



August 2021  
Lincoln County Voluntary Stewardship Program

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## Biennial Report: 2019–2021

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Lincoln County Voluntary Stewardship Program

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Prepared for  
Lincoln County and the Washington State  
Conservation Commission

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BLM	United States Bureau of Land Management
County	Lincoln County
CPPE	Conservation Practice Physical Effect
Ecology	Washington State Department of Ecology
FY	fiscal year
ISP	Individual Stewardship Plan
LCCD	Lincoln County Conservation District
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
RCP	Regional Conservation Partnership Program
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VSP	Voluntary Stewardship Program
Work Group	Lincoln County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Group
Work Plan	<i>Lincoln County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Plan</i>
WSSC	Washington State Conservation Commission



# 1 Introduction

This Biennial Report (report) for fiscal years (FYs) 2019–2021 is intended to document the status and accomplishments of the *Lincoln County Voluntary Stewardship Program Approved Work Plan* (Work Plan; Anchor QEA 2018), which was approved by the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) in May 2018<sup>1</sup>. This report only documents implementation efforts that have occurred since May July 1, 2018 following Work Plan approval and through June 30, 2019 (end of FYs 2017–2019). This report also documents ongoing and planned implementation efforts which will be further reported in future reports to the WSCC.

The Lincoln County Conservation District (LCCD), under direction of the Lincoln County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Group (Work Group), developed this report to provide a periodic review of the effectiveness and accomplishments of Lincoln County's (County's) Work Plan in meeting the purpose and intent of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP; Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 36.70A.700[2]).

This report includes the following:

- A summary of actions and accomplishments made by the Work Group in meeting the VSP goals **from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021** the 2019 to 2021 period, as described above
- A report on the progress toward meeting the goals identified in the Work Plan as measured in accordance with the Work Plan
- A description of how adaptive management needs are being identified and instituted
- A report of the status of Work Plan implementation including progress toward meeting the protection and enhancement benchmarks

## 1.1 Requirements

This report fulfills the state requirements outlined under RCW 36.70A.720 (1)(j), which states that as a part of Work Plan implementation, the Work Group must “conduct periodic evaluations, institute adaptive management, and provide a written report of the status of plans and accomplishments to the county and to the commission within sixty days after the end of each biennium.” The first report biennial report for FYs 2017–2019 was submitted in August 2019(2018).

Per the VSP Policy Advisory No. 05-18 issued by the WSCC, the report should include a summary of how Work Plan implementation is making progress toward meeting the purpose and intent of the

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<sup>1</sup> The *Lincoln County VSP Work Plan* was approved by the Washington State Conservation Commission on April 30, 2018. The approved version of the Work Plan was issued in May 2018.

VSP (RCW 36.70A.700[2]). As of June 30, 2019, VSP Policy Advisory No. 05-18 is the only guidance provided by the WSCC on the requirements of the report.

Table 1 provides the location in this report where information on the status and progress toward meeting the intent of the VSP can be found. The numbers in the left column correspond with the elements found in VSP Policy Advisory No. 05-18.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Progress Toward Meeting VSP Intent**

No.	VSP Intent	Lincoln County VSP Biennial Report (FYs 2019–2021)
1	The protection and enhancement of critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 2.1</b> describes outreach to landowners by the LCCD that has encouraged participation in stewardship strategies and practices to protect critical areas and promote agricultural viability.</li> <li>• <b>Section 2.2</b> describes conservation strategies and practices that have been implemented since July 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Table 4</b> summarizes conservation strategies and practices implemented since July 2019.</li> </ul>
2	The maintenance and improvement of the long-term viability of agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Table 4</b> summarizes the agricultural viability benefits from conservation strategies and practices that have been implemented since July 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Section 2.6</b> describes how implementation efforts have improved agricultural viability.</li> </ul>
3	Reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Table 4</b> describes conservation strategies and practices that have been implemented since July 2019 that have a beneficial effect on agricultural viability.</li> <li>• <b>Table 5</b> summarizes outreach efforts from the LCCD and participation by landowners to implement conservation strategies and practices that benefit agricultural viability.</li> </ul>
4	The maximization of the use of voluntary incentive programs to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship as an alternative to historical approaches used to protect critical areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 2.2</b> summarizes projects implemented by landowners since July 2019, which include funding from seven different voluntary incentive programs benefiting ecosystem stewardship.</li> </ul>
5	The leveraging of existing resources by relying upon existing work and plans in counties and local watersheds, as well as existing state and federal programs to the maximum extent practicable to achieve program goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 2.2</b> summarizes voluntary incentive programs that provide funding to benefit ecosystem stewardship.</li> <li>• <b>Work Plan Appendix D: Existing and Related Plans, Programs, and Regulations</b> describes available resources, plans, and programs being utilized or available to support VSP implementation. No additional resources have been added since submittal of the 2019 biennial report.</li> </ul>

No.	VSP Intent	Lincoln County VSP Biennial Report (FYs 2019–2021)
6	Ongoing efforts to encourage and foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership among county, tribal, environmental, and agricultural interests to better assure the program success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 2.1</b> summarizes the methods the LCCD is using to reach out to interested parties and landowners, including public meetings and regular website updates to encourage partnerships in the community.</li> </ul>
7	Ongoing efforts to improve compliance with other laws designed to protect water quality and fish habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 2.3</b> describes monitoring efforts from the LCCD that include the use of data that is also used to determine compliance with existing water quality and fish habitat laws and regulations. New, publicly available information collected by the LCCD during monitoring will be made available to the appropriate agencies as applicable to assist with their monitoring programs.</li> <li>• <b>Section 2.2</b> summarizes projects implemented by landowners since July 2019. Direct seed cost-share projects with Ecology help comply with water quality programs by helping reduce agricultural runoff.</li> </ul>
8	A description of efforts showing how relying upon voluntary stewardship practices as the primary method of protecting critical areas does not require the cessation of agricultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Table 4</b> demonstrates that based on implementation efforts, Lincoln County is on track to meet goals and benchmarks, indicating successful implementation of the VSP. This will be further supported and verified through continued monitoring and implementation efforts that will also be captured in the next 5-year report.</li> <li>• <b>Section 2.6</b> describes how participating in the VSP allows landowners to protect and enhance critical area functions while also increasing agricultural viability.</li> </ul>

## 2 Summary of Actions and Accomplishments

This section includes a summary of activities the County, LCCD, and others have implemented or completed that support Work Plan implementation and monitoring since July 2019.

