

BENTON COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Portion of Chapter 7 Participation Objectives | January 2017

This is a subsection of Chapter 7 and follows the critical area protection and associated agricultural viability objectives under separate cover. All will be combined in the next version of the chapter.

7.0 GOALS, BENCHMARKS, AND PERFORMANCE METRICS

7.2 Participation Objectives

Participation and stewardship goals and benchmarks are to be identified in the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Work Plan.

RCW 36.70A.720 Watershed group's duties - Work plan - Conditional priority funding.

(1) A watershed group designated by a county under RCW 36.70A.715 must develop a work plan to protect critical areas while maintaining the viability of agriculture in the watershed. The work plan must include goals and benchmarks for the protection and enhancement of critical areas. In developing and implementing the work plan, the watershed group must:

(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;

Farmers and ranchers directly participate in VSP by implementing conservation projects on their properties, often with the help of participating technical providers.

Examples of such activities include the creation of individual stewardship plans and implementation of conservation practices such as irrigation efficiencies, grazing management, and others. See Appendix X for a checklist that could serve as an individual stewardship plan.

Indirect participation of agricultural producers in stewardship activities consists of many of the standard industry practices identified in Chapter 3, Agricultural Context, that are implemented on the initiative of a producer without the use of a federal, state, or non-profit incentive program. Examples of standard practices that have protective or beneficial impacts to critical areas to those identified in Appendix X Checklist. Because many practices are installed without participation in a particular program, but they have the effect of protecting or enhancing critical areas, the presence of the practices should be tracked and monitored.

Participation Goal

Promote volunteerism and stewardship of agricultural land and critical areas.

Participation Benchmarks

- A. Sufficient participation by commercial and non-commercial agricultural operators that achieves the protection of critical area functions and values across WRIA basins.
- B. Passive participation by commercial and non-commercial agricultural operators in VSP conservation practices is maintained or increased over 10 years on agricultural land.

Measurement

1. Indicators of active participation include:
 - Number of outreach events
 - Number/percentage of landowners contacted
 - Number of event attendees
 - Number of VSP participation signs and marketing materials distributed
 - Education opportunities provided
 - Technical assistance sought by producers (as tracked through meetings, calls, applications, and contracts with technical assistance providers)
 - Self-certification: See Appendix X for a checklist.
2. Passive participation in common stewardship practices may be tracked and reported using one or more methods:
 - Mapping and aerial photo evaluation of practices in place, and
 - Random sampling of farmers and ranchers in the field by technical assistance providers with willing landowners, or
 - Phone, mail, or online surveys, or
 - Census of agriculture or other broadly gathered and published information (only available periodically).