



New Developments in the Voluntary Stewardship Program



WSAC presentation – November 15, 2023

Bill Eller,
Washington State Conservation Commission
VSP Coordinator

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)

- An alternative to Growth Management Act regulation created to protect critical areas while maintaining agricultural viability. RCW 36.70A.700-760.
- The purpose of today's session is to cover new developments in VSP, including:
 - Briefly reviewing how VSP works
 - New legislation - SSB 5353 opens VSP up to the 12 counties not currently in VSP
 - New capital funding available for VSP on-the-ground conservation projects
 - New funding available to counties for monitoring of VSP work plan goals and benchmarks
 - New five-year reporting through the State Conservation Commission's Conservation Practices Database Management System (CPDS)
 - Updated VSP website

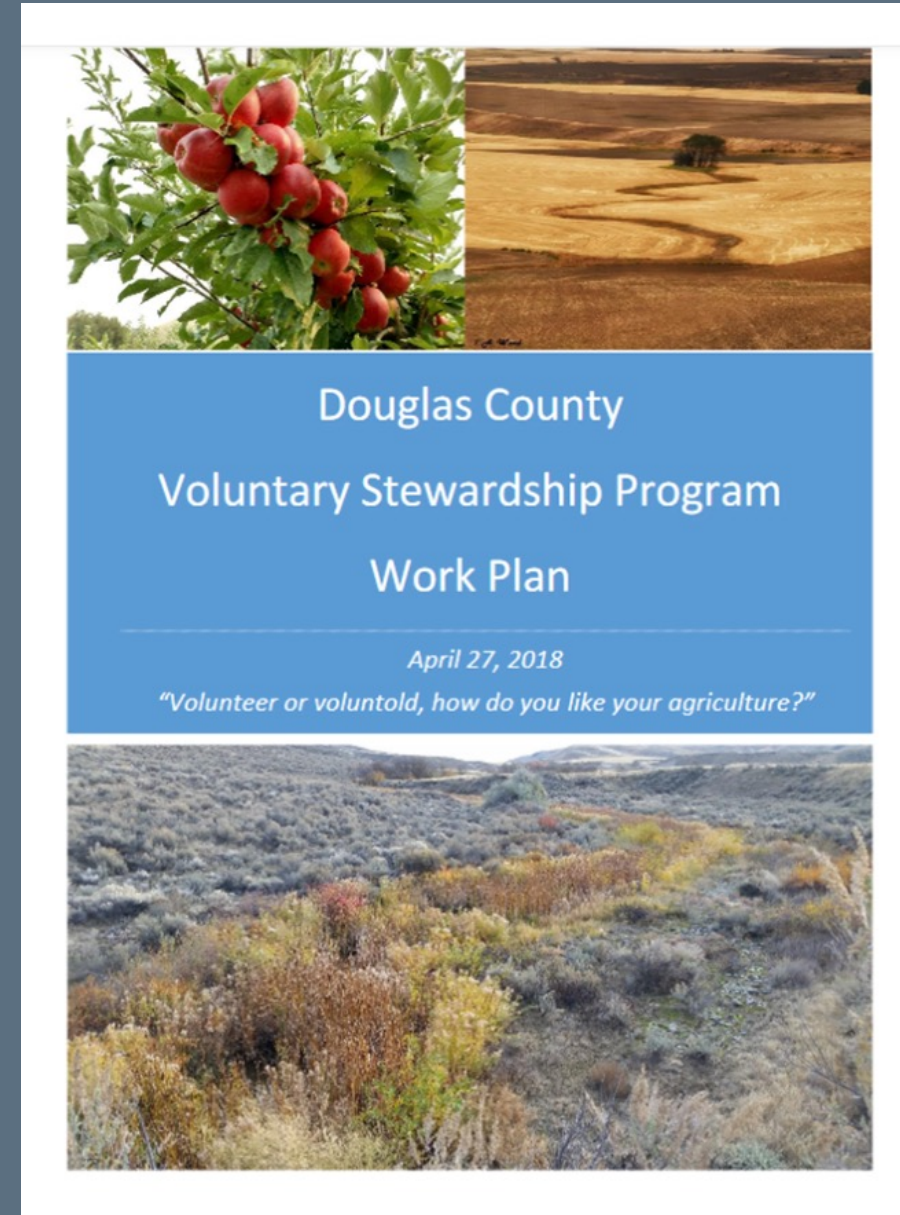
The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)