### 2.1 Outreach

#### 2.1.1 Completed Outreach Activities

Lincoln County has delegated responsibility to the LCCD for managing and facilitating the VSP process. Continued public outreach and education is integral to implementing the Work Plan. Each year, the LCCD has committed to reaching out to 10% of the producers who operate the approximately 900 farms in the County. The Conservation District performed 15 site visits, providing technical assistance and assessing project success, in 2020. Other

Since July 1, 2019 the LCCD has conducted VSP outreach through presentation or distribution of VSP outreach materials. These efforts include

- In the fourth quarter 2019 an interactive map was added to the Lincoln County VSP website that allows users to identify critical areas mapped anywhere in the county. The map was shared by email to over 500 subscribers to the VSP email updates. The map is available at: <http://wacds.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2930001d16314992ab4d6aa1c387e589>
- In the fourth quarter of 2019 a new mailer was created and sent to 650 residents in Lincoln County
- In the first quarter of 2020 the new mailer was sent to another 600 residents in Lincoln County
- The LCLCCD attended Highline Grain Grower meetings in Odessa 2/18/2020, Almira 2/20/2020, and Reardan 2/25/2020 to introduce the Voluntary Stewardship Program and new requirements for NRCS cost share. Additional producers signed up for the VSP contact list at these meetings.
- In the second quarter of 2020 outreach was focused on individual landowner meetings (in part as a response to COVID-19 safety requirements) to discuss potential VSP related projects and cost share funding opportunities. Additional producers signed up for the VSP contact list at these meetings.
- Starting in the third quarter of 2020 outreach efforts continued to emphasize meeting with individual producers. The LCCD met with multiple producers in the field to talk about

potential involvement and projects, and worked to develop more ISP's . These efforts continued through the end of the biennium.

- Interest in cost share programs has grown steadily and in the third quarter of 2020 the LCCD generated a waitlist for potential funding.

**Table 2**  
**Public Outreach Meetings Since July 1, 2019**

No.	Date	Meeting	Location	Participants	Notes
1	February 18, 2020	HighLine Grain Growers Meeting	Odessa, WA	100	VSP flyers and VSP Overview and Checklist were distributed.
2	February 20, 2020	HighLine Grain Growers Meeting	Almira, WA	30	VSP flyers and VSP Overview and Checklist were distributed.
3	February 25, 2020	HighLine Grain Growers Meeting	Reardon, WA	40	VSP flyers and VSP Overview and Checklist were distributed.

### 2.1.2 Ongoing and Future Outreach Efforts

VSP success relies on producer participation to implement conservation actions. The implementation budget for each biennium provided to the County includes funding for Education, Outreach, and Technical Assistance with activities that include stewardship plan development, reporting, and educational materials (see Table 6-1 in the Work Plan). Ongoing and future outreach and implementation efforts include maintaining regular Work Group meetings, conducting outreach, providing technical assistance, continuing to develop the monitoring and reporting framework, and identifying adaptive management needs.

Ongoing and future outreach efforts are summarized as follows:

- **Work Group Meetings:** The VSP Work Group met five times between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2021 to focus on implementation and ongoing outreach activities. Meeting agendas and minutes are available on the LCCD VSP website.<sup>2</sup>
- **Email Updates:** The VSP Coordinator has provided periodic email updates to Work Group members and these emails will continue, with information updates sent out quarterly, at a minimum.
- **Ongoing Individual Stewardship Plan Development:** In the 2019–2021 biennium the VSP Coordinators have continued working with each of the Work Group members and others

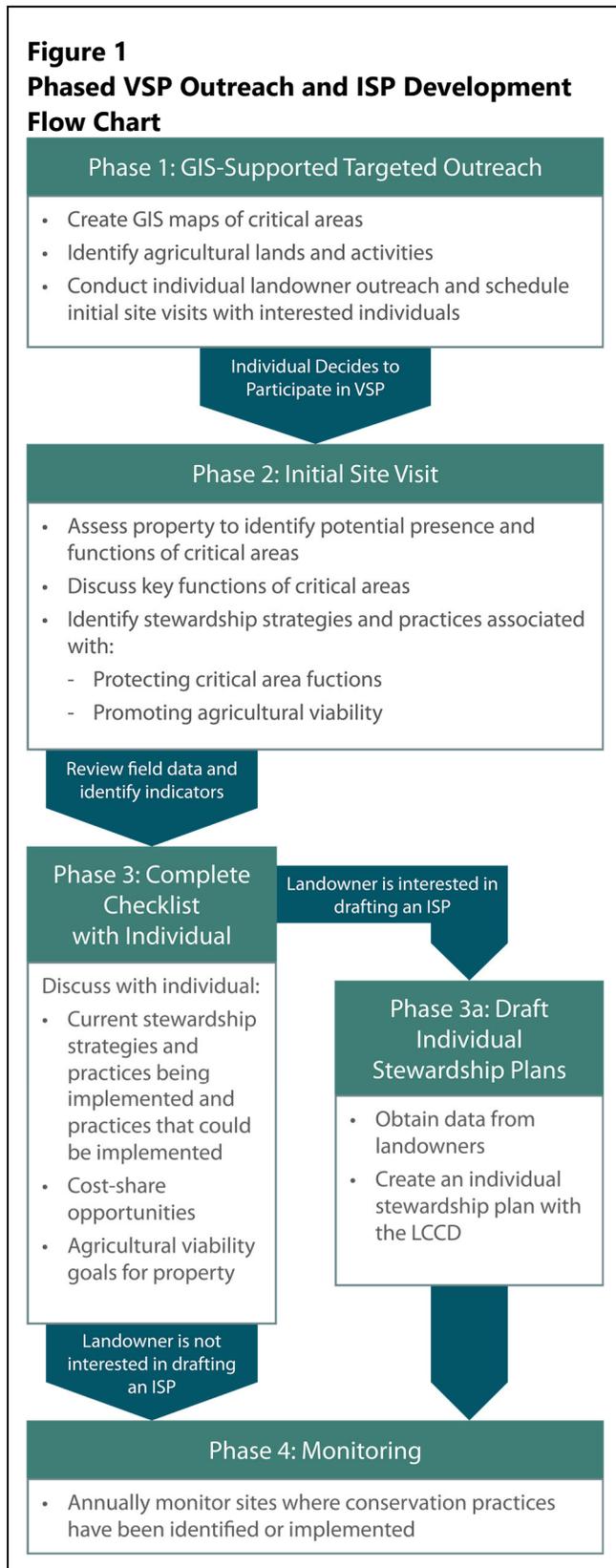
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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lincolncd.com/voluntary-stewardship-program>

