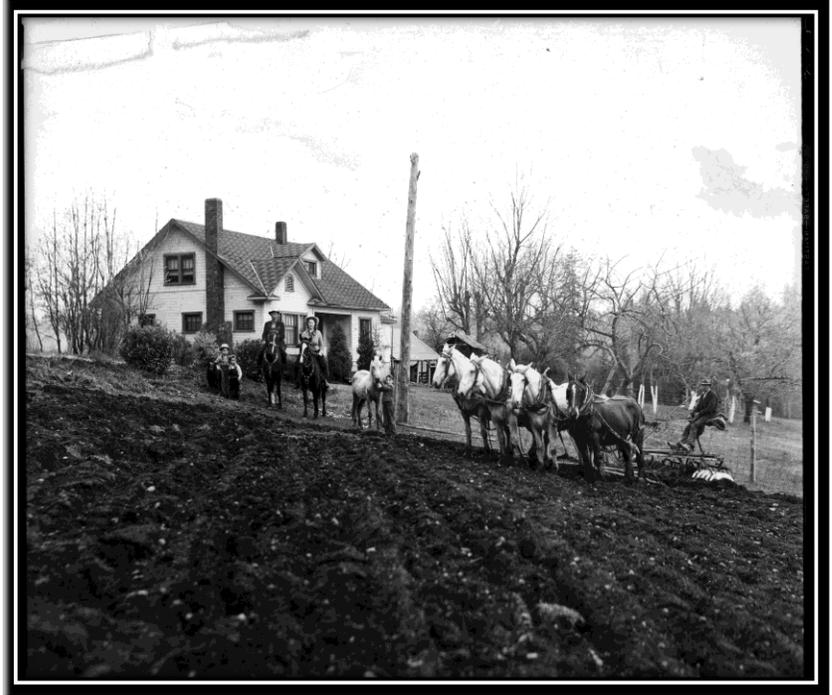


# Voluntary Stewardship Program

Mason County, Washington

# 2018

## Individual Stewardship Checklist



Its long history of agriculture and its perseverance in the community continue to reflect its importance in Mason County's culture and economy. Programs that support the protection of farming, such as the Voluntary Stewardship Program, provide additional opportunities to facilitate and even expand this industry in the future. Places where agricultural activities intersect with critical areas, this Program is intended to promote incentives for agricultural landowners and operators to voluntarily enhance the condition of critical areas through restoration projects and best management practices. A successful stewardship program would enable the community to apply cooperation, innovation, and effective action for the advancement of agriculture and the environment.

Mason Conservation District  
450 W Business Park Road  
360/427-9436  
[www.masoncd.org](http://www.masoncd.org)

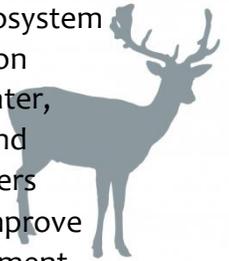
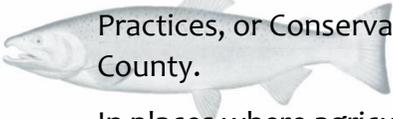
# Voluntary Stewardship Program

Overview and Individual Stewardship Plan Checklist  
Mason County, Washington

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## WHAT IS THE VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?

The Voluntary Stewardship Program, or “VSP”, was adopted in 2011 under the Washington Growth Management Act as an **alternative to traditional critical areas regulations**. It is based on a **WORK PLAN** that focuses on voluntary incentives to encourage good ecosystem stewardship instead of historic regulatory approaches used to protect critical areas on agricultural lands. Critical areas, described further below, generally support clean water, sustainable populations of salmon and shellfish, and healthy populations of plants and wildlife for the next generation of farmers and fishermen. Under this Program, farmers would operate **successful agricultural businesses** while taking the initiative to improve the environment on their land. These initiatives are primarily known as Best Management Practices, or Conservation Practices, and are already in use by farmers throughout the County.