- Protects critical areas (wetlands, frequently flooded areas, aquifer recharge areas, geologically hazardous areas & fish and wildlife habitats) while maintaining agricultural viability
- An alternative to the Growth Management Act – voluntary, not regulatory
- 27 counties have opted-in to VSP
- Each county creates a county work group to provide strategic direction for implementation
- Each county has an approved county-wide VSP work plan with goals & benchmarks
- Protection is provided at the watershed scale, not at the parcel scale
- County-wide plans approved after 3 years of planning, using July 20, 2011, as the baseline date



The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)

- To varying degrees, all 27 VSP counties use local CDs to administer VSP (some just for project development)
- VSP succeeds when the counties can get enough participants installing BMPs to meet the county work plan goals & benchmarks
- Participation typically occurs through Individual Stewardship Plans (ISP) or NRCS farm plans
- Counties (locals) decide which BMPs will meet WP goal and benchmarks, not the state
- Monitoring takes place at the watershed scale, not the parcel scale
- 2-year status report – not reviewed & evaluated
- 5-year review & evaluation report – reviewed & evaluated by the Technical Panel, in consultation with the Statewide Advisory Committee; SCC executive director decides



The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) - Roles

- SCC – statewide administration of VSP
- Counties – opt-in, choose which watersheds in county are in, stand up work groups, ultimately responsible for VSP success
- County work groups – volunteers, local members of community, diverse stakeholders, create and implement county-wide work plan, adaptively manage that plan
- Technical service providers (CDs) – typically are employed by the county work groups for the day-to-day implementation of the county-wide plan, facilitate work group meetings, conduct monitoring, compile reports
- Technical Panel – approves county-wide work plan, reviews & evaluates 5-year reports, made up of WSDA, ECY, WDFW, SCC staff
- Statewide Advisory Committee – advises SCC, county, agriculture, environmental, and tribal (invited) representation



Prepared by:

Work Group

Alan Thomson, Whitman County Planning Director
Art Swannack, Whitman County Commissioner
David Lange, Whitman Conservation District
David L Swannack, Agricultural Producer
Jeff Pittmann, Whitman County Farm Bureau
Joan Folwell, Palouse Conservation District, Palouse Prairie Foundation
John Pearson, Agricultural Producer
Jon Jones, Agricultural Producer
Kim Weerts, Whitman County Cattlemen's Association
Larry Cochran, Palouse Conservation District
Nancy Belsby, Whitman County Water Conservancy Board
Tracy Eriksen, Agricultural Producer

Work Group Advisory Members

Evan Sheffels, Washington State Farm Bureau (Alternate)
Jason Kunz, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
John Stuhlmiller, Washington State Farm Bureau (Primary)

