

Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Group Meeting Minutes

June 23, 2020 ~ Zoom Meeting Platform

I. Call to Order

Chair Marty Hall called to order the 2nd quarter meeting of the Columbia County VSP Work Group at 4:06 p.m. The meeting was held via the Zoom meeting platform due to COVID-19 gathering restrictions.

II. Attendance

Marty Hall, Don Howard, Roland Schirman, Tom Schirm, Terry Bruegman, Val Turner, Ryan Rundell (Commissioner), Levi Keesecker (State Conservation Commission), and Dena Martin (Staff) were present.

III. Approval of Minutes

Schirman moved to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2020 meeting. Howard seconded. Approved as read.

IV. Updates from State VSP

Introduction of Natural Resource Scientist Levi Keesecker with the Washington State Conservation Commission. Keesecker specializes in monitoring and is available to provide assistance as needed.

V. County Updates

Martin provided updates from the County.

- a. The Conservation District and the County approved an interlocal agreement on March 16, contracting with the District to provide help with implementation and technical assistance.
- b. The County terminated its contract with Consultant Don Brigham due to a lack of need and to save funds for implementation and monitoring. Martin read a letter of response from Brigham saying he understood the rationale and hopes to continue working with the County in the future.
- c. An \$800 annual hosting fee is due for the Mapseed program. Martin shared information gleaned from a meeting with VSP Coordinator Brad Johnson discussing how Whitman and Garfield counties have been utilizing the software and soliciting producer participation. It was agreed that VSP will pay the hosting fee for one year and attempt to garner increased landowner participation. If there is no increase in participation next year, the Work Group will consider terminating the Mapseed contract.
- d. Martin informed the Work Group that the 5-year report is due in January of 2021. She is working with the CCD on gathering the necessary

monitoring and comparison data. Additional meetings may be required for adaptive management if it appears benchmarks are not being met.

VI. Implementation Progress

- a. Terry Bruegman provided an update on current cost-share projects. It was agreed that the work group can meet via Zoom to approve implementation on individual projects if they are ready for approval prior to the regularly scheduled quarterly meeting.
 - VSP 2019-01, Craig Martin, Earth Spring Runoff Basin: Bruegman and CCD Engineer Gary Ausman visited the site. There are general concerns with the site including location, rockiness, depth and the ability to design a large enough pond. Ausman is developing preliminary calculations to determine feasibility.
 - VSP 2019-02, George Touchette, Engineered Spring Catch Basin: Applicant has not completed the required ISP survey so not action has been taken. There may be issues with water rights should the project progress.
 - VSP 2019-03, Brett Touchette, Reforestation: Tracy Hanger arranged for NRCS Forester Carrie Gaines of Spokane to visit the site. A detailed recommendation report was submitted. The greatest concern is maintenance to control competing vegetation following planting. Gaines submitted a detailed report which will be incorporated into the ISP. The District is waiting to hear if the applicants want to move forward with the understanding that maintenance will be necessary.
 - VSP 2019-04, Don Howard, Livestock Control Fencing/Watering Stations: Project is waiting on cultural resources review. CCD is working with Archaeologist Ray Tracy for a cost estimate.
 - VSP 2019-05, Rob Peyton, Livestock Watering Stations: CCD is working on locating the exact location. Will meet with landowners when they visit from out-of-state this summer.
 - VSP 2019-06, Tye Knebel, Livestock Control Fencing: CCD will meet with landowner in the next week or so. Will also require cultural resources review.
 - VSP 2019-07, Tye Knebel, Windbreak and Shelterbelt Establishment: Project has been delayed due to impacts of flooding on irrigation system
 - VSP 2019-08, Robert Phinney, Invasive Species Control: CCD and technical experts visited the site and discussed multiple options. Additional clean-up on site is needed prior to the planting of natural grasses. Hall requested that the CCD makes sure the landowner understands this is a multi-year project.