to develop Individual Stewardship Plans (ISPs), which can also act as models for other potentially interested landowners.

- GIS Based Outreach:** To support ongoing outreach, implementation, and future monitoring and reporting requirements, the LCCD hired a GIS Specialist/Natural Resource Planner. The GIS Specialist/Planner has implemented a targeted outreach plan to landowners using critical area mapping and historical imagery. These maps are being used to identify agricultural producers with critical areas on their property. A focus on this group of producers has led to numerous site visits and the development of ISPs.
- Direct Mail Outreach:** Since July, 2019, 1,250 VSP flyers were mailed to producers with follow-up outreach in person or by phone as an ongoing effort.
- GIS Based Tracking and Monitoring:** The LCCD is now using GIS to map implemented practices and host data collected as a part of tracking and monitoring efforts. See Figure 1 for the Phased VSP Outreach and ISP Development Flow Chart.

Table 3 provides an update on the planned public communication and outreach activities that were described in Table 4 of the *Lincoln County Voluntary Stewardship Program Outreach Plan* (Appendix E of the Work Plan).



**Table 3**  
**Status of Public Communication and Outreach Activities**

Type	Completed and Ongoing Activities
Maintain and Update Email List	LCCD maintains an email list containing all interested subscribers from the LCCD website. Anyone may subscribe to the email list from the LCCD website: <a href="https://www.lincolncd.com/voluntary-stewardship-program">https://www.lincolncd.com/voluntary-stewardship-program</a> .
Update Website and Media	LCCD created a webpage specifically for the VSP and has continually updated the site. All meeting notices and materials as well as documents will continue to be provided on the LCCD VSP webpage. LCCD also posts announcement and updates on social media, including Facebook. The website, with links to social media, can be found at: <a href="https://www.lincolncd.com/voluntary-stewardship-program">https://www.lincolncd.com/voluntary-stewardship-program</a> .
News and Success Stories Publications	LCCD publishes news and success stories on their website. Information about the VSP has been and will continue to be included.
VSP Checklist	The VSP Overview and Checklist was included as Appendix E of the Work Plan. This checklist will help facilitate participation in the VSP and track ongoing conservation strategies and practices. The VSP Checklist may potentially be converted to an online, fillable document in the future.
Notifications, Handouts, and Landowner Maps	With GIS support, LCCD will continue conducting outreach to agricultural landowners who may have acreage that intersects with critical areas. LCCD has developed educational handouts outlining common best management practices that protect and/or enhance critical areas. Landowners who request additional information from the LCCD will receive these handouts along with site-specific maps outlining critical areas on their lands based on County maps. An informational flyer encouraging participation was developed and sent to landowners to introduce technical assistance opportunities (Appendix A).
Individual Stewardship Plans	LCCD will work with producers to help them prepare stewardship plans for their farms, and support them in implementing these plans. See Figure 1 for the Phased VSP Outreach and ISP Development Flow Chart.
Reporting on Stewardship Strategies and Practices	LCCD will work with NRCS and the Farm Service Agency to annually collect information related to ongoing and new practices implemented on individual farms. Additionally, LCCD will also work with individual producers to annually collect information on self-funded practices implemented, with associated metrics, to use in developing biennial and 5-year reports and performance reviews. Information will be collected during the GIS-supported landowner outreach.
Educational Opportunities	Educational materials focused on particular critical area issues and agricultural practices are available to producers at their convenience. These can be used at booths at fairs, public meetings, or farmers' markets. LCCD's additional educational offerings are described on the LCCD website: <a href="https://www.lincolncd.com/">https://www.lincolncd.com/</a> (In-person distribution of these materials has been halted during COVID-19 closures but is anticipated to resume in the near future.)
Tours	LCCD-led annual tours are opportunities to share information with producers, partners, and the public. Tours may include on-farm testing, demonstrations, and field trials. (Tours have been halted during COVID-19 closures but are anticipated to resume in the near future.)

## 2.2 Conservation Practices

The report documents implementation of stewardship strategies and practices that have been facilitated or led by the LCCD since July 2019. Section 4.2 of the Work Plan documents conservation practices that were implemented since the establishment of the VSP on July 22, 2011 to 2016, which established appropriate goals and benchmarks for ongoing implementation of the program.

