

# BENTON VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## Voluntary Participation & Practices Checklist

### What is the VSP?

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an optional, incentive-based approach to protecting critical areas while promoting agriculture. The VSP is allowed under the Growth Management Act to recognize the conservation that agricultural producers already do as stewards of their land and to avoid unnecessary regulation. Benton County is one of 27 counties that has “opted in” to VSP, and has received funding to develop a VSP Work Plan identifying goals and benchmarks.

The VSP work plan has been **locally prepared** and monitored by agricultural and environmental stakeholders; the VSP is voluntarily implemented by individual agricultural producers to protect critical areas and improve agricultural viability through conservation practices.

### What are Critical Areas?

Critical areas include (1) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, (2) wetlands, (3) frequently flooded areas, (4) geologically hazardous areas, and (5) critical aquifer recharge areas used for potable water. *Note:*

*See RCW 36.70A and WAC 365-190*

### How can participating in VSP benefit you?

Here are some ways that participating in the Benton VSP can benefit you:

- Be recognized for the conservation and stewardship you already do.
- Work together with other farmers to promote volunteerism versus additional regulatory controls. This means more certainty and less regulations.
- Find out about practices that conserve, improve, and increase efficient use of natural resources to support greater yields and produce quality.
- Create a baseline for your farm and farming in Benton County.
- Enhance the marketability of agricultural products.
- Promote a positive image of agriculture to the larger community.

### Benton County VSP Goals

Your participation can help meet the VSP Work Plan Goals and Benchmarks and avoid unnecessary critical area regulation while improving agricultural viability. Goals in the Draft Work Plan include:

Critical Area Goals	Agricultural Viability Aims associated with critical area protection and enhancement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consistent with the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan, ensure flows necessary to protect salmonids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain and increase reliability and availability of irrigation water.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protect surface water quality in streams, wetlands, and agricultural drains in hydrologic study areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support actions that benefit both stream functions and agricultural viability.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protect shrub-steppe habitat and connectivity without restricting ongoing agricultural activities</li> <li>▪ Protect native plant community diversity</li> <li>▪ Protect the functions and values of wetlands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support measures that provide incentives for conservation of key habitats.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manage shrub-steppe habitat to improve resiliency to fire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protect agriculture from unmanaged fire.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protect groundwater recharge in areas of declining water tables or where recharge can help maintain base flows for rivers and streams</li> <li>▪ Protect groundwater quality in areas of agricultural intersect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain and increase reliability and availability of irrigation water.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protect natural floodplain functions</li> <li>▪ Maintain or reduce hazards to physical safety associated with flooding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognize agricultural activities and techniques that are compatible with flooding.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protect the integrity of steep slopes associated with agricultural production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve soil health and reduce erosion.</li> </ul>

The VSP recognizes other market-based programs you may already participate in such as GlobalGAP, and does not increase requirements. The purpose of the VSP is to maintain critical area functions and values as they were as of July 2011.

### Is someone available to advise me on how I can be part of the VSP or implement conservation practices?

VSP offers technical assistance and incentives for willing producers for conservation practices that protect and enhance critical areas. The conservation practices also are intended to improve agricultural viability by reducing producer costs and increasing yields and quality in many cases. See contact information for Technical Providers to get assistance including cost-sharing of implementing conservation practices on your property:

#### Lead Technical Assistance Providers:

- Benton Conservation District <http://www.bentoncd.org/>

#### Supporting Technical Assistance Providers:

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>
- Washington State University Extension <http://extension.wsu.edu/benton-franklin/agriculture/>
- Benton VSP Program Administration <http://www.co.benton.wa.us/>

#### Project Website

[www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0](http://www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0)

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1. CREP: protect highly erodible soils along salmon-bearing streams
2. Fish screen
3. Irrigation efficiencies
4. Grazing management
5. Field borders
6. Nutrient Management

Photos: BCD.org

## PARTICIPATION & PRACTICES CHECKLIST

### 1. Provide Location Information

1. What basin is your agricultural property located within?
  - a. Lower Yakima
  - b. Rock Glade
  - c. Alkali-Squilchuck
2. Identify potential critical areas on, or near, property:
  - a. fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
  - b. wetlands
  - c. frequently flooded areas
  - d. geologically hazardous areas
  - e. critical aquifer recharge areas



Review critical area and agriculture maps at: [www. XXX.XXX](http://www.XXX.XXX) for potential critical areas on or near your property, such as ponds, streams, wetlands, steep slopes, etc.

