

BENTON COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Outreach Plan | **DRAFT** March 21, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Outreach for the Benton County Voluntary Stewardship Plan has three primary phases:

1. Outreach to stakeholders in establishing the VSP Workgroup (completed during 2016).
2. Outreach to interested stakeholders and the public that a VSP work plan is being prepared (through June, 2017).
3. Outreach during plan implementation (after June of 2017).

Descriptions of each outreach phase, along with relevant goals, tactics, and metrics (if relevant) are described below.

PHASE 1: ESTABLISHING THE WORKGROUP

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.”

Phase 1 Outreach Goals

- Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan
- Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders
- Gain responsibility and ownership of the Voluntary Stewardship Plan by the agricultural community
- Bridge the gap between agricultural producers and resource agencies

Phase 1 Outreach Tactics

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

For agricultural groups, several agricultural organizations agreed to participate and are shown in the list of members. Invitations were also extended to:

1. Easterday Farms - Called and left message 3/4/16; emailed 3/10/16
2. Kiona Vineyards –Called and left message on 3/4/16
3. Roza Irrigation District – declined invitation and suggested Kennewick Irrigation District

4. Boushey Vineyards – Discussed on 3/8/16 and declined information due to lack of staff to do this
5. Wyckoff Farms contacted on 2/29/16 and 3/4/16, called back to decline invitation.

For tribal government, an invitation was extended to the Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla. The Yakama Nation accepted the invitation; the Umatilla Tribe did not respond. The Umatilla Tribe was contacted by on 3/4/16, and by e-mail on 3/10/16.

For environmental organizations, invitations were extended to several organizations. Participants are shown in the list of members. Organizations invited but declining to participate were Ducks Unlimited on 3/4/16 (declined the invitation due to staff resources) and Futurewise (returned call on 3/16/16 to decline invitation due to their staff resources). If an e-mail address was available, they were included on the distribution list to receive materials so they could track if they desired.

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 Department of Natural Resources said they were not able to participate in the work group but would like to be kept in the loop if issues which may affect DNR land arise.

The final list of members (listed at the end of this appendix) shows the representatives of the stakeholder groups who are members of the watershed workgroup.

PHASE 2: OUTREACH DURING WORK PLAN PREPARATION

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.”

Phase 2 Outreach Goals

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

Phase 2 Outreach Tactics

The county hired a consulting team (Berk Team) to facilitate the workgroup and to prepare the draft Work Plan. The team established e-mail distribution lists for both workgroup members and those persons wanting to track the VSP Work Plan development effort. The county also established a website containing information about the VSP process:

<http://www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0>

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:

Table 1. Phase 2 Outreach Tactics

Tactic	Audience	Relevant Outreach Goals	Performance Metrics	Timeline	Who
Write article on Benton VSP for workgroup members to use with their constituents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers Stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article is distributed to workgroup members Number of article placements with organizations 	Spring 2017	Consultants and Workgroup
Create Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) handout for workgroup members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers Stakeholders General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of FAQs handed out 	Draft: March 2017 Workgroup meeting	Consultants and Workgroup
Attend meeting of Audubon Society and brief them on the Work Plan	Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 		Anytime	Audubon representatives, plus other workgroup members, Michelle
Outreach to growers/producers (which specific groups/organizations?)	Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing the Work Plan 	Number of calls, meetings, etc. with producers, prior to Work Plan approval	Ongoing	Relevant representatives on workgroup, BCD staff
Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board	Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek participation in, and understanding of, Work Plan development by other stakeholders 		ASAP	WDFW representative (Mike Ritter) and others? Sarah

Tactic	Audience	Relevant Outreach Goals	Performance Metrics	Timeline	Who
General public workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers Stakeholders General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a Work Plan Seek participation in, and understanding of, Work Plan development by other stakeholders 	Number of people who attend workshops	Ongoing	March – get timeframe from WG - All
Presentation to Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Workgroup at quarterly meeting, perhaps in conjunction with VSP groups in Yakima and Kittitas counties	Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek participation in, and understanding of, Work Plan development by other stakeholders 	Presentation completed	June meeting?	Perhaps Neil, Seth, Benton County and/or Yakama Nation representatives?
Write a press release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers Stakeholders General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing the Work Plan Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 	Number of media stories about the VSP		Consultants
Attend annual meetings for Farm organizations e.g. WA State Hort Association for tree fruit; Northwest Horticulture Council; WSU Extension for wine grape growers.	Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 	Number of meetings attended	Dec – mid-January	
Good Fruit Grower Magazine article	Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan 	Article is placed		Consultants

