

Outreach

There are two primary timeframes to address regarding outreach: outreach to stakeholders in establishing the VSP Workgroup, and outreach conducted (in several phases) that provides information to interested stakeholders and the public that a VSP work plan is being prepared. There are statutory considerations for both of these components of outreach.

Outreach for the Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Plan has several objectives^[NA1]:

- 1. Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan***
- 2. Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders***
- 3. Gain responsibility and ownership of the Voluntary Stewardship Plan by the agricultural community***
- 4. Ensure that growers/producers know about the VSP work plan as we near adoption***
- 5. Bridge the long-standing gap between agricultural producers and resource agencies***

Establishing the workgroup^[NA2]

The legislation establishing the Voluntary Stewardship Program provides the following direction for appointing the VSP Watershed Workgroup:

“RCW 36.70A.715 (3) The watershed group must include broad representation of key watershed stakeholders and, at a minimum, representatives of agricultural and environmental groups and tribes that agree to participate. The county should encourage existing lead entities, watershed planning units, or other integrating organizations to serve as the watershed group.”

Benton County staff established a list of potential participants and contacted them. The lists were inclusive of the major sectors of agriculture and interest groups operating in the County. Formal letters were sent inviting each person to be a workgroup member.

For agricultural groups, invitations were extended to xxx.

For tribal government, an invitation was extended to, and accepted by, the Yakama Nation. An invitation was also extended to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. They did not respond to the invitation.

For environmental organizations, invitations were extended to:

- xxx

Specific state agencies with interest in VSP and expertise in related issues were asked to be part of the workgroup. This includes the Departments of Ecology, Agriculture, and Fish and Wildlife.

The final list of members included below shows the representatives of the various stakeholders who are members of the watershed workgroup.

General outreach:

RCW 36.70A.720 sets out the general considerations for outreach during the development of the VSP work plan. Section 1 (b) requires the work group to “seek input from tribes, agencies, and stakeholders.” Section 1 (d) requires the work group to “ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed.”

Outreach can be divided into three phases:

1. Early outreach: Ensure stakeholders are aware of the VSP workgroup and its efforts to prepare a plan;
2. Outreach as a draft plan is being developed: Ensure stakeholders know what the draft plan says and have an opportunity to provide feedback to workgroup before submittal to Conservation Commission
3. Implementation: Outreach to agricultural operators along with technical assistance, once a workplan is approved.

First phase: early outreach

The consultant team used the e-mail distribution lists for workgroup members provided by the County. A separate list was established for those persons wanting to track the VSP workplan development effort and receive the meeting materials. The county also maintains a list of persons interested in the meeting agendas and they established a website containing information about the VSP process: <http://www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0> Agendas and meeting materials provided to the work group are regularly posted to this website.

Second phase: outreach as a draft plan is being developed

The workgroup had several discussions about specific stakeholders and outreach required to reach them. The following table lists proposed outreach activities, as discussed by workgroup members. This will be a living document, and added to as outreach activities occur:

Outreach
Draft 2/6/17

Outreach Tasks	When	Who
1. Write general article on Benton VSP for workgroup members to use with their constituents	ASAP	Consultants and Workgroup
2. Prepare a newsletter discussing the draft workplan and its contents	When draft is complete	Consultants and Workgroup
3. Attend meeting of Audubon Society and brief them on the workplan	Anytime	Audubon representatives, plus other workgroup members
4. Outreach to growers/producers (which specific groups/organizations?)	Ongoing	Relevant representatives on workgroup, BCD staff
5. Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board	ASAP	WDFW representative (Mike Ritter) and others?
6. Informal work session for Board of County Commissioners	After draft VSP is issued	Neil, Lisa, Sarah, county staff, BCD staff, others?
7. Public workshops	Ongoing	

8. Presentation to Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Workgroup at quarterly meeting, perhaps in conjunction with VSP groups in Yakima and Kittitas counties	June meeting?	Perhaps Neil, Seth, Benton County and/or Yakama Nation representatives?
9. Write a press release		
10. Attend annual meetings for Farm organizations e.g. WA State Hort Association for tree fruit; Northwest Horticulture Council; WSU Extension for wine grape growers.	Dec – mid-January	
11. Good Fruit Grower Magazine article		
12. Benton County Farm Bureau, Cattleman's Association		
13. WA Dairy Federation (or meet directly with about 4 producers – main ones)		
14. Native Plant Society; Friends of Badger Mountain	Monthly meetings	
15. WA State Potato Commission	Meet with Chris Vogt	
16. Yakima Valley Fair in Grandview – second weekend of August	Second weekend of August	
17. Benton-Franklin Fair – first weekend in September		

Third phase: implementation

As noted above, the statute requires outreach to agricultural producers. RCW 36.70A.720 (1) (d) requires the work group to “ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed.”

The third phase and final phase of outreach occurs after adoption of work plan. Although this is considered the final phase of outreach, it is considered on-going. Additionally, outreach will be continued as needed to maintain a representative Work Group.

[Note: this section will be expanded as the work group talks about implementation strategies. It should address both outreach provided by technical service providers and general outreach about the VSP. It could also discuss the responsibilities of specific entities, including Benton County, the Benton Conservation District as Technical Service Provider, and other entities with responsibilities]