In places where agricultural activities intersect with critical areas, the Program is intended to promote incentives for agricultural landowners and operators to **voluntarily enhance** the condition of critical areas through restoration projects and best management practices. **A successful stewardship program would enable the community to apply cooperation, innovation, and effective action for the advancement of agriculture and the environment.**

## THE VSP WORK PLAN

Mason County has an approved **WORK PLAN** for the Program that includes goals, benchmarks, and strategies for protecting and enhancing critical areas through voluntary, site-specific stewardship practices. The **WORK PLAN** is also focused on maintaining and enhancing the **long-term viability of agriculture** and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses. Specifically the **PLAN** has four goals:

- Goal 1** Protect Critical Area Functions and Values on Agricultural Lands at a Watershed Level As They Existed As Of July 22, 2011
- Goal 2** Enhance Critical Area Functions And Values Through Voluntary, Incentive-Based Measures.
- Goal 3** Ensure The Viability Of Agriculture And Reduce The Conversion Of Agricultural Land Into Other Uses.
- Goal 4** Establish Baseline Monitoring Program To Measure Benchmarks Over A Ten Year Period.

## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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Under the Goals there are benchmarks and then a series of strategies designed to achieve them. While those terms sound fairly synonymous, they actually describe pieces of the **WORK PLAN's** procedural structure. In simpler terms, think of it like a menu. The goals establish the meal – breakfast, lunch, dinner, and desert. The benchmarks are the items you would order under each meal, and the strategies describe the ingredients that make up the meal. For instance, if the Goal is Lunch, then the Benchmark could be a Club Sandwich, and the Strategies would be the bread, lettuce, tomato, ham, turkey, bacon, and mayonnaise. All of this is designed to show the ultimate goal (lunch), and how (sandwich) and what (ingredients) we are going to do to achieve it. As long as we continue to achieve our goals, the Program remains successful.

Fortunately, the majority of work associated with the **WORK PLAN**, its implementation and monitoring, is the responsibility of the District. You, the volunteer farmer, are only as obligated as you choose to be utilizing a variety of available best management practices.

Implementation of the Program *requires only voluntary stewardship* as the primary method of protecting critical areas. It may not require an agricultural operator to discontinue agricultural activities<sup>1</sup> or to even participate in the Program. Agricultural operators volunteering to participate may withdraw from the program at any time.

Commercial and noncommercial agricultural operators participating in the Program and implementing an individual stewardship plan consistent with the **WORK PLAN** are presumed to be working toward the protection and enhancement of critical areas. Operators participating in the program are eligible to receive funding and assistance under watershed programs. There are *many funding opportunities* for farmers regardless of whether or not they participate in this program. Some of those are listed later.

### WHAT ARE CRITICAL AREAS?

Not everyone is familiar with what or where critical areas are in Mason County. The Program recognizes five different critical areas according to the Growth Management Act, and all five can be found here. These include: critical aquifer recharge areas (CARA), frequently flooded areas, wetlands, fish & wildlife habitat conservation areas, and geologically hazardous areas. In Mason County, geologically hazardous areas are divided into three subcategories: landslide hazard, seismic hazard, and erosion hazard areas. The following table indicates the total acreage of each critical area in the County and its proportional interface with agricultural lands.

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<sup>1</sup> Legally existing prior to July 22, 2011

# Voluntary Stewardship Program

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Critical Area “CA”	Total	Total Agriculture	Agriculture Interface	% Agriculture Interface	% CA Interface
Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas	120,984	6,385	3,333	52%	3%
Frequently Flooded Areas	59,537	6,385	2,989	43%	5%
Landslide Hazards	82,683	6,385	259	4%	0.3%
Seismic Hazards	398,388	6,385	5,998	94%	1%
Erosion Hazards	16,856	6,385	87	1%	0.5%
Fish & Wildlife Priority Species Habitat	35,856	6,385	1,784	28%	5%
Wetlands	54,656	6,385	1,147	18%	2%

Critical areas, as denoted above, support clean water and healthy plant and wildlife populations. Each is different in its make-up and functions, as well as its associated protection measures. Below are brief descriptions of all five:



**CRITICAL AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS**

Surface waters replenish, “recharge”, aquifers through seepage from streams, lakes, and wetlands, and from precipitation that percolates through soil or rock. Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, also called Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas or CARAs.