Anchor QEA, LLC for Whitman County

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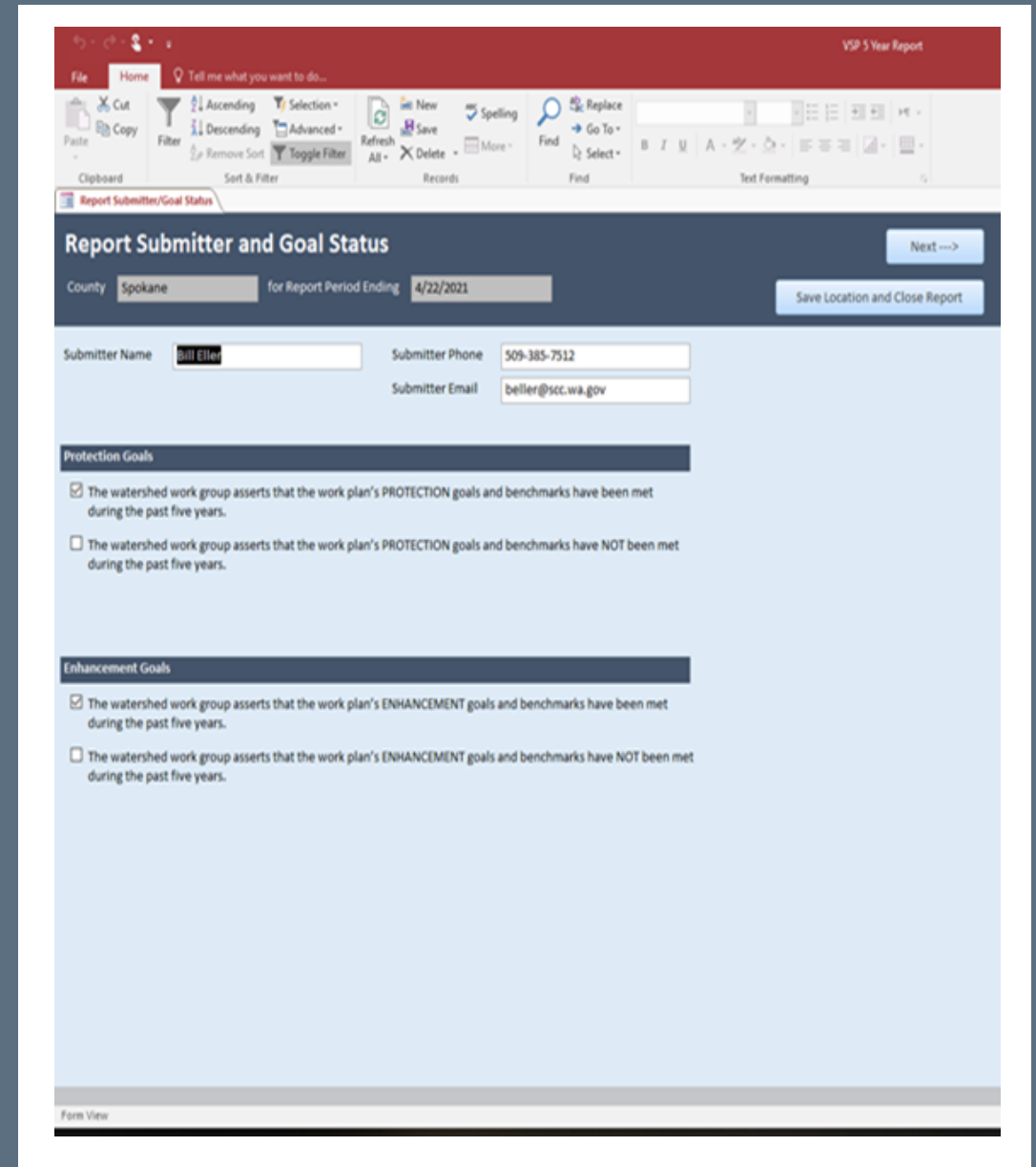
The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) - Timeline

- July 20, 2011 – VSP created
- July-Dec 2011 – Counties opt-in
- 2015 – VSP funded, counties accept funds (determines reporting dates)
- 2016-19 – Work groups created, create county-wide work plans, approved by TP & SCC ED
- Implementation after approval
- 2020-2021 – 1st 5-year report due
 - TP & SCC ED reviewed & evaluated all 27 5-year (5YR) reports, all successfully on track to meet county-wide work plan goals & benchmarks
- Implementation after 5YR review
- 2025-2026 – 2nd 5YR report due

	Chelan & Thurston – July 20, 2024
Kittitas – November 17, 2025 Mason – November 24, 2025 Garfield – November 30, 2025	
	Asotin & Grant – December 14, 2025 San Juan – December 20, 2025 Cowlitz & Pacific – December 22, 2025 Okanogan – December 28, 2025
Benton – January 12, 2026 Skagit & Whitman – January 19, 2026 Columbia – January 20, 2026 Yakima – January 21, 2026 Douglas – January 22, 2026	
	Pend Oreille – February 2, 2026 Franklin – February 24, 2026
Walla Walla – March 7, 2026 Stevens – March 10, 2026 Ferry – March 14, 2026 Grays Harbor & Lincoln – March 21, 2026	
	Lewis – April 18, 2026 Spokane – April 22, 2026
Adams – May 23, 2026	