- CCD is working with two landowners on pH soil health which will be submitted as a new cost-share eligible item.
 - Bruegman asked the Work Group if they would consider nutrient management projects on CRP land. The Work Group agreed to accept applications for these types of projects.
- b. Members reviewed the draft Columbia County Cost-Share Policy.
- Bruegman wanted to ensure the policy allows for additions to the listed Best Management Practices. This is noted in the policy.
 - The policy lists cost-share percentages of 75% funding for projects that do not have other funding sources and 50% funding for projects that have other funding.
 - Schirman moved to approve the Columbia County Cost-Share Policy as written and submit the plan to the State. Turner seconded. All in favor. (Policy attached)
- c. Martin provided an update on a meeting with WDFW High Resolution Change Detection analyst Robin Hale. The State has contracted with WDFW to provide the change detection data to counties. There is no cost to the county. WDFW will provide comparisons from 2011-2017 with a focus on changes in tree canopy cover and impervious surfaces. The County is gathering GIS data to aid in the analysis. Some Work Group members expressed concern that the visual change may not be positive and stressed that land being removed from CRP to direct seed, or other best practice methods, should not be considered a positive to negative.

VII. On-going Items

Discussed outreach methods including postcard mailings and a fair booth. The Work Group agreed to setting up a fair booth if exhibits will be open to the public under the COVID-19 restrictions.

VIII. Next Meeting

The VSP Work Group will meet Tuesday, September 15 at 4 p.m. The meeting location will be determined at a later date, depending on COVID-19 gathering restrictions.

IX. Adjournment

Hall adjourned the meeting at 4:28 p.m.



Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program

Columbia County Cost-share Policy

Columbia County Planning and Building

114 South 2nd Street
Dayton, Washington 99328

Prepared by the Columbia County VSP Work Group

Contact: dena_martin@co.columbia.wa.us

(509) 382-4676

Columbia County VSP Cost-share Policy

The Columbia County VSP Workgroup believes that the distribution of cost-share funds to critical areas protection and enhancement projects is one of the most direct and efficient means of protecting critical areas while maintaining agricultural viability. As such, the VSP work group has developed the following structure for the allocation of those funds.

Eligibility Requirements

VSP cost-share funds are available within the boundaries of Columbia County to landowners, producers and operators through an application, scoring and review process. In order to receive VSP cost-share funds, at least one critical resource area of concern on agricultural lands must be identified and addressed through the implementation of best management practices.

Individual Cost-share Projects

To receive funds, applicants must complete the Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program Project Application (Attachment 1). The application includes a description of the project, identification of impacted critical areas, a description of the impacts, the project budget, timeline and expected sustainability. In order to receive VSP cost-share funds, the project must address at least one critical resource area through implementation of Best Management Practices.

Applications are distributed, with applicant identities redacted, by email to VSP work group members who evaluate them independently. Work group members score the applications based on the attached rubric (Attachment 2). Rubric scores are based on:

- Clearly defined goals
- Measurable results
- Clear implementation strategies
- Cost-effectiveness, feasibility, and matches program priorities
- Sustainability
- Impact on agricultural viability
- Other funding available (priority given to unfunded projects)
- Ability to track status/improvements/benchmarks
- Direct and indirect impacts to critical areas

Work group members then come together at quarterly meetings to share scores and discuss the projects as a group before making awards. Feasibility considerations such as the amount

of engineering and permitting required for a project may also factor in to project award selection.

Prior to accepting a cost-share award, the producer must complete an Individual Stewardship Plan (ISP) Survey (Attachment 3, Pages 187 – 201 in the Columbia County VSP Work Plan). The ISP survey identifies critical areas and aids in the development of an Individual Stewardship Plan which identifies practices and programs that further the goals and benchmarks of the VSP.

Columbia County has contracted with the Columbia Conservation District to serve as technical lead for VSP implementation and monitoring. The District will assist applicants in reviewing projects, provide and/or coordinate technical assistance, complete the cost-share agreement, and assist in monitoring benchmarks.

VSP-funded projects must meet all Washington State Conservation Commission requirements identified in Section 8 of the Washington State Conservation Commission Grant & Procedure Manual.

Individual Project Cost-share Rates

Unfunded projects: Columbia County VSP will make cost-share awards to otherwise unfunded projects in the amount of 75% of the lesser of the budgeted or actual project cost.

Funded projects: The VSP will award 50% of the unfunded balance of the lesser of budgeted or actual project costs of projects that will receive funding from other sources.

Other Cost-share Opportunities

At times, the VSP may partner with another agency to provide additional cost-share funding for an existing project, such as noxious weed eradication. In these cases, producers may bypass the application and review process and may opt-in to receive funding by completing the ISP Survey.

Cost-Share Practices

The following are examples of project types and best practices that are eligible for funding through the District's cost-share program. If the VSP Workgroup identifies practices that should be added to the cost-share list, they will work with the District to add them. The District has a year-round call for projects and the VSP work group will be available to review applications and make awards at quarterly meetings.

