

The background of the entire page is a green field filled with white contour lines, resembling a topographic map. The lines are of varying thickness and form irregular, organic shapes that flow across the page.

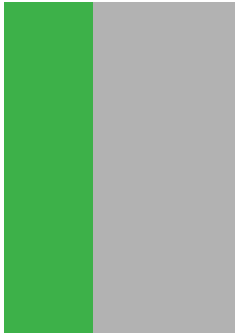
VSP

Voluntary Stewardship Program Walla Walla County

**Walla Walla Conservation District
325 N. 13th Ave.
Walla Walla, WA 99362**

**8:00 AM to 4:30 PM
509-956-3777**

OVERVIEW



WALLA WALLA COUNTY

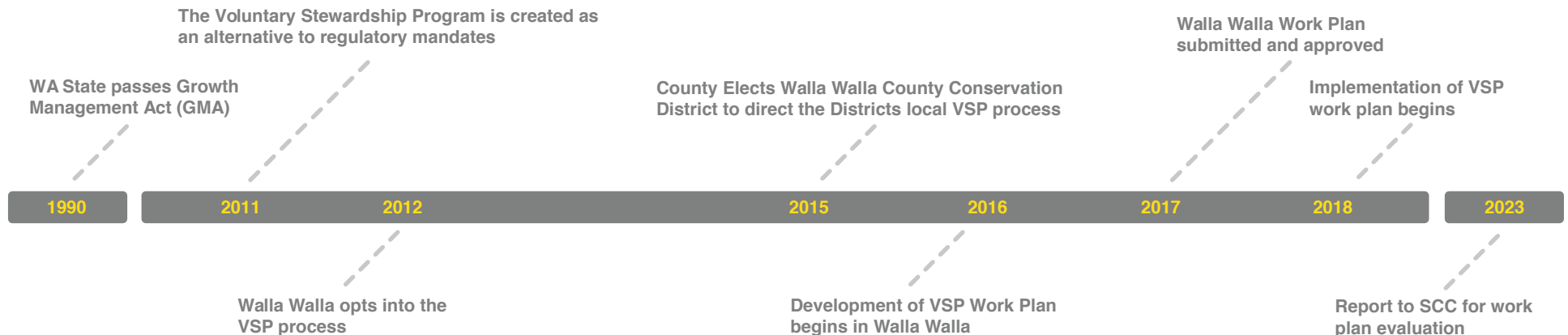
The primary habitat types in Walla Walla County are agriculture/pasture, shrub-steppe, and at higher elevations, evergreen forest. Each type holds high habitat value and a unique assemblage of plant and wildlife species. Additionally, valuable riparian habitat lines the various streams and rivers throughout the Walla Walla River Basin.

Agriculture is the most significant single industry in Walla Walla County and the County's largest land use. Dryland wheat and other grains are the leading crops, but hay, irrigated alfalfa seed, fruits, and vegetables are also significant products grown in the County. The role of agriculture within watersheds, including the number and acreage of farms, the economic value of crops and livestock, and the risk of the conversion of farmland was taken into account when developing the VSP Work Plan for Walla Walla County.

VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (VSP)

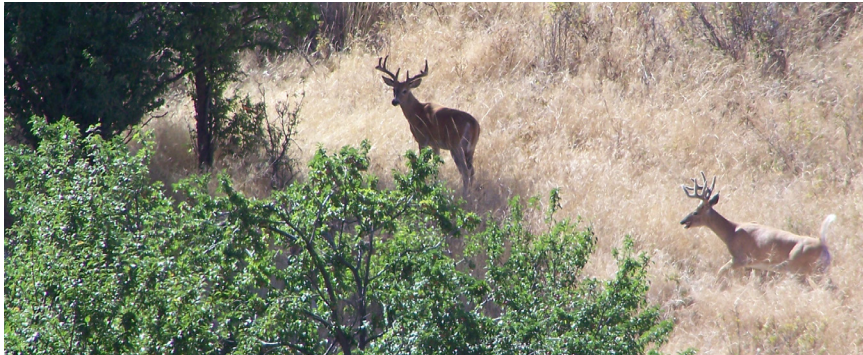
The Voluntary Stewardship Program is a county-led alternative to regulation. It gave counties the option to develop locally led work plans that use voluntary and incentive based tools to protect critical areas and viable agriculture. Local stakeholders worked together to develop these work plans, monitor, and report the results. The Voluntary Stewardship Program is the how Walla Walla County can fulfill Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements for protecting critical areas (outlined on the next page), while still maintaining the viability of agriculture.