Several assessments and evaluations of practices have been performed during the past biennium. In summary, The Voluntary Stewardship program has had the opportunity to fund enhancement projects that address major erosion events and the visible results have been immediate. The improvements to the direction of flow have decreased the amount of erosion seen on a daily basis after runoff events while also improving the "farmability" of the land under best management practices. The observation of planting projects does not have such an immediate visible response. Yearly monitoring will show the results of the mortality rate over wintering periods in critical wildlife areas. Fencing projects through the VSP in geologically hazardous areas will also require monitoring over a period of time to see positive results.

Since July 2019, the LCCD has supported producers with 4 completed stewardship projects in partnership with existing state and local programs. Funding sources for implementation of these stewardship projects has been provided through cost shares from seven different programs:

- **Voluntary Stewardship Program:** VSP funding is allocated to each participating county for implementation to meet the goals and objectives of their work plan.
- **Lincoln County Conservation District:** LCCD allocates resources with the goal of meeting the needs of local landowners to conserve soil, water, and other natural resources.
- **Washington State Department of Ecology:** The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) provides funding for water-quality improvement and protection projects through various grant programs and partnerships with local conservation districts.
- **Washington State Conservation Commission:** The WSCC supports conservation districts through financial and technical assistance and has grant programs for landowners to complete natural resources enhancement projects.
- **Palouse Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program:** The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is dedicated to improving water quality, soil health, and habitat through voluntary incentive funding, and covers a portion of the southeast part of the County.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:** The Channeled Scablands Cooperative Weed Management funded through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provides funding for technical and financial assistance to landowners to control invasive species and restore rangelands for the benefit of the greater sage grouse habitat.

- **U.S. Bureau of Land Management:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provides funding to protect the sage grouse habitat area by creating roadside fuel breaks to prevent the spread of wildfires in these areas.

Table 4 summarizes the types of strategies and practices implemented since in July 2019 and identifies associated key conservation strategies and practices, consistent with Work Plan Tables 5-6 and 5-7. See Appendix B for full descriptions of each project.

Projects implemented in this biennium had agricultural viability benefits that included producing habitat for beneficial species, protecting against erosion, promoting land fertility, and protecting herd health. The projects included protections for all five critical areas (wetlands, habitat conservation areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, geologically hazardous areas, and frequently flooded areas).

Based on the number and type of projects that have already been completed, it appears Lincoln County is on track to meet protection and enhancement benchmarks described in the Work Plan and as reported in the 2021 5-year monitoring report.

The LCCD is working to field verify 10% of implemented conservation practices through annual monitoring and visual recognition. The GIS mapping, ISPs, and other outreach practices are incorporating the 10% verification process. Figure 1 shows the phasing the LCCD is using to approach field verification and ISP development with interested landowners, which would include outreach, site visits, and monitoring. The LCCD currently conducts field verification following installment of all practices and projects that are facilitated by the LCCD. The purpose of field verification is to confirm that practices have been installed consistent with best management standards and specifications.

### *2.2.1 Individual Stewardship Plans*

The LCCD will continue with outreach efforts and work with agricultural producers to provide technical assistance and develop ISPs highlighting a variety of stewardship strategies and practices, consistent with COVID-19 safety requirements, as applicable.

**Table 4**  
**Examples of Projects Implemented Since Work Plan Approval (July 1, 2019)**

Key Stewardship Strategies			Projects			2021 Protection Performance Objectives <sup>1</sup>
Type	Key Conservation Practice	NRCS No.	Number of Projects	Funding Source	Approximate Units	
<b>Residue and Tillage Management</b>	Direct Seed Tillage	329	<b>8</b>	Ecology	800 acres	7,107 acres
<b>Pest Management</b>	Precision Pest Control/ Herbaceous Weed Treatment	595/315	<b>19</b>	USFWS	4,259 acres	611 acres
<b>Nutrient Management</b>			<b>0</b>			459 feet
<b>Water Management</b>	Diversion Project	362	<b>1</b>	WSCC	255 feet	384 acres
	Drainage Cleanout	607	<b>1</b>	WSCC	4,350 feet	
<b>Livestock Management</b>	Spring Development	574	<b>1</b>	VSP	1 watering facility	1 watering facility 532 acres
	Livestock Watering Facility	614	<b>1</b>	LCCD	1 watering facility	
<b>Soil Management</b>			<b>0</b>			159 acres 25 feet
<b>Habitat Management</b>	Tree Planting	612	<b>1</b>	RCPP	32 acres	984 acres 519 feet
	Power Fence Installation	382	<b>1</b>	RCPP	1,135 feet	
	Riparian and Upland Planting	342	<b>1</b>	LCCD	26 acres	
	Living Snow Fence	422	<b>1</b>	LCCD	1,600 feet	
	Drainageway Maintenance	342	<b>1</b>	LCCD	6,590 feet	
	Fuel Break	383	<b>3</b>	BLM	47,520 feet	
Other	Off-Site Mitigation Work <sup>2</sup>	Other	<b>1</b>	LCCD	0.5 acre	N/A

Notes:

1. Units for performance objectives are based on the examples of key conservation practices identified in the Work Plan. Practices such as fencing or field borders are captured in feet while practices such as prescribed grazing or direct seed are captured in acres. See Work Plan Table 5-6 for the list of key strategy and practice examples.
2. This project is related to mitigation for a road project; which included riparian plantings occurring on private agricultural lands.

## 2.3 Monitoring

The LCCD is committed to monitoring performance, reporting progress, and implementing adaptive management measures as discussed in Section 6.3 of the Work Plan. Monitoring focuses on measurable benchmarks and indicators described in Section 5 of the Work Plan that are to be informally evaluated every 2 years to support the 5-year performance review. In preparation for data monitoring and indicator analysis for the 5-year report, LCCD hired a GIS specialist and has implemented a VSP mapping system to help support an outreach, monitoring, and reporting program. The VSP Coordinators are also committed to monitoring public participation in stewardship strategies and practices every 2 and 5 years. Results of efforts by the LCCD to monitor producer participation are summarized in Table 5, consistent with Table 5-9 in the Work Plan.