Project Types & Best Management Practices

Project: Livestock Water Development	Project: Riparian Habitat Improvements
Spring Development	Riparian Tree/Shrub Planting
Well	Plant Protection Tube
Pipeline	Drip Irrigation
Hydrant	Riparian Fence
Storage Tank	Corral Fence (Relocation)
Trough	Feed Area Fence (Relocation)
Heavy Use Area Protection	Critical Area Planting
Pump	
Protection Fence	Project: Cropland Improvements
Critical Area Planting	Residue Management (Reduced tillage)
	Nutrient Management
Project: Range/Pasture Improvements	Pest Management
Rangeland Planting	Pasture/Hayland Planting
Pasture/Hayland Planting	Terrace
Tree/Shrub Planting	Sediment Basin
Cross Fence	Grassed Waterway
Windbreak	Windbreak
Equipment/Livestock Crossing	
Multipurpose Pond	Project: Instream Habitat Improvements
	Beaver Dam Analogs
Project: Manure Management	Post Assisted Log Structures
Heavy Use Area (Feed pads)	Engineered Instream Structures
Waste Storage Structures	Fish Barrier Removal

Attachment 1

Columbia County Voluntary Stewardship Program Project Application



The Columbia County VSP offers an incentive-based approach to garner voluntary involvement in protecting critical areas while enhancing the long-term success and viability of agricultural production in Columbia County. The VSP is currently accepting applications for cost-share projects that help producers address agricultural impacts to critical areas on their property.

- The application deadline is December 31, 2019 with project awards being announced by January 31, 2020.
- Cost-sharing matches range from 50% to 75%.
- All projects will be considered but priority will be given to projects for which no additional outside funding is available.
- Priority will be given to projects that positively impact more than one critical area.

PRODUCER INFORMATION			
Name:	Email:		
Mailing Address:		Phone:	
City:	State:	Zip:	
What form of communication do you prefer? Phone ___ Email ___ Mail ___			
PROJECT INFORMATION			
Please clearly describe your project and how the project protects or enhances a critical area while maintaining agricultural viability (space will expand as you type). <i>Example: Installation of four livestock watering stations will redirect livestock access to streams. Reducing access will prevent runoff of animal waste to streams and reduce stream bank erosion. Livestock will benefit from clean, dependable drinking water.</i>			
Describe the specific location of the project.			
Quantity impacted (acres/feet/units)			
What critical areas will be impacted? (See last page for description) See map layers at Mapseed (columbiacountyvsp.mapseed.org) to determine if your project lies within one of the critical areas listed below or call the Planning Department at 509-382-4676 for assistance.)			

Critical Areas	Is your project located in a critical area?	Does your project indirectly impact a critical area?
Wetlands		
Frequently Flooded Areas		
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Areas		
Geologically Hazardous Areas		
Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas		
Describe the critical areas impacted in more detail (e.g. size of area, river or stream length impacted, fish and wildlife species, etc.)		
Will you be able to measure the success of this project in protecting or enhancing a critical area(s)? If so, how?		
Are you aware of other funding for this project or are you currently participating in a cost-share program for this project? If so, describe the funding agreement. (Note: participation in another cost-share program does not automatically disqualify you from VSP funds.)		
What are your expected project start and completion dates?		
What is the expected budget for this project and how is it broken down?		
How sustainable will this project be following the initial VSP funding? Will it require ongoing maintenance?		

The goal of the Columbia County VSP is to enhance or maintain baseline functions and values of the county’s critical areas while maintaining agricultural viability. Critical areas include:

- **Wetlands:** Areas inundated by surface water or groundwater for at least part of the growing season and which support vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.
- **Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas:** Lands and waters that provide habitat to support fish and wildlife species throughout their life stages.
- **Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas:** Areas that have a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for drinking water, including aquifers vulnerable to contamination.

- **Geologically Hazardous Areas:** Areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, and other geological events. In Columbia County, geologic hazards related to agricultural activities are primarily associated with erosion.
- **Frequently Flooded Areas:** Includes floodplains and floodways and often includes the low-lying areas adjacent to rivers and lakes that are prone to inundation during heavy rains and snowmelt.

Questions? Contact Dena Martin at dena_martin@co.columbia.wa.us or 509-382-4676.