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) – 5-Year Report

- Per the VSP statute, counties must demonstrate that they are meeting their county-wide work plan goals and benchmarks every five years (the “5YR report”).
- SCC created a database for counties to make their case that they are meeting those goals and benchmarks.
- The database collects data on each work plan goal and benchmark, which includes monitoring the effects of the protection efforts on the critical areas.
- SCC ED must concur with the county work group’s assertion that it is meeting its goals and benchmarks, or else county could fail out
- New for 2024 – migrating the 5YR report from the database to the SCC’s Conservation Practices Database System (CPDS) – CDs are more familiar with CPDS



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the "VSP 5 Year Report" form. The browser's address bar shows "VSP 5 Year Report". The form is titled "Report Submitter and Goal Status" and includes a "Next -->" button. The form fields are as follows:

- County: Spokane
- for Report Period Ending: 4/22/2021
- Save Location and Close Report (button)
- Submitter Name: Bill Eller
- Submitter Phone: 509-385-7512
- Submitter Email: beller@scc.wa.gov

The form also includes two sections of checkboxes for goal status:

- Protection Goals**
 - The watershed work group asserts that the work plan's PROTECTION goals and benchmarks have been met during the past five years.
 - The watershed work group asserts that the work plan's PROTECTION goals and benchmarks have NOT been met during the past five years.
- Enhancement Goals**
 - The watershed work group asserts that the work plan's ENHANCEMENT goals and benchmarks have been met during the past five years.
 - The watershed work group asserts that the work plan's ENHANCEMENT goals and benchmarks have NOT been met during the past five years.

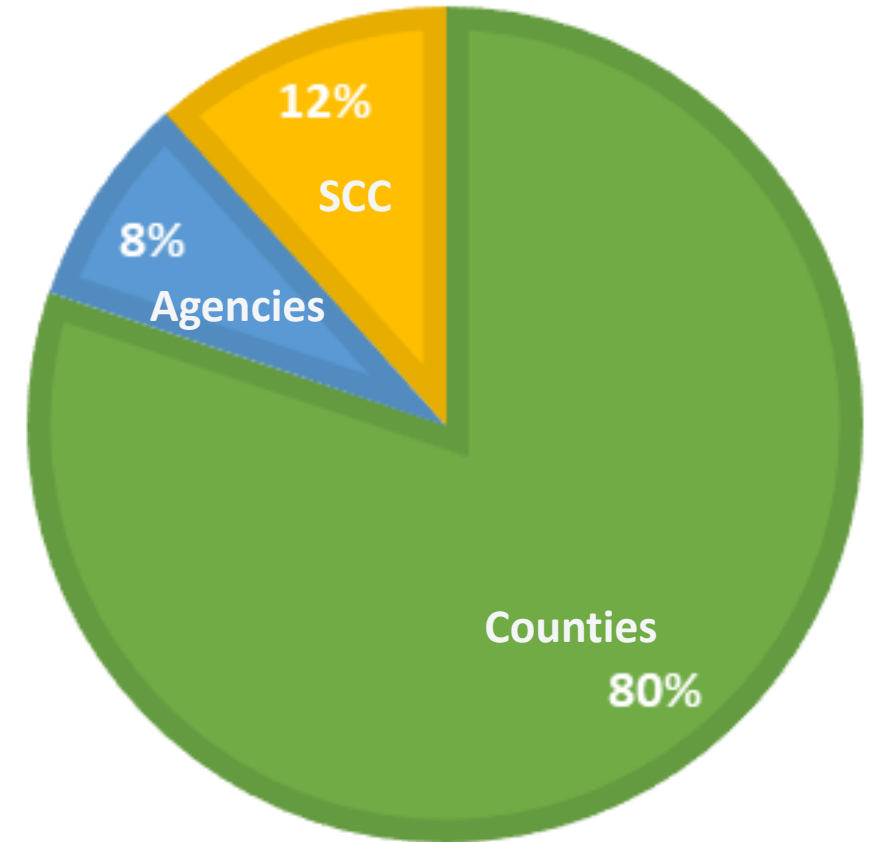
The form is displayed in a "Form View" at the bottom.