*Photo: Oakland Bay, Courtesy of WA Department of Ecology*

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### FREQUENTLY FLOODED AREAS

Frequently flooded areas are lands in the flood plain subject to at least a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year, or within areas subject to flooding due to high groundwater.

*Photo: Tahuya River, Courtesy of The Lunkers Guide*



### LANDSLIDE HAZARD AREAS

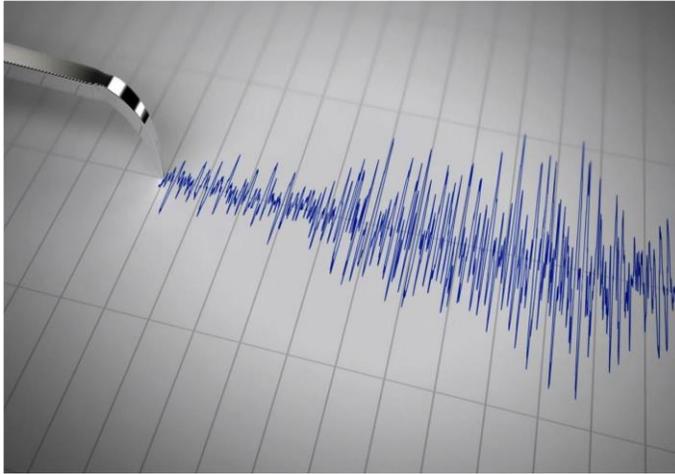
The risk of landslide occurrence depends on a number of factors including soil vulnerability, slope, and the degree of water saturation.

*Photo: Highway 106 Landslide, Courtesy of KOMO 4 News*

# Voluntary Stewardship Program

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## SEISMIC HAZARD AREAS

Seismic hazards occur in areas subject to severe risk of earthquake damage as a result of seismic induced settlement or soil liquefaction.

*Photo: Courtesy of [www.nbcrightnow.com](http://www.nbcrightnow.com)*



Image: Hugh Shipman

## EROSION HAZARD AREAS

Erosion is a natural process in which the land surface is worn away by the action of water, wind, ice or other geologic processes. The most common cause of erosion is water falling or flowing across the land.

*Photo: Bulkhead, Courtesy of Mason CD*

## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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beautifulwashington.com

### FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION AREAS

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA) are recognized for maintaining species in suitable habitats within their natural geographic distribution so that isolated populations are not created. They are both aquatic and terrestrial areas within the County.