The Voluntary Stewardship Program works under the assumption that complex environmental problems can be solved through voluntary cooperation rather than regulatory mandates.



CRITICAL AREAS

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires counties to identify and protect lands with critical areas. These areas consist of wetlands, frequently flooded areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, geologically hazardous areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.



FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Fish and wildlife habitat critical areas are guided by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Priority Habitats and Species list. Local priorities include wintering habitat for birds of prey, unique habitats within the county, habitat for neotropical birds, and more. Among other things, protection of these critical areas aims to increase fish habitat, improve county zoning, and maintain forest buffers.



WETLANDS

Wetlands are areas that are saturated by surface or groundwater and support vegetation adapted for life in these conditions. Distinguishing between natural and artificial wetlands can be difficult, but is important to determine. The Walla Walla Work Plan encourages producers to develop management alternatives for farming saturated field depressions, improve wetland inventory, and verify historical use.



FREQUENTLY FLOODED AREAS

Lands in the floodplain subject to one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year are considered frequently flooded areas. These areas perform important hydrologic functions but also present a risk to persons and property. Flood events are increasing in frequency, making it ever more pressing to restore stream and floodplain function.



CRITICAL AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS

Areas that have a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water are labeled as critical areas under VSP. Areas that are subject to contamination or are susceptible to reduced recharge are particularly important. Groundwater levels are declining, leading to increasing stress on already limited resources. VSP can work to mitigate these effects by, among other things, developing a local water plan and implementing shallow aquifer recharge projects.



GEOLOGICALLY HAZARDOUS AREAS

Geologically hazardous areas include areas that are susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events. They can be broken down into four categories:

WIND SUSCEPTIBILITY OF EROSION

Erosion areas are the largest critical area in Walla Walla County. Weather patterns, soil type, and some tillage practices contribute to the wind susceptibility of erosion.



WATER SUSCEPTIBILITY OF EROSION

Like wind erosion, erosion caused by water is a major concern in the County. Soil type, weather, and historical practices contribute to this problem.



SEISMIC AND LIQUIFACTION RISK

Saturated and silty soils can behave like a liquid during a seismic event. To avoid liquefaction events, landowners are encouraged to adopt best management practices for irrigation water resources management.



LANDSLIDES AND STEEP SLOPES

Steep slope areas in Walla Walla County are mainly basalt outcrops along major rivers. The VSP will address these areas with best management practices specific to each site.



VSP WORK PLAN

The Walla Walla County VSP Work Plan aims to foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership among county, tribal, environmental, and agricultural interests and maximize existing voluntary incentive programs so as to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship practices.

WORK PLAN GOALS

ALL CRITICAL AREAS

Increase awareness of the benefits and hazards of critical areas.

FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Maintain existing 2011 fish and wildlife habitat.

CRITICAL AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS

Limit aquifer level decline related to agricultural use and reduce agricultural pollutants.

WETLANDS

No net loss of wetlands.

FREQUENTLY FLOODED AREAS

Increased flood event resilience.

GEOLOGIC HAZARD AREAS

Protect critical soil areas from soil loss, reduce landslide potential on rangeland, increase awareness of liquifaction potential.



COST SHARING

In a VSP cost-share project, the landowner only pays a portion of a project's total cost -- the remaining portion is paid by a project sponsor. Using funds from the State Conservation Commission (SCC) Walla Walla County Conservation District offers cost sharing as an incentive for landowners to install eligible conservation projects.



CONSERVATION PLANS

Landowners enrolled in the Voluntary Stewardship Program follow a conservation plan in order to meet conservation goals. If a landowner does not have an existing conservation plan, a VSP stewardship plan can be created. This simple and straightforward document is completed by both the landowner and conservation district and identifies which Best Management Practices (BMPs) are appropriate for the landowner's operation.

VSP COMPONENTS

The Voluntary Stewardship Program helps to formalize and strengthen the relationship between landowners and the critical areas on their land. The Walla Walla County Conservation District (WWCCD) helps facilitate these plans and assist in their implementation. WWCCD works with landowners to secure local, state, and federal financial assistance for these projects.