VSP Operating Budget

- \$10,332,000 for FY 23-25 in SCC operating budget
- \$8,279,000 for counties, including
 - \$1,420,000 for monitoring
 - \$379,000 for new opt-in counties
- Prior years, for the biennium:
 - FY 15-17: \$7,290,000 - \$270,000/county - planning
 - FY 17-19: \$5,940,000 - \$220,000/county - planning
 - FY 19-21: \$6,480,000 - \$240,000/county - implementation
 - FY 21-23: \$6,345,000 - \$235,000/county - implementation
 - FY 23-25: \$6,480,000 - \$240,000/county - implementation
- Counties must meet VSP statutory obligations and SCC contractual deliverables, including running the work group, outreach, monitoring, reporting, etc.
 - SCC recommends 1 FTE @ each county
 - New for 2023 – each county has access to \$47,000 for monitoring activities

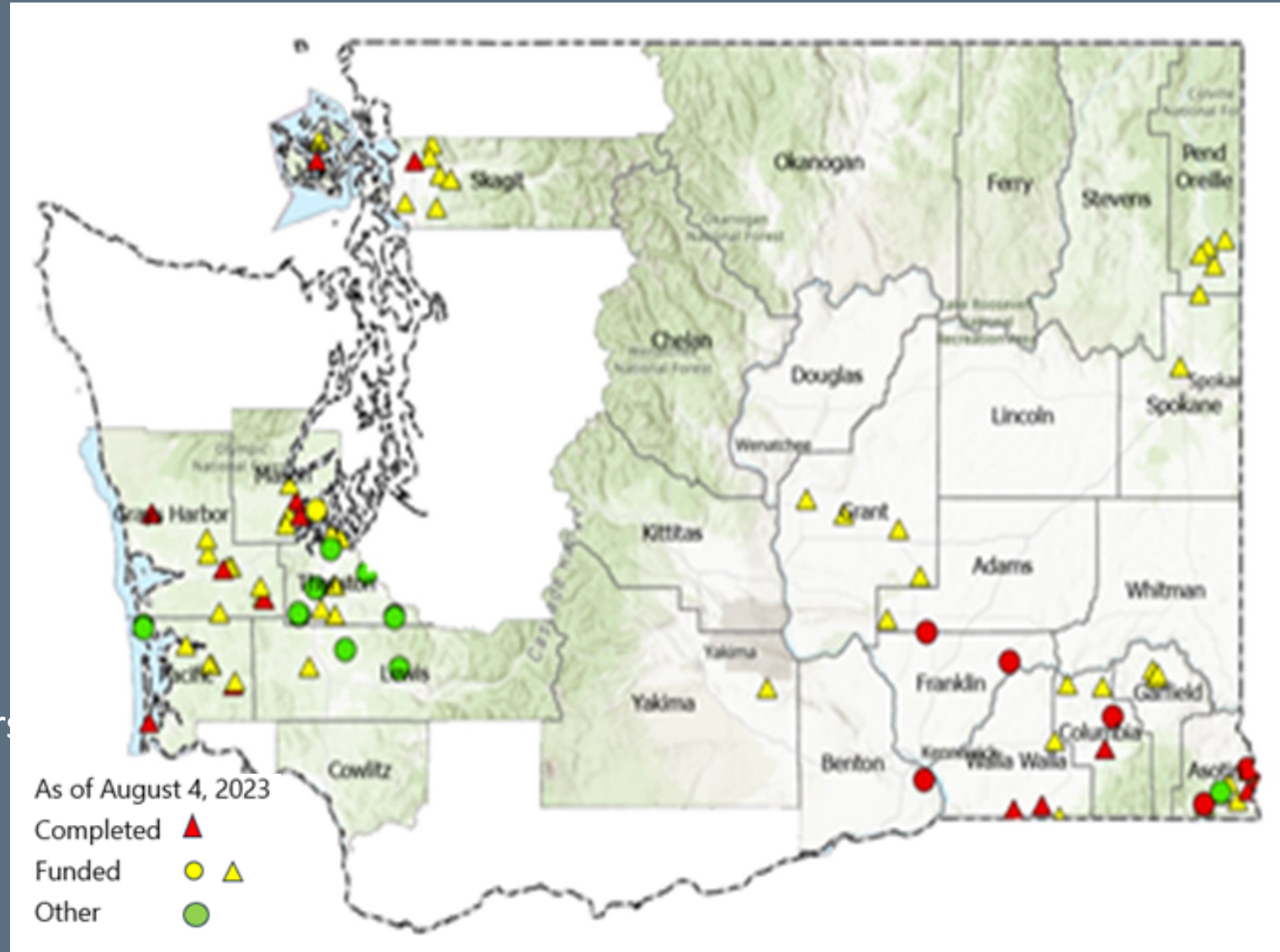
VSP FY 23-25 Budget Allocation

80% Counties (\$8,279,000)
12% SCC (\$1,203,000)
8% State Agencies (\$850,000)