*Photo: Courtesy of BeautifulWashington.com*



### WETLANDS

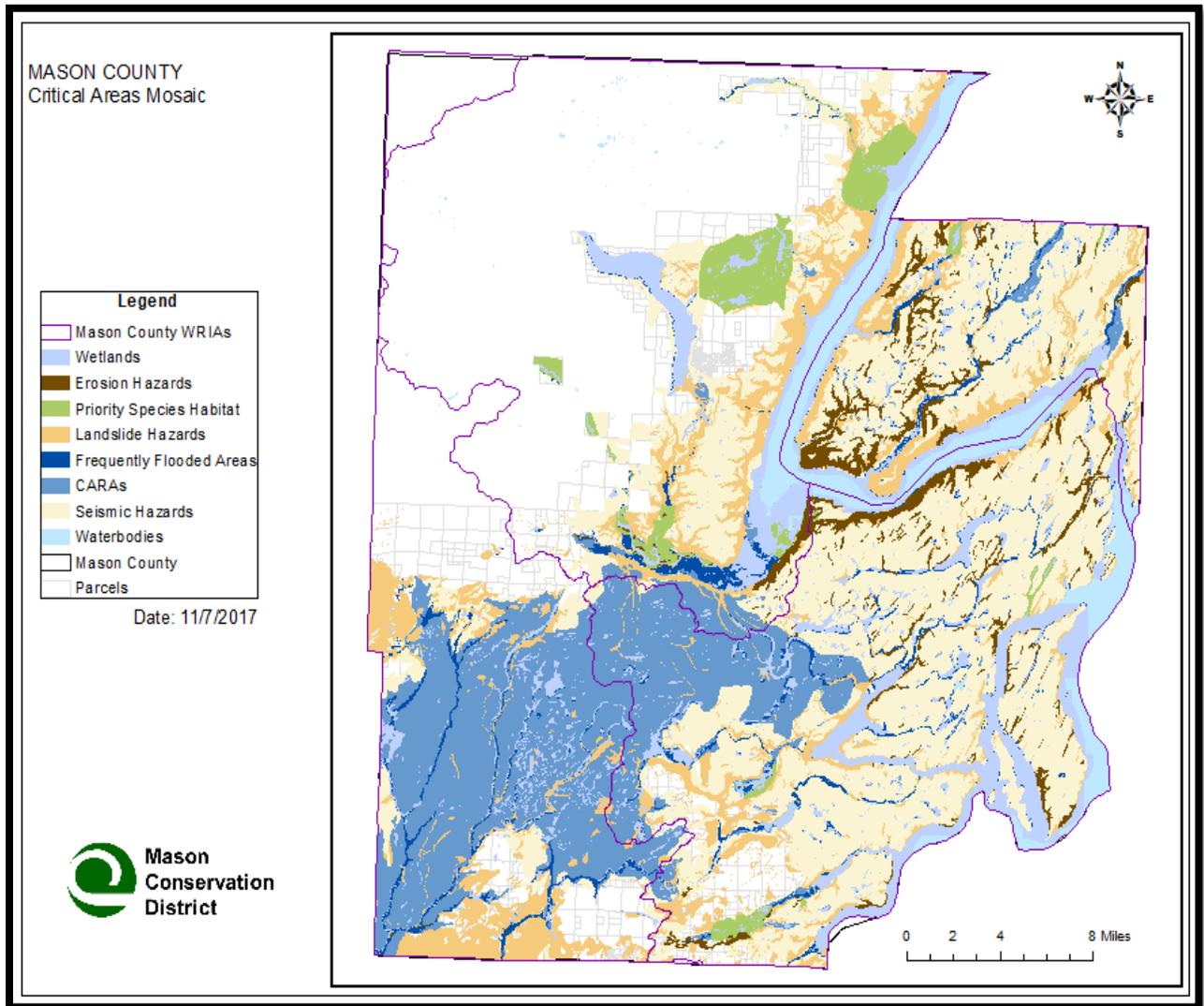
Generally, wetlands are areas inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

*Photo: Thelar Wetlands, Courtesy of trevor.com*

# Voluntary Stewardship Program

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To give you an idea of where these areas are, this Critical Areas Mosaic Map illustrates a pattern of these areas across the County.



To find out if your agricultural operation has a critical area located on it, and to learn more about voluntary practices, the District has created a Checklist<sup>2</sup> that evaluates the **WORK PLAN's** goals together with the needs and objectives of the individual operator.

<sup>2</sup> The Mason County VSP ISP checklist contains a compilation of original and borrowed materials from checklists approved for other jurisdictions, including Pacific, Thurston, Yakima, and Grant - our thanks and acknowledgement of their work.