Attachment 2

Applicant Name:

Amount requested:

Scoring: 0 = Unsatisfactory 1 = Good 2 = Better 3 = Excellent

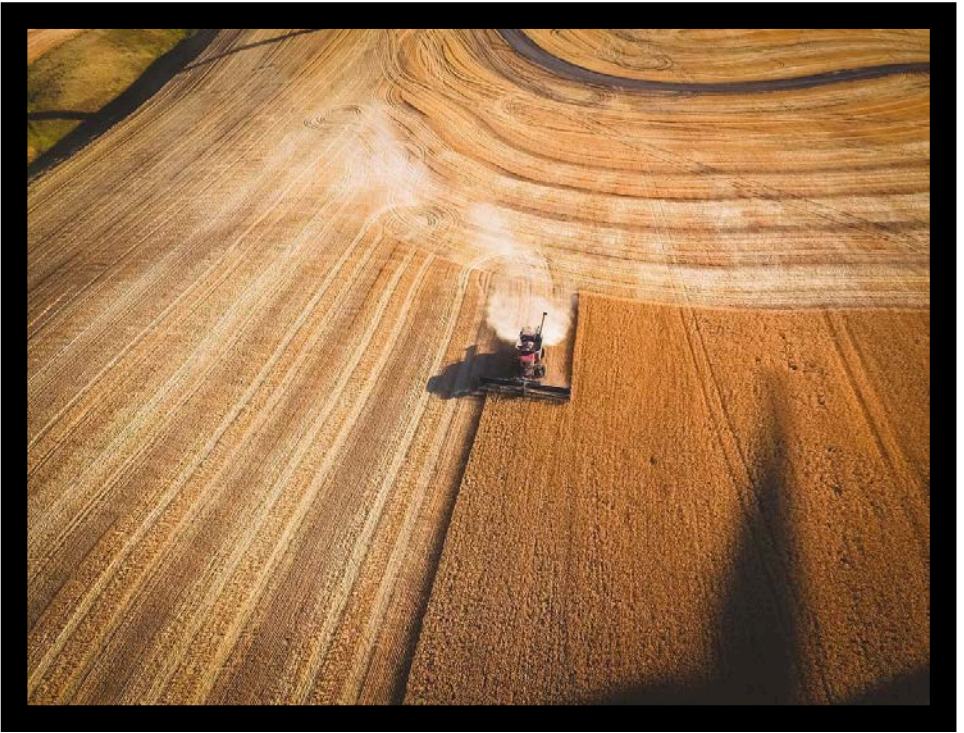
Evaluation Questions	Score 0-3
Project is clearly stated and includes a clearly defined goal that meets VSP objectives.	
Project addresses a specific need in a way that will yield measurable results.	
The project is fully defined with clear implementation strategies	
The budget is clear and cost-effective, feasible and matches program priorities.	
The project is likely to be sustainable or will have sustainable impacts after the initial grant fund	
The project will have a strong impact on ag viability.	
Is other funding available or is this part of another cost-share program?	
How easy will it be to track status/improvements/benchmarks?	
Critical Areas Impacts Direct Impact = 2 points Indirect Impact = 1 point	
The project positively impacts Wetlands	
The project positively impacts Frequently Flooded Areas	
The project positively impacts Wildlife Conservation Areas	
The project positively impacts Geologically Hazardous Areas	
The project positively impacts Critical Aquifer Resource Areas	
TOTAL	

Comments:

Attachment 3

Voluntary Stewardship Program for Columbia County

Individual Stewardship Plan Survey
www.columbiacountyvsp.com



Columbia County, Washington



Introduction

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is the result of legislative amendments to the Growth Management Act to establish and develop a non-regulatory approach to Critical Area protection within agricultural lands (RCW 36.70A.725). Its goal is to provide agricultural producers more flexibility than the traditional Critical Area protection measures can offer. The legislative intent is to encourage producers to use the flexibility of VSP, allowing all involved producers to create a plan that works for them and their land—this is not a “one shoe fits all” approach. The flexibility, individuality, and voluntary design of a VSP ensure success in protecting Critical Areas, while promoting agricultural viability and success.

Instructions

In a combined effort between Columbia County and Columbia Conservation District, we have formatted this Land Use Survey. The VSP Work Group that helped develop the VSP maintained that many of the guidelines are already being met; yet producers would find it beneficial to develop an Individual Stewardship Plan (ISP) as provided in this program. The ISP will greatly help in securing the resources needed to fully implement the VSP. The information contained within the ISP is held as confidential through the Columbia Conservation District.