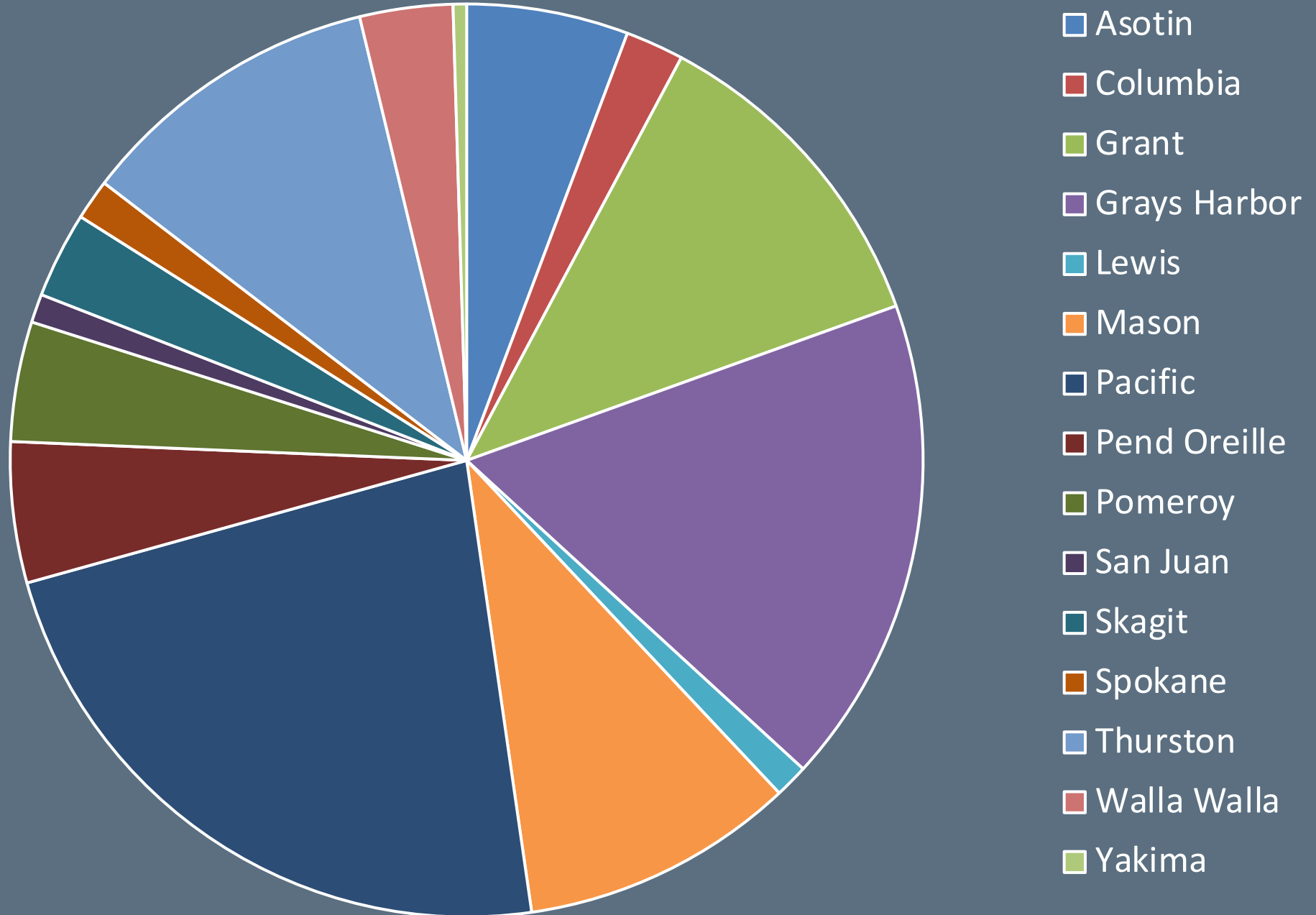


VSP Capital Budget

- Never had capital funds for VSP cost-share
- 2022 Legislative session - first time received \$3M
- Created VSP cost-share guidelines
- From Sept 2022 – Jun 2023, allocated ~\$2.2M
 - 148 best management practices
 - 15 different counties
- For FY 23-25 – asked for & received a new \$3M
- From July – Sept 2023, allocated 100% of the \$3M
- ~90 BMPs with ~47 different landowners
- Skagit County \$1M in cost-share in FY2023-25



VSP Capital Funding Allocation By County for FY 2022



SSB 5353 VSP Legislation