**Table 5  
Producer Participation Monitoring**

<b>Participation Goal:</b> Promote producer participation in voluntary stewardship of agricultural lands and critical areas to meet the protection and/or enhancement benchmarks and protect critical area functions and values at a County-wide watershed level.		
<b>Objectives/Benchmarks</b>	<b>Performance Metric/ Monitoring Method</b>	<b>Biennial Status</b>
Sufficient active participation by commercial and non-commercial agricultural operators (farmers and ranchers) over 10 years that achieves the protection of critical area functions and values at a County-wide watershed level <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of acres reported in key stewardship practices</li> <li>• Number of VSP self-assessment checklists submitted</li> <li>• Sufficient producer participation necessary to meet protection and enhancement benchmarks</li> </ul>	The LCCD has been tracking and reporting key stewardship strategies and practices for the biennial reporting period, as summarized in Table 4. Producer participation has been on track to meet protection and enhancement benchmarks at the 5-year reporting period.
Passive participation by commercial and non-commercial agricultural operators in VSP stewardship practices is maintained or increased over 10 years on agricultural land <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping and aerial photo evaluation and/or rapid watershed assessment of practices in place</li> <li>• Random sampling of farmers and ranchers in the field by technical assistance providers with willing landowners</li> </ul>	The LCCD has hired GIS support to develop methodology for GIS tracking of critical areas and to assist in targeted landowner outreach. Figure 1 demonstrates the process for site visits and technical assistance conducted since July 2019.
Technical assistance and outreach are provided to agricultural producers to encourage stewardship practices and VSP participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of outreach and education events</li> <li>• Number of event attendees</li> </ul>	The LCCD has participated in six public meetings reaching over 250 attendees since July 2019. VSP outreach materials were presented at these events.

Notes:

1. Active participation includes stewardship activities reported either through publicly funded programs or self-reported through the VSP self-assessment checklist in coordination with the VSP Coordinator or technical assistance provider.
2. Passive participation includes un-reported stewardship activities.

A list of monitoring indicators included for each critical area function in Table 5-8 of the Work Plan were used to inform whether protection of baseline conditions is being achieved during the 5-year reporting period. The 5-year report found.... Indicators are also being used to identify trends and focus efforts on high-priority areas. Some indicators being used to support conservation practice monitoring, such as surface and groundwater tracking through Ecology and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife habitat assessments, support other environmental compliance laws and regulations including water quality standards and fish habitat protection.

## **2.4 Adaptive Management**

No adaptive management needs have been identified at this time. Lincoln County is in the implementation and monitoring stage of the VSP and currently appears to be on track to meet protection and enhancement benchmarks by the 5-year reporting period. Adaptive management would be triggered if the 5-year performance review suggests the VSP may not be protective of critical area functions that existed in 2011. Adaptive management will be applied on an ongoing basis as needed and is not restricted to actions included in biennial or 5-year reports. See Section 5.4 of the Work Plan for discussion on the adaptive management process and thresholds that are to be met by the 5-year performance review.

## **2.5 Reporting**

The report is intended to be a summary of accomplishments and plans of commitments in the Work Plan from July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021. The 2021 5-year performance review provided a more robust report that specifically documents how the County has met protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks from the Work Plan. The 5-year report also included an analysis of monitoring indicators and showed that the established benchmarks are being met.

## **2.6 Agricultural Viability**

Conservation activities being implemented also sustain agricultural viability, as summarized in Table 5. Many of the cost-share projects planned or completed in this biennium allowed producers to provide ecosystem services while protecting herd health, promoting yield, and protecting against the risk of erosion. Continued participation in the VSP by landowners and upcoming site visits are expected to result in even more conservation strategies and practices implemented with benefits to agricultural viability through cost-sharing and technical assistance from LCCD. Participation by the County in the VSP allows producers to protect critical areas without discontinuing agricultural activities or converting agricultural land to other uses.

### ***2.6.1 Agricultural Viability Successes***

Through multiple years of participation through the direct seed program, producers are starting to see relationships between root growth and residue left on the surface of last year's crop creating a

positive relationship often not generated by plowing or tilling the fields. By adopting this new form of farming the Department of Ecology estimates that an estimated 7 tons per acre of soil loss is saved versus a conventional tillage system. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with NRCS also falls hand in hand with the goals of the VSP by protecting sometimes deemed critical areas of land by allowing them to fall back into their historic native grassed form.

## 2.6.2 *Agricultural Viability Concerns*

Recent agricultural viability concerns identified by the Work Group include the following:

- Drought impacts in 2021 on dry land wheat and other crop yields where water supply is more limited, noting higher wheat prices may partially offset losses. Some farms may have to defer land lease payments or extend loan payment periods, and are at risk of going out of business or may need to sell multigeneration family farms, to maintain economic position.
- Increased foreign ownership of productive farmlands could result in reduced income in the local economy or the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses (NPR 2019)
- Increased consolidation of ownership could result in reduced income to the local economy
- Toxicity studies indicate that glyphosate (one of the most widely used agricultural pesticides worldwide, also known as Roundup) may result in transgenerational inheritance of pathologies (Sorensen 2019). If this chemical, which is used for fallowing and weed control, were restricted in usage or banned all together, it would result in producers needing to rely on other, more expensive methods of treatment to achieve the desired effects for their operations. These actions could further reduce margins on dryland crops that are already experiencing thinner margins in recent years.
- Inaccurate, conflicting, or inconsistent messaging coming to consumers from various information sources about farming practices and their impact on the environment is affecting economic viability of agriculture. Agricultural producers continue to improve land stewardship practices and apply sustainable farming practices. Producers and those they work with to move products to market need to improve messaging and provide more consistent messaging about how farmers are good stewards of the land and use sustainable practices.