Thank you for your interest in the VSP. Your involvement will allow us to work together to promote your Agricultural Viability and protect our County-Wide Critical Areas. *Please submit this survey to the Department of Planning and Building (address and contact information on the back).*

Thank you,

Columbia County
Columbia Conservation District

Current Land Use

1. Do you currently farm or raise animals within Columbia County?

Yes

No (If selected, please discontinue survey)

2. How many acres of land do you own/lease and actively farm or ranch on? (Choose one)

0-50 acres

50-100 acres

101-1,000 acres

1,001 + acres

Prefer not to answer

3. What crops are you currently growing, or have you previously (between 2011—now) grown on your land? Choose all that apply.

Barley

Beans

Spring Peas

Oilseed Crops

Lentils

N/A

Spring Wheat

Other: Please Explain

Winter Wheat

Alfalfa/Hay

4. What livestock do you currently, or have you previously (between 2011—now) raised on your land? Choose all that apply.

Dairy Cattle

N/A

Beef Cattle

Other: Please Explain

Goats

Chickens

5. How many years have you been farming or ranching this land? (Please write in a numerical value)

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Your Crop Practices (If you do not farm your land, proceed to the next section)

6. Do you participate in any Conservation Cover practices? (Definition—establishing and maintaining long-term, permanent vegetative cover)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

7. Do you participate in Integrated Pest Management practices? (Definition—a site-specific combination of pest prevention, pest avoidance, pest monitoring, and pest suppression strategies)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

8. Do you participate in any Cover Crop practices?
(Definition—grasses, legumes, and leafy ground cover plants for seasonal vegetative cover)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

9. Do you participate in having a Riparian Forest Buffer?
(Definition—an area predominantly of suitable trees and/or shrubs planted along a stream, river, lake, or other water body)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

10. Do you participate in Residue and Tillage Management/Reduced Till? (Definition—managing the amount, orientation, and distribution of crop and other plant residue on the soil surface year-round)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

11. Do you participate in Nutrient Management? (Definition—managing the amount, source, placement, and timing of plant nutrients and soil amendments)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

12. Do you participate in Fencing? (Definition—a constructed barrier to protect animals or people)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

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Your Livestock Practices (If you do not ranch your land, proceed to the next section)

13. Do you participate in having a Riparian Forest Buffer?
(Definition—an area predominantly of suitable trees and/or shrubs planted along a stream, river, lake, or other water body)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

14. Do you participate in Fencing? (Definition—a constructed barrier to protect animals or people)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

15. Do you participate in Stream Habitat Improvement and Management? (Definition—maintain, improve, or restore physical, chemical and biological functions of a stream and its associated riparian zone)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

16. Do you participate in Livestock Grazing? (Definition—managing the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals and soil amendments)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

17. Do you participate in having a Watering Facility?
(Definition—a means of providing a controlled water source to livestock or wildlife)

Yes, I do:

No, I do not:

Implemented before
07/2011

I am interested in
learning more

Implemented after
07/2011

I am not interested in
learning more

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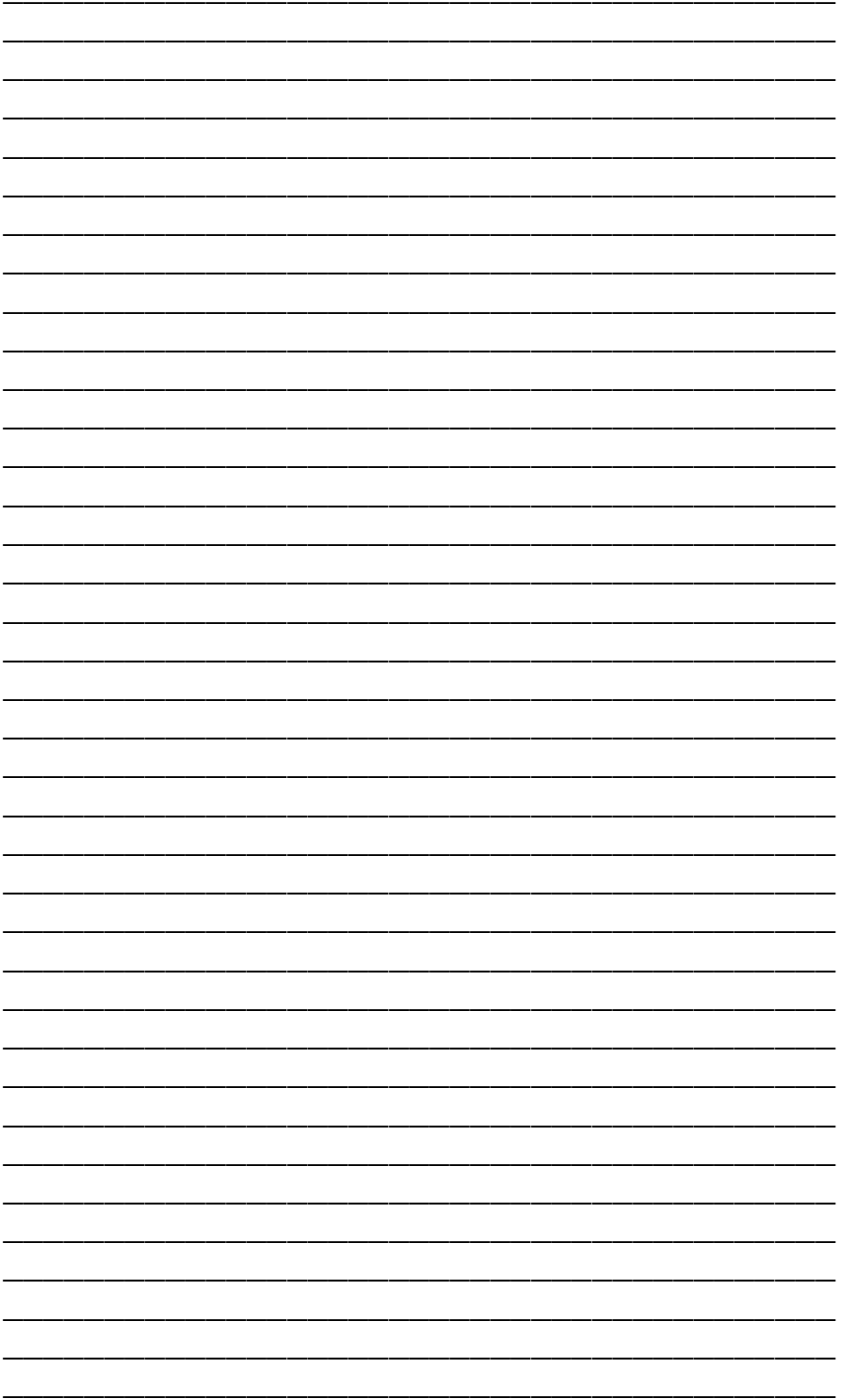
21. For the Conservation Practices you currently participate in, what are your funding sources?

- Federal Funding Sources
- State Funding Sources
- Private Funding Sources
- Mixed Funding Sources

22. What WRIA is your land located within? *Check all that apply.*

- Tucannon—WRIA 35
- Touchet—WRIA 32
- Lower Snake—WRIA 33
- Unsure; may require technical assistance in identifying

23. Through this survey, what would you like to gain? Are you interested in learning about funding options, available technical assistance, or other Conservation Practices available to you? *Please be as detailed as possible. Use the following space to answer the question.*



Contact Information

Please complete the following page with requested contact information. Once your survey is processed, County and Conservation District staff will review your responses and contact you as follow up. From this survey, an ISP can be developed for you at your discretion.

Name:

Mailing Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Location of Farmed/Ranched Lands:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, the first step in identifying and documenting the resource management efforts being applied by our local producers.

While we review this information, we may reach out with additional questions regarding your submittal. Once we have completed review, we will follow up with you to discuss your interest in pursuing the development of an ISP for your operation.

If you would like to schedule an on-site inspection for any technical assistance (Critical Area identification, WRIA identification, etc.) please contact us below.

**Columbia County Planning and Building
114 South 2nd Street, Dayton, WA 99328
Meagan Bailey
Planning Director
509-382-4676
Meagan_bailey@co.columbia.wa.us**

**Columbia Conservation District
202 South 2nd Street, Dayton, WA 99328
Terry Bruegman
District Manager
509-382-4273
Tb-ccd@daytonwa.net**

This survey and the Voluntary Stewardship Program have been endorsed by the Work Group Committee, made up of local farmers, ranchers, and public officials. For more information, please contact us or visit www.columbiacountyvsp.com.