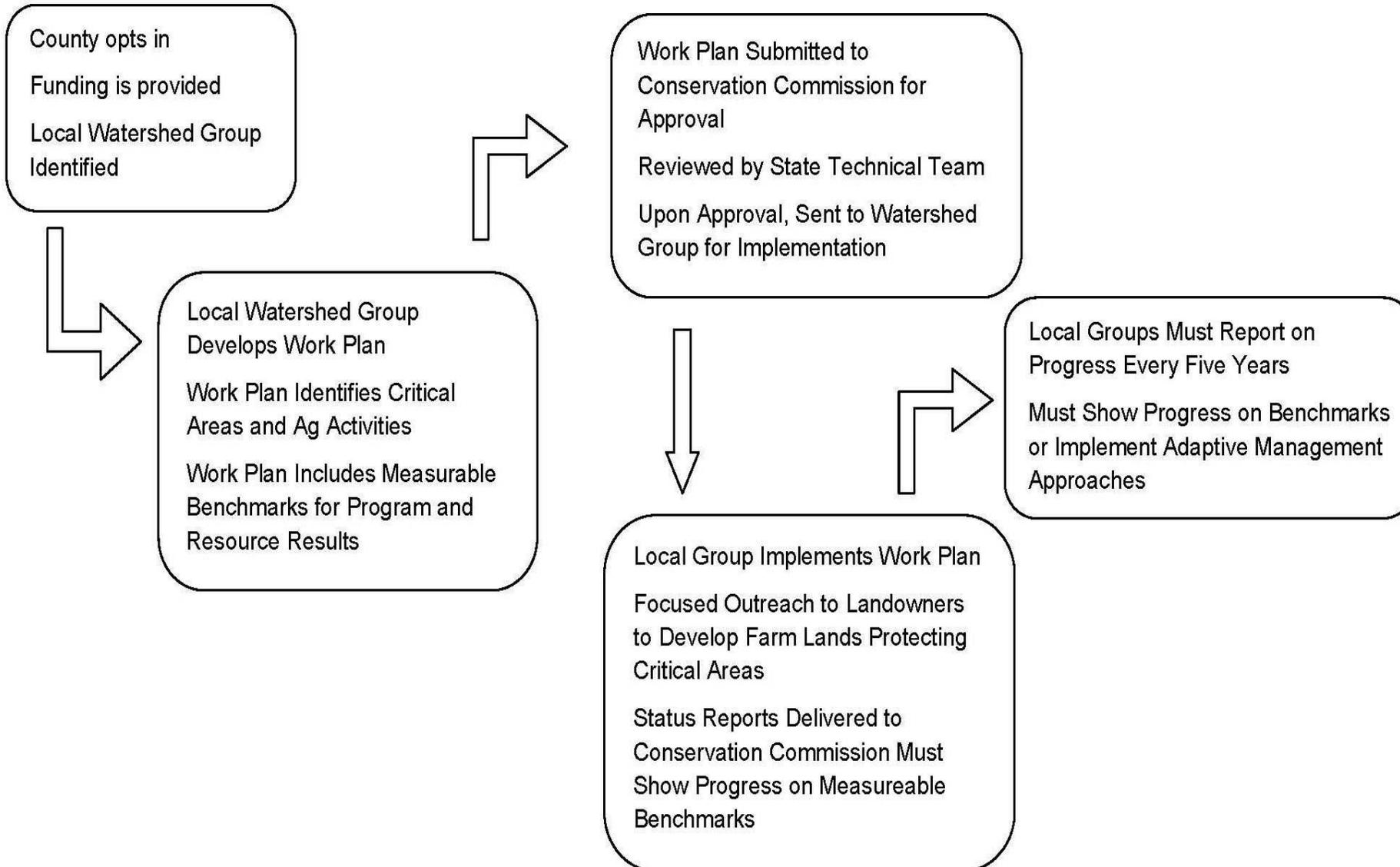


As of January 2016

VSP Implementation

- 2015-17 Operating budget included \$7.6 million for development of VSP work plans.
- Funding for each opt-in county is calculated at:
 - \$150,000 in year 1
 - \$120,000 in year 2
- Includes funding for 1.5 FTE at the SCC
- Includes funding for agency participation
- Funding is required to go to the counties
- Contracts will be developed for each county with deliverables

Voluntary Stewardship Program Process



Initial County Responsibilities

- Within 60 days of funds being available to a county to implement the program, the county must:
 - designate an entity to administer funds
 - County may designate itself, a tribe, or another entity to coordinate the watershed group.
 - designate a watershed group
 - must confer with tribes and stakeholders before designating the watershed group.
 - must acknowledge receipt of funds
 - Signing contract with the SCC - triggers timeline for completion of a work plan.