- Re-opens VSP to those 12 counties who originally declined to opt-in another chance to opt-in
- No deadline now to opt-in
- Deadlines are set after the county acknowledges receipt of funds, but before receipt of funds can happen, the county must
 - confer with stakeholders,
 - pass the ordinance,
 - send the ordinance to the SCC,
 - the SCC responds to the county with a contract, and
 - the contract is signed by both

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5353

Chapter 187, Laws of 2023

68th Legislature
2023 Regular Session

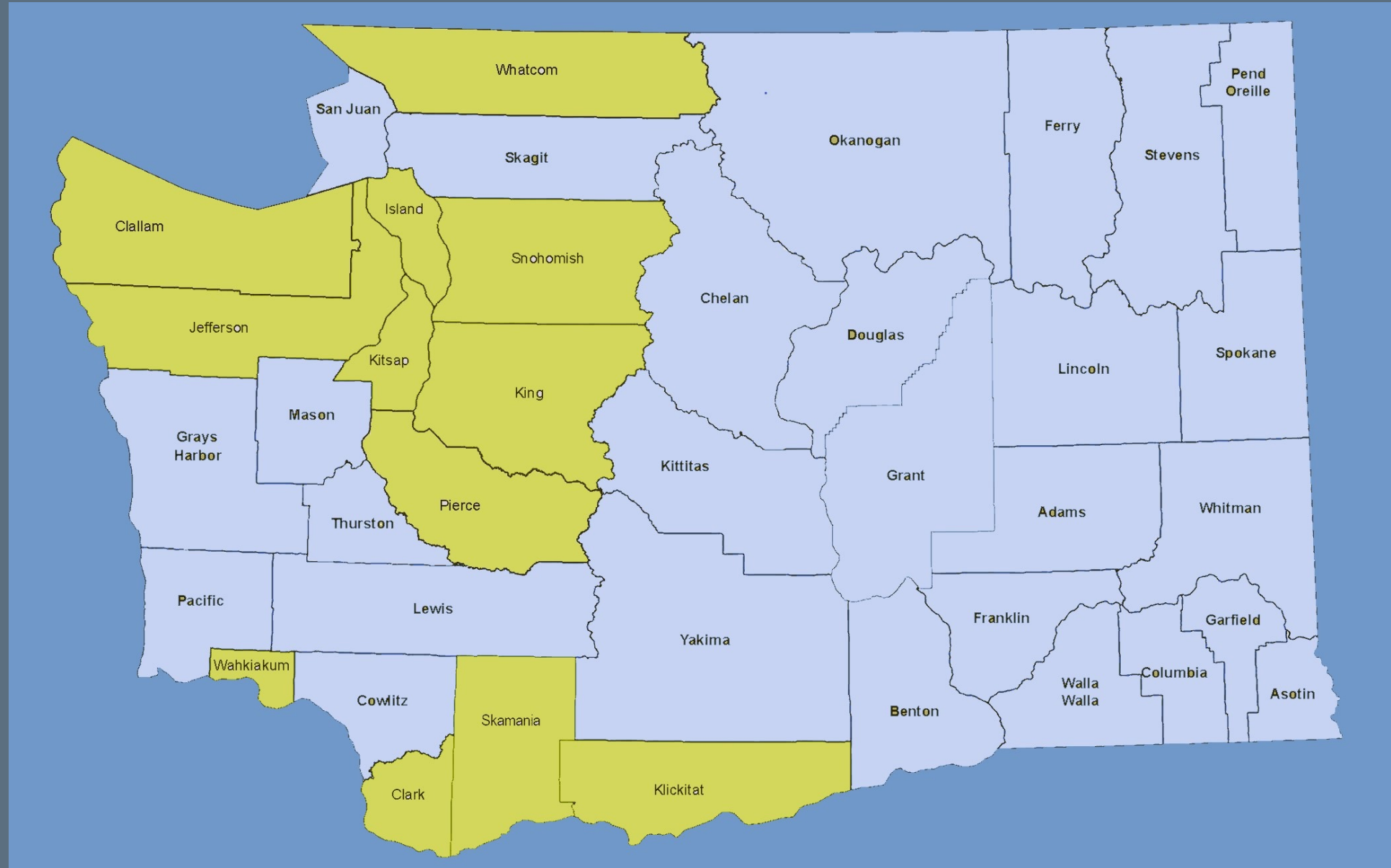
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM—COUNTY PARTICIPATION