## 2.7 **Spirit of Cooperation**

Since July 2019, six different agencies have partnered with landowners in Lincoln County to implement projects that benefit critical areas and agricultural viability. Additionally, the LCCD has collaborated, partnered, and contracted with Grant and Pend Oreille counties on VSP efforts, such as GIS monitoring platforms, outreach, presentations and supplemental monitoring strategies. The LCCD has been updating the website and social media accounts to keep community members informed on different programs and activities that are part of the VSP. Additional information updates will be provided. Implemented projects have included critical area plantings that benefit

wildlife habitat on privately owned land without direct intersects with agricultural activities, bridging agricultural and environmental interests.



LCCD staff working on wetland reserve plantings voluntarily implemented by private agricultural producers

### 3 Voluntary Stewardship Program Successes

Since July 1, 2019, the LCCD has worked with landowners to coordinate implementation of stewardship strategies and practices that not only protect and enhance critical areas functions and values, but also support the viability of agriculture for individual agricultural producers. Highlights of some of these successes are shown below.

	<p><b>Direct Seed Projects</b></p> <p>Example benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduces erosion</li><li>• Improves water storage and filtration</li><li>• Limits soil compaction</li><li>• Promotes natural groundwater filtration functions</li><li>• Protects soil health</li><li>• Promotes yield and fertility</li><li>• Reduces invasive and nuisance species</li></ul>
	<p><b>Grassed Waterway Project</b></p> <p>Example benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduces erosion</li><li>• Improves water storage and filtration</li><li>• Reduces inputs from runoff</li><li>• Protects soil health</li><li>• Reduces invasive and nuisance species</li><li>• Enhances habitat for native plant and animal species</li></ul>



### Stock Watering Projects

Example benefits:

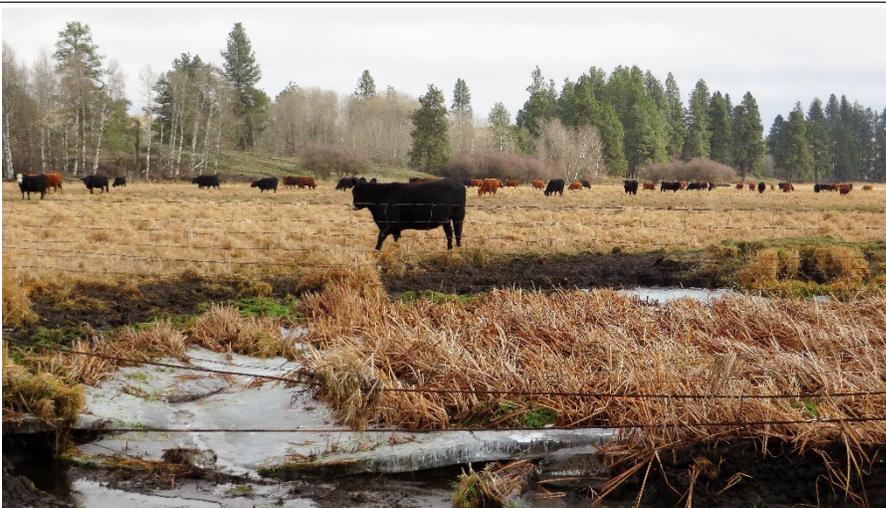
- Reduces erosion
- Improves water storage and filtration
- Limits trampling of habitat
- Prevents unintentional conversion of shrub-steppe habitat
- Limits shoreline degradation
- Limits soil compaction
- Protects soil health
- Reduces invasive and nuisance species



### Wetland Reserve Plantings

Example benefits:

- Protects wetlands and buffers
- Reduces inputs from runoff
- Restores/creates habitat structures
- Reduces erosion
- Reduces invasive and nuisance species



### Exclusion Fencing of Waterway

Example benefits:

- Limits shoreline degradation
- Limits trampling of habitat
- Protect against erosion risk
- Reduces invasive and nuisance species
- Improves water quality

Specific VSP cost share projects and other examples of VSP successes in Lincoln County include,

- Post fire reforestation tree planting following the 2016 Hart Rd fire. 15,000 trees were planted.
- 5000+ trees and shrubs were planted along Crab Creek. This is an ongoing Conservation Easement, Wetland Reserve Program partnering with NRCS. Since 2018 there have been approximately 18,000 trees and shrubs planted. This program will conclude in 2024.
- Sediment Dam Removal. This project was funded with VSP cost-share funding removing and restructuring old sediment dams that no longer were working and were actually rerouting and eroding the fields.
- Large waterway cleanout of 1000 ft. Reseeding has been done and plantings to follow this Spring.
- Exclusion fencing project. This project was funded with VSP Cost-share funding. This project also includes a new watering facility
- Watering facility that was placed between two adjacent pastures to alternate with cattle and to prevent use of a nearby waterway.

## 4 References

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# Appendix A

## Outreach Materials

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- VSP Overview and Checklist
- New VSP Flyer

# Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)

A collaborative process that helps Washington communities ensure healthy landscapes and strong farms today and for the future.



## What are critical areas?

Washington's Growth Management Act covers five critical areas that counties must identify and protect:

1. Wetlands
2. Frequently flooded areas
3. Critical aquifer recharge areas
4. Geologically hazardous areas
5. Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (emphasis on anadromous fish)

## Background: Managing growth in Washington

- ▶ Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) requires counties to develop plans for managing population growth and development.
- ▶ GMA requirements include that counties must:
  - » Identify and protect critical areas (see left), including those on agricultural lands.
  - » Preserve farmland and prevent urban growth from crowding out agriculture.
- ▶ Prior to 2011, the main tool for counties to protect critical areas on agricultural land was regulation.
- ▶ Regulation threatened farm viability and led to legal battles.