# Voluntary Stewardship Program

Overview and Individual Stewardship Plan Checklist

Mason County, Washington

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## PROPERTY INFORMATION

The following checklist can be used to initiate an Individual Stewardship Plan<sup>3</sup> (ISP) under the Voluntary Stewardship Program. This is a site-specific plan for individual agricultural operations that identifies agricultural activities and conservation practice options based on the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) conservation planning procedures. The ISP details conservation practices that promote agricultural business viability while protecting and voluntarily enhancing critical areas. Completion of this survey is the first step to helping the agricultural community in Mason County to meet its participation standards under the Program. This ISP survey will be used to assess trends in implementation of practices that support agricultural viability and critical area protection, and the individual results of this survey will be held in confidentiality by the Mason Conservation District. External reporting of the ISP results will only occur at the watershed scale.

Your name:

---

Phone number or email address:

---

Today's date:

---

Agricultural business address:

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Name of person who manages your farm:

---

Number of acres in agricultural production:

---

What products do you produce?

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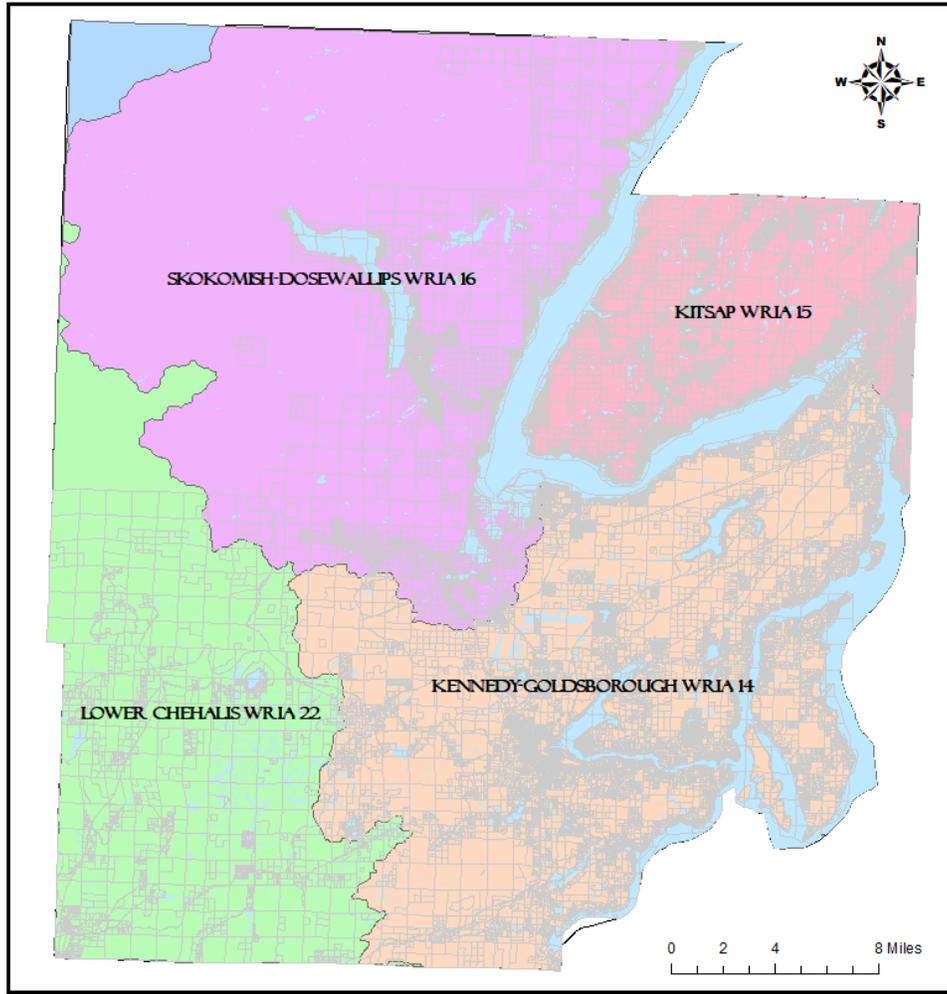
<sup>3</sup> The Washington State Conservation Commission believes that Individual Stewardship Plans are similar to Farm Plans developed by Conservation Districts and are confidential and exempt from disclosure. Policy Advisory #01-17 RCW 42.56.270(17)