CRITICAL AREAS



VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PLAN



THE LANDOWNER



WALLA WALLA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT



FUNDING SOURCES



PRIORITIZING AGRICULTURE

The Voluntary Stewardship Program is intended to ensure the protection of critical areas while maintaining the viability of agriculture. It is imperative that farmers and ranchers maintain an economically successful business, keep the land in agriculture long-term, and sustain the land so that it will remain productive in the future.

The Voluntary Stewardship Program benefits agriculture because VSP demonstrates that voluntary measures are the most effective way to protect critical areas on working agriculture lands.



VSP BENEFITS AGRICULTURE BY:

Requiring the viability of agriculture be maintained.

VSP sets forth as a given that the viability of agriculture is just as important a consideration as the protection of critical areas.

Offering an alternative to heavy-handed, state-level regulatory mandates.

It is difficult for state level regulatory measures to address the unique needs of each county. Moreover, these methods do not respond to the individual needs of producers. The VSP takes a different approach: locally developing work plans allow landowners a say in their work plan's priorities and the flexibility to take on what measures they can.

Allowing landowners to self-select into the program.

The VSP is completely voluntary. Individuals decide what practices are viable for their situation. Each producer decides what measures to implement to contribute to the conservation of our County's resources.

Leveraging existing cost share programs.

The VSP uses local, state, and federal financial assistance programs to help landowners implement their conservation plans.

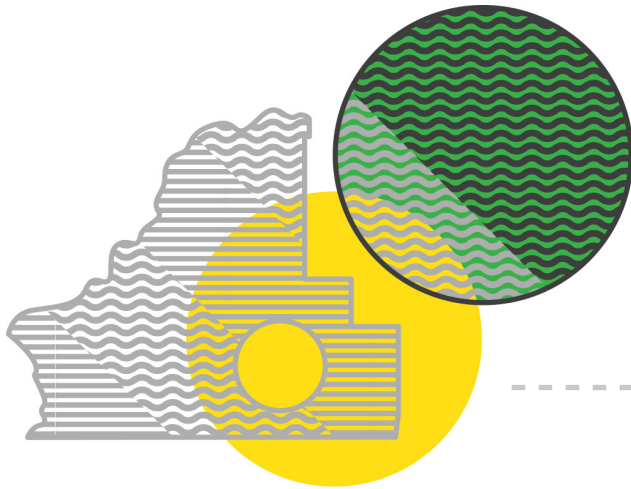
Thinking long-term.

Conserving critical areas makes Walla Walla County a more sustainable place for agriculture production for years to come.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

NEXT STEPS

In order to remain in the Voluntary Stewardship Program, Walla Walla County must document protection of critical areas on a watershed scale. To help the county meet these goals, go check out the critical area mapping tool and, if you are a landowner, consider completing a voluntary stewardship plan. You can find our website at: www.wwccd.net



1

CRITICAL AREA MAPPING TOOL

Use the critical area mapping tool on our website (www.wwccd.net) to find which critical areas are on your land.



2

COMPLETE A VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Our County's stewardship plan is a simple four page checklist to document what you are already doing to protect your critical areas.

RESOURCES

The following programs are only part of the many opportunities that VSP enrolled landowners can use to cost-share in the implementation of new conservation practices on their property.

WASHINGTON STATE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION GRANTS

Irrigation Efficiencies, Natural Resource Investment grants, Firewise or Fire recovery grants

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Floodplain by Design, Centennial & 319 grants, and Terry Hussemen Account grants

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

WDFW grants

WASHINGTON STATE RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

ALEA, Salmon Recovery, Washington Wildlife and Recreation program

FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS



USDA - NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs

USDA - FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Agriculture Loss Coverage-County (ARC-CO), Price Loss Coverage, Marketing assistance loans or loan deficiency payments, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), Tree Assistance Program (TAP)

US FISH AND WILDLIFE (USFW)

Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Conservation Banks

VSP CONTACTS

WALLA WALLA VSP TECHNICAL LEAD

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WALLA WALLA SUPPORT

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This booklet was designed and printed in 2018 by
the Walla Walla County Conservation District

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WWCCD is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of the natural resources of Walla Walla County, facilitated by working on a voluntary basis with landowners to identify opportunities and create solutions, while consistently providing education, information, and assistance whenever possible.