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 23, 2023

<p>Passed by the Senate March 2, 2023 Yeas 49 Nays 0</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ DENNY HECK President of the Senate</p> <p>Passed by the House April 11, 2023 Yeas 34 Nays 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ LACRIS JINKINS Speaker of the House of Representatives</p> <p>Approved April 25, 2023 3:49 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ JAY INSLEE Governor of the State of Washington</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CERTIFICATE</p> <p>I, Sarah Bannister, Secretary of the Senate of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5353 as passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives on the dates hereon set forth.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ SARAH BANNISTER Secretary</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FILED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">April 26, 2023</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Secretary of State State of Washington</p>
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SSB 5353 Re-opened VSP to 12 non-VSP counties

- Clallam
- Clark
- Island
- Jefferson
- King
- Kitsap
- Klickitat
- Pierce
- Skamania
- Snohomish
- Wahkiakum
- Whatcom



SSB 5353 VSP Legislation

- “VSP-like” programs
- In the 12 non-VSP counties (gray counties on map)
- Criteria being discussed:
 - Have a collaborative process
 - Broad stakeholder groups
 - Organized like VSP
 - Not in a VSP county already
 - County-wide plan already in place, like a VSP county plan
- Must follow VSP statute requirements, which include monitoring, reporting, & adaptive management
- Examples:
 - Sustainable Lands Strategy – Snohomish County
 - Snoqualmie Fish, Farm & Flood – King County



VSP Day-to-Day

- Quarterly regional joint meetings of the Statewide Advisory Committee & Technical Panel
 - Counties divided into regions (Western, Central, NE, SE)
 - Counties invited to dialogue with SAC & TP and prepare for their 5YR report
 - A direct result of county/CD feedback during 2020-2021 first 5YR rpt
- Monthly Technical Panel agency meetings (WDFW, WSDA, ECY)
- Monthly VSP newsletter – 800 subscribers
- Monthly capital funding review committee meetings
- Quarterly work group meetings (27 counties)
- Quarterly monitoring trainings (opportunity to learn monitoring skills)
- Quarterly monitoring symposiums (opportunity to network, share ideas)
- Annual new staff, budget, contract, voucher & cost-share trainings
- Presentations at WADE, WSAC (convention & new commissioner training), planner’s forums, other events

2023 meetings	Location	Region	Counties
12-Jan-23	Lacey	Western	San Juan
			Skagit
			Mason
			Thurston
			Grays
			Pacific
			Lewis
11-May-23	Ellensburg	Central	Cowlitz
			Okanogan
			Chelan
			Douglas
			Kittitas
			Yakima
			Adams
13-Jul-23	Spokane	North East	Grant
			Ferry
			Pend Oreille
12-Oct-23	Pullman	South East	Spokane
			Lincoln
			Stevens
			Benton
			Franklin
			Columbia
			Walla Walla
			Whitman
Garfield			
Asotin			

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County Resources

RESOURCES OVERVIEW



Questions!

Bill Eller, VSP Program Coordinator

beller@scc.wa.gov

(509) 385-7512

Thank you!



Washington State
Conservation Commission