# Voluntary Stewardship Program

Overview and Individual Stewardship Plan Checklist

Mason County, Washington

## WHAT WRIA IS YOUR AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN?



Kennedy-Goldsborough - WRIA 14

Kitsap - WRIA 15

Skokomish-Dosewallips - WRIA 16

Lower Chehalis - WRIA 22

For online maps and to look up your parcel you can go to <http://www.geodata.org/>

## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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Mason County, Washington

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### IDENTIFY POTENTIAL CRITICAL AREAS ON, OR NEAR, PROPERTY:

- a. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
- b. Wetlands
- c. Frequently Flooded Areas
- d. Geologically Hazardous Areas
  - i. Landslide Hazard
  - ii. Seismic Hazard
  - iii. Erosion Hazard
- e. Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

VSP is a voluntary and non-regulatory program. Checking one or more critical areas that may potentially be located on or adjacent to the property does not constitute an official determination of such a feature. It is helpful in filling out the rest of the checklist. If you are unsure you can contact the **VSP Coordinator at (360) 427-9436, ext. 104 or you can email [Badkins@masoncd.org](mailto:Badkins@masoncd.org)** for assistance.

### IDENTIFY YOUR CURRENT PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY:

- EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- CStP - Conservation Stewardship Program
- EWP - Emergency Watershed Protection Program
- EWP FPE - Floodplain Easement
- FRPP - Farm & Ranchland Protection Program
- CREP - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
- ECP - Emergency Conservation Program
- Disaster Assistance Program (includes LFP- Livestock Forage Program)
- Mason County Open Space Tax Program
- Existing farm plan through the conservation district or NRCS

Other:

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# Voluntary Stewardship Program

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Try your best to answer the questions and a Mason Conservation District’s technical assistance provider can help you with the rest. District staff can perform a site visit to verify the actual extent and location of critical areas on your property and help you develop an ISP for implementing conservation practices and maintaining or improving the long-term viability of your agricultural operation. This can be done through the use of online mapping tools and visual identification.

Using the examples below, begin identifying conservation practices that you are already doing or that you are interested in discussing with the District to meet objectives of the VSP. The examples are only a few of those commonly used that might be implemented in an ISP. Please indicate which conservation practices you are already doing (after the July 22, 2011 baseline) or that you would like to implement, or if it is not applicable to your operation.

For more information, criteria, and other practices please use the link in the footnote below to view the conservation practice standard in the Field Office Technical Guides.<sup>4</sup>

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## FENCING

Facilitates conservation objectives by providing means to control movement of animals and people, including vehicles.

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I did this after July 22, 2011	<input type="radio"/>
___ Feet      ___ Acres	
I am interested in this	<input type="radio"/>



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<sup>4</sup> <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov>

## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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### HEAVY USE PROTECTION AREA

Provides stable, non-eroding surface for areas frequently used by animals, people, and vehicles; protects/improves water quality

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I did this after July 22, 2011

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I am interested in this



### SUBSURFACE DRAIN

Remove or distribute excessive soil water; remove salts and other contaminants from soil profile

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I am interested in this



## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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Mason County, Washington

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### COMPOSTING FACILITY

Reduces pollution potential and improves handling characteristics of organic waste solids; produce soil amendment that adds organic matter and beneficial organisms, provides slow-release plant-available nutrients, and improves soil condition

---

I did this after July 22, 2011

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I am interested in this



### ACCESS CONTROL

Monitor, manage intensity of use by animals, people, vehicles, equipment with other practices of conservation plan.

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I did this after July 22, 2011

\_\_\_\_ Feet      \_\_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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### FILTER STRIP

Reduces suspended solids and contaminants in runoff; reduces dissolved contaminants in runoff; reduces suspended solids and contaminants in irrigation tailwater.