VSP Workgroup Topics to Address

- The work plan must:
 - Identify critical areas and ag activities
 - Identify economic viability of agriculture in the county
 - Identify outreach plan to contact landowners
 - Identify entity to provide landowner assistance
 - Identify measurable programmatic and implementation goals and benchmarks

Work Plan Elements

- In developing and implementing the work plan, the watershed group must:
 - Review and incorporate applicable water quality, watershed management, farmland protection, and species recovery data and plans;
 - Seek input from tribes, agencies, and stakeholders;
 - Develop goals for participation by agricultural operators necessary to meet the protection and enhancement benchmarks of the work plan;
 - Ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed;
 - Create measurable benchmarks that, within 10 years after receipt of funding, are designed to result in the protection and enhancement of critical areas functions and values through voluntary, incentive-based measures;
 - Designate the entity that will provide technical assistance;

Work Plan Implementation

- Various incentive programs are available to be identified in the landowner stewardship plan:
 - CREP - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
 - EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentive Program
 - CSP - Conservation Stewardship Program
 - ACEP - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
 - Conservation District Programs - Funded through SCC funding and other fund sources; such as ECY water quality grants and local assessment funds.

Progress on Work Plan Implementation

- Goals are programmatic and resource oriented:
 - Programmatic Goals - Those measuring progress on implementation of the work plan. Include landowner participation and stewardship plan implementation.
 - Natural Resource Goals - Are the identified critical areas being protected; is enhancement occurring on available funds?
 - Economic Resource Goals - Is the viability of ag being protected and enhanced?

Review and Program Evaluation

➤ At the County Level:

- VSP includes several elements for review and evaluation of the implementation of a work plan.
- VSP also includes consequences when progress is not being made towards the goals and benchmarks.
- Under the VSP, watershed groups are required to, in their work plan, establish baseline monitoring for:
 - Participation activities and implementation of the voluntary stewardship plans and projects;
 - stewardship activities; and
 - the effects on critical areas and agriculture relevant to the protection and enhancement benchmarks developed for the watershed.

Review and Program Evaluation

➤ At the County Level:

- The work group must also 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.

Questions?

▶ SCC VSP Contacts:

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Shellfish Program

- ▶ SCC received \$4 million for FY16-17 to provide Shellfish Grants to conservation districts for work with private landowners.
- ▶ The appropriation was provided solely for grants to complete natural resource enhancement projects necessary to improve water quality in shellfish growing areas.

Shellfish Program Rules

- ▶ Cost share awards are allocated based on the cost share amount requested in the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).
- ▶ Based on the cost share award, an additional 25% will be awarded to include the costs of technical assistance, engineering, travel and overhead.
- ▶ Cultural resource costs are awarded on a case by case basis in addition to cost share funding.
- ▶ Ineligible costs:
 - Goods & Services
 - Education & Outreach
- ▶ Significant movement on the project must begin within 120 days of the funding allocation.

Shellfish Funding Criteria for Award

- ▶ Projects must be in a watershed that has a shellfish growing area or
- ▶ Watershed with a resource concern of ocean acidification
- ▶ Projects must be clustered together

Shellfish Resource Impacts

- ▶ **Ocean acidification**--Ocean acidification is a reduction in the pH1 of seawater for an extended period of time due primarily to the uptake of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by the ocean. Local sources of acidification include nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxide gases, or nutrients and organic carbon from wastewater discharges and runoff from land-based activities.
- ▶ **Shellfish growing areas**--Growing area restoration involves finding and correcting nonpoint fecal pollution sources that reduce marine water quality and cause closure of commercial and recreational shellfish beds.
 - Examples of nonpoint fecal pollution are failing on-site sewage systems, improper management of animal waste, or any fecal pollution that finds its way to a creek, river, or storm drain and eventually ends up in marine waters