### 2. Do you participate in any of the following conservation programs?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. Global Gap: <a href="http://www.scsglobalservices.com/globalgap-certification">www.scsglobalservices.com/globalgap-certification</a> <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Safe Quality Food Institute: <a href="http://www.sqfi.com">www.sqfi.com</a> <input type="checkbox"/>         |
| b. WSDA Organic System Plan: <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/">http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/</a> <input type="checkbox"/>                  | f. Vinewise: <a href="http://www.vinewise.org/eval/">http://www.vinewise.org/eval/</a> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. NRCS Conservation Plan: <a href="https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/">https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/</a> <input type="checkbox"/>          | g. Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| d. LIVE Certification: <a href="https://livecertified.org/standards">https://livecertified.org/standards</a> <input type="checkbox"/>                            |   |

### 3. Water Efficiencies/Management Practices

Water Efficiencies and Management practices can help enhance on farm irrigation efficiency and distribution, conserve water, save energy, decrease producer's costs, and may improve crop yield and production.

Conservation Practice Examples	I do this	Amount Implemented (since 2011)	I'm interested in this	Does not apply
Irrigation Canal or Lateral	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Irrigation Pipeline	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Irrigation System, Microirrigation, Drip	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Irrigation System, Sprinkler, Solid Set, Wheeline	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Irrigation Water Management, including Soil and Plant Moisture Monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pond Lining - Irrigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pumping Plant—Variable Frequency Drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Quantity Enhancements: Center Pivot low energy precise application (LEPA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Well for livestock, fire control, wildlife, and other agricultural uses	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Well Water Testing	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water trust agreement or other water exchange or transfer	<input type="checkbox"/>	(amt)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are there other Water Efficiencies/Management practices you are using? Please describe your practice(s), including whether you've implemented it since 2011, and the amount you've implemented.

#### 4. Land Management and Habitat

Land Management and Habitat practices can promote crop pollination, breakdown of organic matter to provide nutrients for crops, provide contaminant degradation, allow for agricultural pest control, reduce invasive species, and reduce the risk of wildfire. Additionally, practices can reduce erosion and improve water quality. For example, by fencing off streams and providing off-stream watering, producers can increase drinking water quality, pasture quality, stream bank stability, biodiversity, and wildlife habitats, while reducing disease incidents, water pollution, and erosion.

Conservation Practice Examples	I do this	Amount Implemented (since 2011)	I'm interested in this	Does not apply
Access Control to exclude animals, people, vehicles, and/or equipment from an area	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access Road: position away from water bodies and water courses; locate and build to control or reduce erosion	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brush Management to manage or remove woody plants that are invasive or noxious	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conservation Cover to provide vegetative cover, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fence (management of browsing animals or management of wildlife movement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Field Border to provide wildlife food and cover, protect soil and water quality.		(ft)		
Fish Screen to protect fish from injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrated Pest Management to control noxious weeds and invasive plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Livestock Pipeline to convey water for livestock or wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prescribed Grazing, including to reduce noxious weeds or invasive plants, manage fuel loads, and address erosion	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Riparian Forest Buffer	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seasonal high tunnel system for crops	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft <sup>2</sup> )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spring Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structures for wildlife: Raptor and bat nesting box for predator patrol	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tree and Shrub Establishment	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watering Facility for livestock or wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	(no)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetland Creation	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetland Enhancement	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetland Restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife and pollinator habitat planting	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Windbreak	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ARE THERE OTHER LAND MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT PRACTICES YOU ARE USING? PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR PRACTICE(S), INCLUDING WHETHER YOU'VE IMPLEMENTED IT SINCE 2011 AND THE AMOUNT YOU'VE IMPLEMENTED.

### 5. Soil Health and Erosion Control

Soil Health and Erosion Control practices help maintain agricultural viability for producers through improving soil health and water quality; avoiding soil loss, crusting, high summer temperatures, and moisture loss; and maintaining the land base for agricultural purposes.

Conservation Practice Examples	I do this	Amount Implemented (since 2011)	I'm interested in this	Does not apply
Access Road: position away from water bodies and water courses; locate and build to control or reduce erosion	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conservation Cover to provide permanent vegetative cover, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cover Crop for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire wise: wildfire protection to maintain cover/reduce soil loss	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heavy use area protection to stabilize ground surface	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Irrigation Water Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutrient Management to conserve nutrients, minimize pollution	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mulching to control erosion and conserve soil moisture	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prescribed Grazing, including to reduce erosion and manage fuel loads	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residue and Tillage Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ac)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seasonal High Tunnel System for crops and soil moisture	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vegetative Barrier along contour of slopes or concentrated flow areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Windbreak to reduce soil erosion, protect plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	(ft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ARE THERE OTHER SOIL HEALTH AND EROSION CONTROL PRACTICES YOU ARE USING? PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR PRACTICE(S) INCLUDING WHETHER YOU'VE IMPLEMENTED IT SINCE 2011 AND THE AMOUNT YOU'VE IMPLEMENTED.