I did this after July 22, 2011

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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

### WASTE STORAGE STRUCTURE FACILITY

Temporarily store wastes, wastewater, and contaminated runoff as storage function component of agricultural waste management system.

I did this after July 22, 2011

\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

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### PASTURE/HAYLAND PLANTING

Improve/maintain livestock nutrition and/or health; provide/increase forage supply; reduce soil erosion and improve soil and water quality; produce feedstock for biofuel or energy production; increase carbon sequestration.

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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

### IRRIGATION SYSTEM: MICRO-IRRIGATION

Efficiently and uniformly apply irrigation water and maintain soil moisture; prevent contamination of ground and surface water.

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I am interested in this



Photo: [www.indiamart.com/narmadapipes-r](http://www.indiamart.com/narmadapipes-r)

## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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### PRESCRIBED GRAZING

Improve/maintain desired plant species composition; improve maintain quantity and quality of forage, water, riparian and watershed functions, and food/cover for wildlife; reduce accelerated soil erosion; manage fine fuels loads.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
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I am interested in this



### FIELD BORDER

Reduce wind/water erosion; protect soil/water quality; provide wildlife food and cover and pollinator or other beneficial organism habitat; increase carbon storage; improve air quality.

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\_\_\_\_ Feet      \_\_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



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### IRRIGATION SYSTEM: SPRINKLER

Efficient, uniform water application; improve plant condition, productivity, health, vigor; prevent entry of excessive nutrients, organics, other chemicals in water; improve soil condition; reduce particulate matter emissions; reduce energy use.



Photo: [www.gmoutlook.com/micro-sprinkler](http://www.gmoutlook.com/micro-sprinkler)

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this

### IRRIGATION WATER CONVEYANCE – PIPELINE: HIGH PRESSURE PLASTIC

This practice may be applied as part of a resource management system to achieve one or more of the following purposes: conveyance of water from a source of supply to an irrigation system or storage reservoir, reduce energy use, develop renewable energy systems.



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I did this after July 22, 2011   
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I am interested in this

## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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### RECREATION TRAIL AND WALKWAY

Provide/improve animal access to forage, water, working/handling facilities, shelter; facilitate improved grazing; protect ecologically sensitive, erosive sites; provide pedestrian/off-road vehicle access to agricultural, construction, maintenance operations

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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

### SURFACE DRAINAGE – FIELD DITCH

Intercept excess surface and shallow subsurface water from a field, conveying it to a surface main or lateral; collect excess irrigation water for a tailwater reuse system.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
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I am interested in this



Photo: www.nrcs.usda.gov

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### SURFACE DRAINAGE – MAIN OR LATERAL

Convey excess surface or shallow subsurface water from field ditch to safe outlet; convey excess subsurface water from subsurface drain to safe outlet.

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I am interested in this

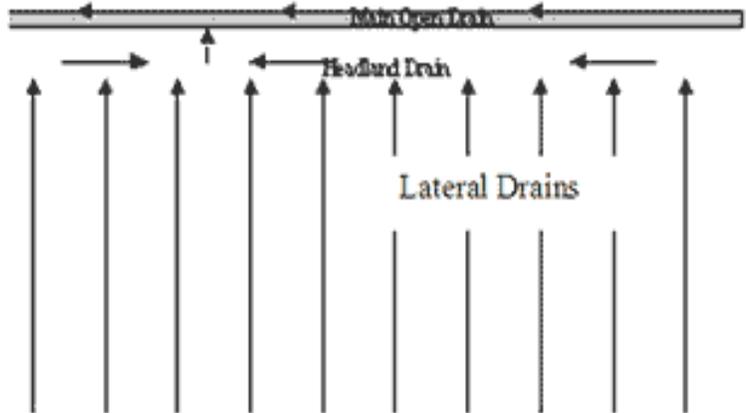


Photo: [agriculture.vic.gov.au/agricultur](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agricultur)

### WASTE FACILITY COVER

Protect clean water in existing or planned animal waste handling or storage area; improve waste management and utilization; capture biogas emissions from an existing or planned animal waste storage facility; protect clean water by excluding it from a chemically contaminated area.