Targeted implementation of shellfish funding

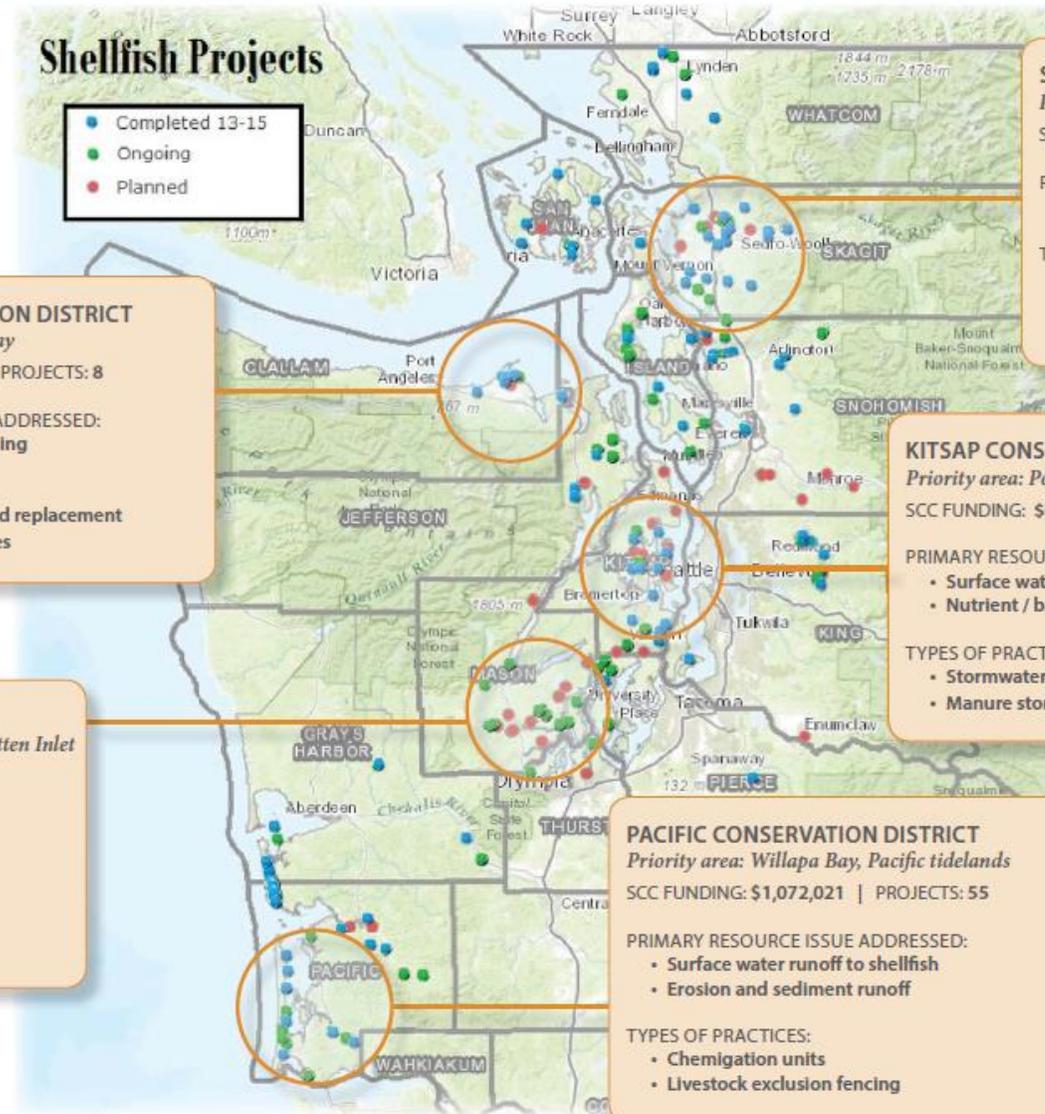
13-15 and 15-17 biennium: Examples of completed, ongoing, and planned shellfish projects



TOTAL SCC INVESTMENT:
\$5.1 million
PROJECTS FUNDED:
214

Shellfish Projects

- Completed 13-15
- Ongoing
- Planned



CLALLAM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Priority area: Dungeness Bay
SCC FUNDING: \$181,858 | PROJECTS: 8

PRIMARY RESOURCE ISSUE ADDRESSED:
• Nutrient / bacteria loading

TYPES OF PRACTICES:
• Septic system repair and replacement
• Manure storage facilities

SKAGIT CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Priority area: Samish Bay
SCC FUNDING: \$457,827 | PROJECTS: 37

PRIMARY RESOURCE ISSUE ADDRESSED:
• Nutrient / bacteria loading

TYPES OF PRACTICES:
• Septic repair and replacement
• Manure storage facilities
• Livestock exclusion fencing

KITSAP CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Priority area: Port Orchard Narrows, Rich Passage
SCC FUNDING: \$661,461 | PROJECTS: 19

PRIMARY RESOURCE ISSUE ADDRESSED:
• Surface water runoff to shellfish
• Nutrient / bacteria loading

TYPES OF PRACTICES:
• Stormwater infiltration
• Manure storage facilities

MASON CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Priority area: Oakland Bay, Case Inlet, Totten Inlet
SCC FUNDING: \$420,787 | PROJECTS: 19

PRIMARY RESOURCE ISSUE ADDRESSED:
• Nutrient / bacteria loading

TYPES OF PRACTICES:
• Manure storage facilities
• Livestock exclusion fencing

PACIFIC CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Priority area: Willapa Bay, Pacific tidelands
SCC FUNDING: \$1,072,021 | PROJECTS: 55

PRIMARY RESOURCE ISSUE ADDRESSED:
• Surface water runoff to shellfish
• Erosion and sediment runoff

TYPES OF PRACTICES:
• Chemigation units
• Livestock exclusion fencing



Dairy Loan Program

Legislative Budget Language

Dairy Nutrient Demonstration Low Interest Loans

- ▶ *The appropriation is subject to the following conditions and limitations: The appropriation is provided solely for low interest loans for two or more dairy nutrient management demonstration projects, with at least one located west of the cascades and one east of the cascades.*

Dairy Loan Program continued

- ▶ Awarded \$5 million for dairy low interest loans
- ▶ Currently in the process of writing a Request for Qualifications for an entity to manage the loan program

Questions?

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