## What makes VSP different?

- ▶ VSP (created in 2011) gives counties the option to protect critical areas and farmland by implementing plans that rely on incentives — rather than regulations — to encourage farm-friendly conservation practices.
- ▶ Each county develops and carries out local plans that identify where critical areas and agricultural activities intersect, set benchmarks to protect critical areas and farmland, and outline the incentive-based strategies that will be used to hit those benchmarks.
- ▶ Agricultural landowners are offered incentives to develop and implement stewardship plans for their property that will help achieve benchmarks.



## What does VSP mean for you?

If you own farmland in a VSP county, the program can be a big help for your operation:

- ▶ VSP is voluntary and non-regulatory. You can choose whether to do a stewardship plan for your farm.
- ▶ Stewardship plans are site-specific and identify conservation practices that you can install on your property that protect critical areas and keep your agricultural operation economically viable... so it works for you!
- ▶ The program seeks to focus available resources, funding, and incentives to help you complete the practices outlined in your stewardship plan, such as constructing livestock fencing or improving pastures and paddocks.

## How it works - Three phases of VSP

### 1: Develop work plan\*

- ▶ Local stakeholders form a VSP workgroup and develop a work plan.
- ▶ Work plan is sent to the State Conservation Commission for approval.
- ▶ Workgroup begins outreach to agricultural landowners about the program.

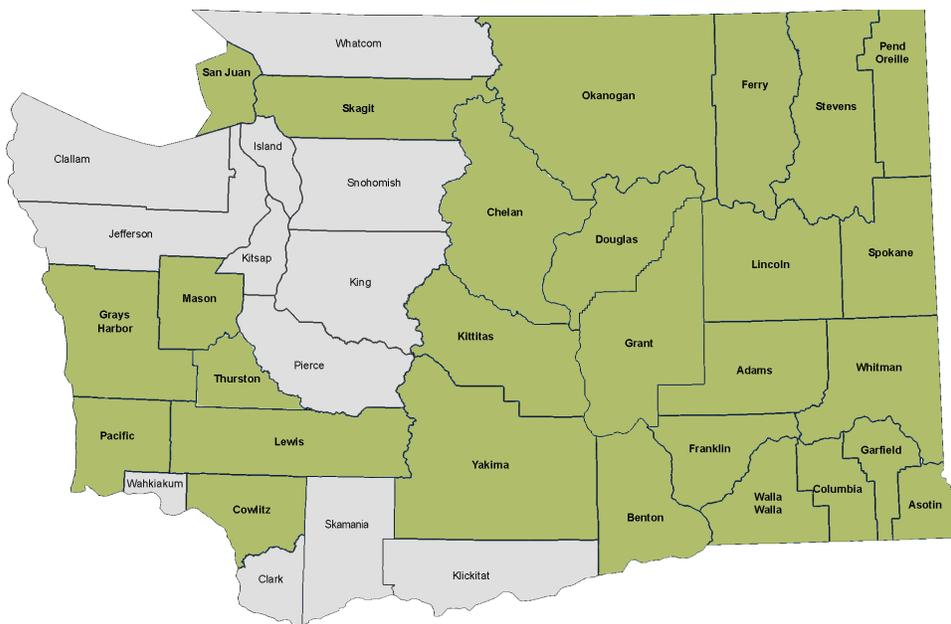
### 2: Implement stewardship plans

- ▶ Local conservation technicians conduct outreach in priority areas and create stewardship plans for agricultural landowners who choose to participate.
- ▶ Stewardship plans identify conservation practices that meet agricultural and critical area goals.
- ▶ Existing voluntary, incentive-based programs are used to help landowners implement stewardship plans.

### 3: Monitor results

- ▶ Workgroup provides status reports to the State Conservation Commission every two years.
- ▶ Workgroup monitors and reports on progress every five years — must show progress toward benchmarks and goals.
- ▶ If progress isn't achieved, new incentives may be created, or the county may need to revert to a regulatory approach.

\*As of 2019, all 27 counties participating in VSP have completed Phase 1 and have state-approved work plans.



*27 counties are participating in the Voluntary Stewardship Program.*

### Partners supporting VSP:



### Contact:

Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator  
 beller@scc.wa.gov  
 509.385.7512

<http://scc.wa.gov/vsp/>

SCC-VSP-LO-04-19

Please call our office (360-407-6200) if you need to view content from this document in an alternate format.





## LINCOLN COUNTY **VSP** VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM Individual Stewardship Plan



The purpose of your Individual Stewardship Plan is to provide you with a record of your conversation with your Lincoln County Conservation District VSP representative. It also provides you with information about possible stewardship practices and activities you may choose to use on your property in the future and capture current projects.

Because an Individual Stewardship Plan is part of a Farm Plan, information within it remains confidential. However, the Washington State Conservation Commission requires the District to report the total number of Individual Stewardship Plans and projects completed in the watershed. The District will keep a copy of your plan on file for future reference.

Please remember that the stewardship practices suggested in the Individual Stewardship Plan are **voluntary** and **do not place any commitment on your part.**

Please feel free to call or visit the Lincoln County Conservation District office for further assistance:

(509) 725-4181 ext. 118, 1310 Morgan St., PO Box 46, Davenport , WA 99122

## Section 1. Individual Stewardship Plan Owner Profile

This Individual Stewardship Plan is for: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Site & mailing address if different\*

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Landownership: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan prepared on: \_\_\_\_\_

Interested in receiving emails from the District about:

The Voluntary Stewardship Program Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Other District news, activities, & events Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2. Current Agricultural Activities

Type of agricultural activities currently on the property:

- Crop
- Livestock
- Other:

Resource concerns:

Current or past participation in conservation programs/funded or self-funded:

### **Section 3. VSP Critical Areas**

**The following critical areas may be on the property:**

- Wetlands**
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas**
- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas**
- Geologically Hazardous Areas**
- Frequently Flooded Areas**

**Current concerns about critical areas on the property:**

**\*Please see attached aerial image of your property for potential location of critical areas on your property.\***

## Section 4. Recommended Stewardship Practices

Stewardship practices or conservation projects completed *since July 2011*:

Practice	Quantity/Unit	Date

**Possible future projects and additional conservation measures**

	<b>Technical Assistance</b>
	<b>Stabilizing Streambanks or Shorelines</b>
	<b>Professional Engineering</b>
	<b>Managing nutrients and runoff</b>
	<b>Installing fence</b>
	<b>Installing livestock watering facility</b>
	<b>Minimizing wildfire risk</b>
	<b>Managing application of pesticides, herbicides', and fertilizer</b>
	<b>Rotational grazing</b>
	<b>Improving floodplain, wetland, instream, or riparian habitat</b>
	<b>Improving habitat for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species</b>
	<b>Managing flood risks</b>
	<b>Establishing a riparian buffer</b>
	<b>Direct seed, no-till</b>
	<b>Other:</b>

**Signatures** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

The Lincoln County Conservation District is available to help you at anytime.  
Please feel free to contact us with your questions or when you need assistance.  
(509) 725-4181 ext 118, 1310 Morgan St., PO Box 46, Davenport, WA 99122

## What conservation practices are being implemented on your farm or ranch?

Example Conservation Practices	I do this	I'm interested in this	Does not apply	Not interested	Average units/year (acres/feet/other)
<b>Residue and Tillage Management</b>					
Mulch Till					
Reduced Till					
No Till/Direct Seed					
Other(s): _____					
<b>Chemical and Nutrient Management</b>					
Integrated Pest Management					
Nutrient Management					
Other(s): _____					
<b>Water and Filtration Management</b>					
Irrigation Water Management					
Grassed Waterways/Filter Strips					
Residue Retention (dryland)					
Instream Water Storage					
Other(s): _____					
<b>Range Management</b>					
Prescribed Grazing					
Range Planting					
Stock Watering Facilities/Wells					
Other(s): _____					
<b>Soil Management</b>					
Cover Crop					
Conservation Crop Rotation					
Mulch					
Low Disturbance Subsoil					
Eco Tillage					
Other(s): _____					
<b>Habitat Management</b>					
Conservation Cover					
Critical Area Planting					
Tree/Shrub Establishment					
Hedgerow					
Range Planting					
Fencing					
Other(s): _____					

## Appendix B

# Examples of Implemented Stewardship Strategies and Practices (facilitated by the LCCD)

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# Descriptions of Implemented Stewardship Strategies and Practices (facilitated by the LCCD)

## VSP-Funded Cost Share Project

### 1. **Spring Development Project (WRIA 43):** \$20,000 max. Cost share 50% with landowner.

This project upgraded an existing spring development and livestock watering trough and developed a second adjacent spring and watering trough about 380 feet away from the first one. Livestock have been getting water out of the partially developed through located within the saturated overflow area of the spring. Vertical 4-foot-diameter, 4-foot-tall galvanized steel culverts with a surrounding shell of gravel were installed just downhill of each spring to collect and filter the groundwater. Groundwater will be piped downhill to an adjacent 6-foot-diameter metal water trough that is located on drier ground. Overflow water will be piped downhill and returned to an adjacent stream channel that is lined by trees and shrubs. The immediate saturated soil area around each spring was fenced in for livestock exclusion.

Before photos:



## Additional Conservation Projects:

2. **DOE-funded direct seed tillage cost share projects (locations vary):** Cost share 50% with landowner for implementing practice on between 40 and 200 acres. Currently eight Lincoln County landowners are funded for \$33,600 maximum for 3 years. More landowners will be funded as budget allows.
3. **WSCC-funded projects:**
  - a. **Diversion project (WRIA 43):** Cost share 50% with landowner up to \$20,000. Seasonal runoff from nearby hills was flowing away from an intermittent pond and flooding the

landowner's barns, shop, arena, and second residence. The project established a waterway with a diversion on the lower-sloped side of the channel to divert the surface water away from the landowner's property and protect the range-ground from the damages of upland runoff. After the channel was constructed, the edges were reseeded with grass seed to stabilize the channel sides.

- b. **Drainage Cleanout project (WRIA 43):** Cost share 50% with landowner up to \$20,000. This project cleaned out a drainageway channel to restore the proper functioning of this waterway area without adversely affecting the alfalfa planting on both sides of the central channel. This channel was clogged with cattails in most locations, which led to the breaching of runoff water out of the waterway area and into the adjacent crop field. Small gullies were eroded into the cropland soil due to this overflow. The cattails were removed and were replaced with smaller native grasses, sedges, and rushes that will reduce clogging and prevent water from overflowing onto the owner's cropland.

#### 4. RCPP-funded projects:

- a. **Tree planting project (WRIA 34):** Cost share 50% with landowner up to \$1,000 to plant caragana, chokecherry, Ponderosa pine, serviceberry, and woods rose trees and shrubs on the unfarmable hillsides on this cropland. Landowner and laborer scalped the planting area with hoe to remove grass sod and hand planted trees and shrubs with shovels.
- b. **Power fence installation project (WRIA 34):** Cost share 50% with landowner up to \$20,000. The project established 1,135 feet of electric fence line to exclude cattle from a wetland area.

#### 5. LCCD-funded projects:

- a. **Riparian and upland planting:** Partnering with NRCS, LCCD staff planted 5,500 trees along a creek to prevent erosion and create a wildlife habitat.
- b. **Living snow fence project:** The establishment of Austrian pine trees along 1,600 feet of a highway road to block seasonal snowdrifts.
- c. **Off-site mitigation work:** The establishment of about 0.5 acre of wetland in an alternative area to replace wetland area lost by a road construction project.
- d. **Livestock watering facility project:** Cost share 50% with landowner up to \$20,000 to install a trough for livestock.
- e. **Drainageway maintenance:** Cost share 50% with landowner up to \$20,000. The reshaping and installation of plants along an estimated 6,590 feet or 1.25 miles of intermittent stream.