I did this after July 22, 2011   
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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

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### WATERING FACILITY

Supply daily water requirements; improve animal distribution; provide water source as alternative to sensitive resource

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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

### HEDGEROW PLANTING

Food, cover, corridors for terrestrial aquatic and wildlife; improve water quality and aquatic habitat; living fences; intercept airborne particulate matter; reduce chemical drift, odor movement; increase carbon storage in biomass and soils; screens and barriers to noise, dust.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

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### HERBACEOUS WEED CONTROL

Enhance accessibility, quantity, quality of forage and/or browse; restore or release plant communities and wildlife habitats consistent with the ecological site; protect soils, control erosion; reduce fine-fuels fire hazard and improve air quality.

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I did this after July 22, 2011

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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

### RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFER

Create shade to lower, maintain water temperatures; reduce excess sediment, organic material, nutrients and pesticides in surface runoff and in shallow ground water flow; reduce pesticide drift; restore riparian plant communities; increase carbon storage in plant biomass and soils.

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I did this after July 22, 2011

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I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

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### STREAM HABITAT IMPROVEMENT & MANAGEMENT

Provide suitable aquatic habitat; maintain stream corridor ecological processes and hydrological connections of diverse stream habitat types important to aquatic species.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
\_\_\_\_ Feet      \_\_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

### TREE/SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT

Establish woody plants for: forest products, habitat, long-term erosion control and water quality, treat waste, store carbon in biomass, reduce energy use, develop renewable energy systems, improve and restore natural diversity, and enhance aesthetics.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
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I am interested in this



Photo: www.nrcs.usda.gov

## Voluntary Stewardship Program

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### TREE/SHRUB SITE PREPARATION

Encourage natural regeneration;  
permit artificial establishment of  
woody plants.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



### WETLAND RESTORATION

Restore conditions conducive to  
hydric soil maintenance, wetland  
hydrology, native hydrophytic  
vegetation, original fish and wildlife  
habitats.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



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### ROOF RUNOFF STRUCTURE

Protect surface water quality by excluding roof runoff from contaminated areas; protect structure foundation from water damage or soil erosion from excess water runoff; increase infiltration of runoff water; capture water for other uses.



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I did this after July 22, 2011

\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this

### STREAM CROSSING

Access to another land unit; improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrient, organic and inorganic loading; reduce streambank and streambed erosion.



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I did this after July 22, 2011

\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this

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### NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Budget, supply, and conserve nutrients; minimize agricultural nonpoint source pollution; properly utilize manure or organic byproducts; protect air quality; maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

### SILVO-PASTURE ESTABLISHMENT

Provide forage for livestock and wood products; increase carbon sequestration; improve water quality; reduce erosion; enhance wildlife habitat; reduce fire hazard; provide shade for livestock; develop renewable energy systems.

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I did this after July 22, 2011   
\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_ Acres

I am interested in this



Photo: Mason CD

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The VSP is designed to promote the viability of agriculture over the long term and to avoid unnecessary local critical area regulations due to the prevalence of conservation practices undertaken by willing producers. Farmer and agricultural operators may find funding programs, as previously discussed, and request a field visit to obtain advice on improving viability and to recommended conservation practices.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

If you have any questions or would like more information on how to get involved, contact the VSP Coordinator or visit the VSP website at [www.masoncd.org/vsp](http://www.masoncd.org/vsp). Critical areas exist throughout the County. You can direct questions about the presence of critical areas on your property or any questions on how to get involved to the Mason County VSP Coordinator:

Barbara Adkins, AICP  
Special Programs Manager  
Mason Conservation District  
450 W. Business Park Road  
Shelton, WA 98584  
(360) 427-9436, ext 104  
Badkins@masoncd.org