Tactic	Audience	Relevant Outreach Goals	Performance Metrics	Timeline	Who
Benton County Farm Bureau, Cattleman's Association	Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan 	Number of meetings attended Number of producers in attendance		Michelle went with Fred in Feb and again in March
WA Dairy Federation (or meet directly with about 4 producers – main ones)	Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan 	Number of meetings attended Number of producers in attendance		
Native Plant Society; Friends of Badger Mountain	Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 	Number of organizational meetings attended	Monthly meetings	Michelle? Maybe Sarah?
WA State Potato Commission	Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan 	Number of producers in attendance	Meet with Chris Vogt	

Global Effectiveness Measure:

- Determine public awareness through tools such as measuring unique visitors to VSP website (Google Analytics).
- Other?

PHASE 3: OUTREACH DURING VSP IMPLEMENTATION

The draft Benton County VSP Work Plan is expected to be complete by July 2017. For the purposes of this Outreach Plan, implementation outreach activities will be assumed to be begun at that time. Some outreach activities from Phase 2 may extend into Phase 3.

Because the VSP will be implemented through the voluntary participation of private agricultural producers, an important outreach goal is a high level of participation from producers located in areas of critical area intersect. Producer participation includes filling out checklists with technical providers and implementing new practices; participation will likely be measured through the number of cost-shares with the Conservation District. A specific metric for producer participation is part of the March 2017 Workgroup meeting agenda.

In addition, RCW 36.70A.720(1)(d) requires the work group to “ensure outreach and technical assistance is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed” once a work plan is approved.

Phase 3 Outreach Goals

- Seek wide awareness of VSP work plan by producers
- Gain participation in VSP activities by producers in target areas
- Provide technical assistance to participating producers in target areas
- Gain responsibility and ownership of the VSP by the agricultural community
- Bridge the gap between agricultural producers and resource agencies
- Seek understanding of the work plan and its implementation among stakeholders and the general public

Audiences

- Primary Audience: Agricultural producers in areas of critical area intersect
- Secondary Audiences:
 - Interested stakeholders, including environmental organizations and tribes
 - The general public

Messaging

To Producers:

What the VSP is (non-regulatory, voluntary), how it can benefit you, and how to participate.

To stakeholders and the general public:

How the VSP protects the environment and agricultural viability. Program oversight, schedule, and goals.

Phase 3 Outreach Tactics

Table 2. Implementation: Potential Outreach Tactics

Tactic	Audience	Relevant Outreach Goals	Performance Metrics	Timeline	Who
Each Conservation District sends a letter to agricultural producers in areas of critical area intersect, introducing them to VSP and inviting them to participate.	Producers in target areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek wide awareness of VSP work plan by producers • Gain participation in VSP activities by agricultural producers • Provide technical assistance to participating producers in target areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of producers in target areas contacted by BCD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter prepared: Spring 2017 • Letter sent: after June 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter content: Consultant • Develop list of producer names & addresses: _____ • Mail letters: BCD
<p>Producer fills out the short checklist.</p> <p>Details: Prior to interfacing with the Conservation District, the District could provide the short form to the producer to get some information ahead of a walk through. Or the short-form could serve as a self-certification form for larger producers where there are more staff resources and less need to interface with technical providers.</p>	Producers in target areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain participation in VSP activities by agricultural producers • Provide technical assistance to participating producers in target areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of checklists filled out by producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After June 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCD/ Producer
<p>Producer meets with Technical Service Provider. Technical providers fill in form based on a one-on-one discussion with the producer.</p>	Producers in target areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain participation in VSP activities by agricultural producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of meetings between BCD and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After June 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCD

Tactic	Audience	Relevant Outreach Goals	Performance Metrics	Timeline	Who
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance to participating producers in target areas 	producers in target areas		
Producer and Technical Service Provider develop cost-share agreement for relevant new conservation practices.	Producers in target areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain participation in VSP activities by agricultural producers • Provide technical assistance to participating producers in target areas 		After June 2017	BCD and producers
Informal work session for Board of County Commissioners	General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 		After June 2017	Neil, Lisa, Sarah, county staff, BCD staff, others?
Prepare a newsletter discussing the draft work plan and its contents	Stakeholders and general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek wide awareness of VSP work plan by producers • Seek early participation by growers/producers in developing a work plan • Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter article completed • Number of article placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant

Tactic	Audience	Relevant Outreach Goals	Performance Metrics	Timeline	Who
		development by other stakeholders			
Yakima Valley Fair in Grandview – second weekend of August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers Stakeholders General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek wide awareness of VSP work plan by producers Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 		Second weekend of August	
Benton-Franklin Fair – first weekend in September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers Stakeholders General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek wide awareness of VSP work plan by producers Seek participation in, and understanding of, work plan development by other stakeholders 		September 2017	

Global Effectiveness Metric:

- Determine public awareness through tools such as measuring unique visitors to VSP website (Google Analytics) and periodic survey of participants (phone survey is ideal; online is secondary method).

OUTREACH CHAPTER APPENDIX A: WORK GROUP INFORMATION

Watershed Work Group Meetings

The work group held its first meeting on June 2, 2016. Following meetings were held monthly, generally on the fourth Monday of each month in Prosser.

Watershed Work Group Members/Alternates

- Perry Beale, WA State Dept. of Agriculture
- Nicole Berg, Benton County Wheat Growers
- Debbie Berkowitz, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
- Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation
- Michael Crower, Barker Ranch
- Seth Defoe, Kennewick Irrigation District
- Robin French, Benton County Farm Bureau
- Ron Harle, Hogue Ranches
- Gwen Hoheisel, WSU Extension
- Phil Hull, Zirkle Fruit
- Shane Johnson, Ag Association Management (represents 14 associations)
- Tom Mackay, AgriNorthwest
- John Marvin, Yakama Nation
- Zach Meyer, WA Dept. of Ecology
- Fred Muller, Benton County Cattlemen's Association
- Lori Nelson, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
- Mark Nielson, Benton Conservation District
- Larry Pearson, Tapteil Winery
- John Raap, Olson Brothers Ranches Inc.
- Mike Ritter, WDFW
- Evan Sheffels, WA State Farm Bureau
- Karen Sowers, Tapteal Greenway Association
- Matt Vickery, AgriNorthwest

OUTREACH CHAPTER APPENDIX B: DRAFT VSP INVITATION LETTER

Dear Producer,

The Benton Conservation District invites your participation in a new voluntary program that protects critical environmental areas while promoting agriculture. It's called the **Voluntary Stewardship Program, or VSP**.

The VSP is a program under the Growth Management Act to avoid unnecessary regulation. Benton County has "opted in" to VSP and developed a VSP Work Plan. The Work Plan has been **locally prepared** and is monitored by local agricultural and environmental stakeholders. The VSP is voluntarily implemented by individual agricultural producers to protect critical areas and improve agricultural viability through conservation practices. Participating in the Benton VSP could benefit you in several ways:

- Work together with other farmers to promote volunteerism versus additional regulatory controls. This means more certainty and less regulations.
- Be recognized for the conservation and stewardship you already do.
- Find out about practices that make efficient use of natural resources and support greater yields and produce quality.
- Enhance the marketability of agricultural products.

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. The success of our VSP program depends on recognizing the good work you are doing now to steward your land and improve your productivity.

Tell us a little about you:

- What kind of farm or ranch do you have? What is working well? What could be working better?
- What kinds of water efficiencies/management practices have you been implementing?
- What kind of livestock management practices have you implemented?
- What about land management and habitat practices?
- Have you had to address soil erosion or soil health measures?

As a technical service provider, we are here to meet your needs, including cost-sharing for implementation of conservation practices on your property. Please let us know if you would like to have an individual meeting with us. You can contact us at [phone, email]. We will be following up with a phone call within the next month. Please fill out the short form included to help identify potential or existing conservation practices. [if included]

Sincerely,

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