

VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

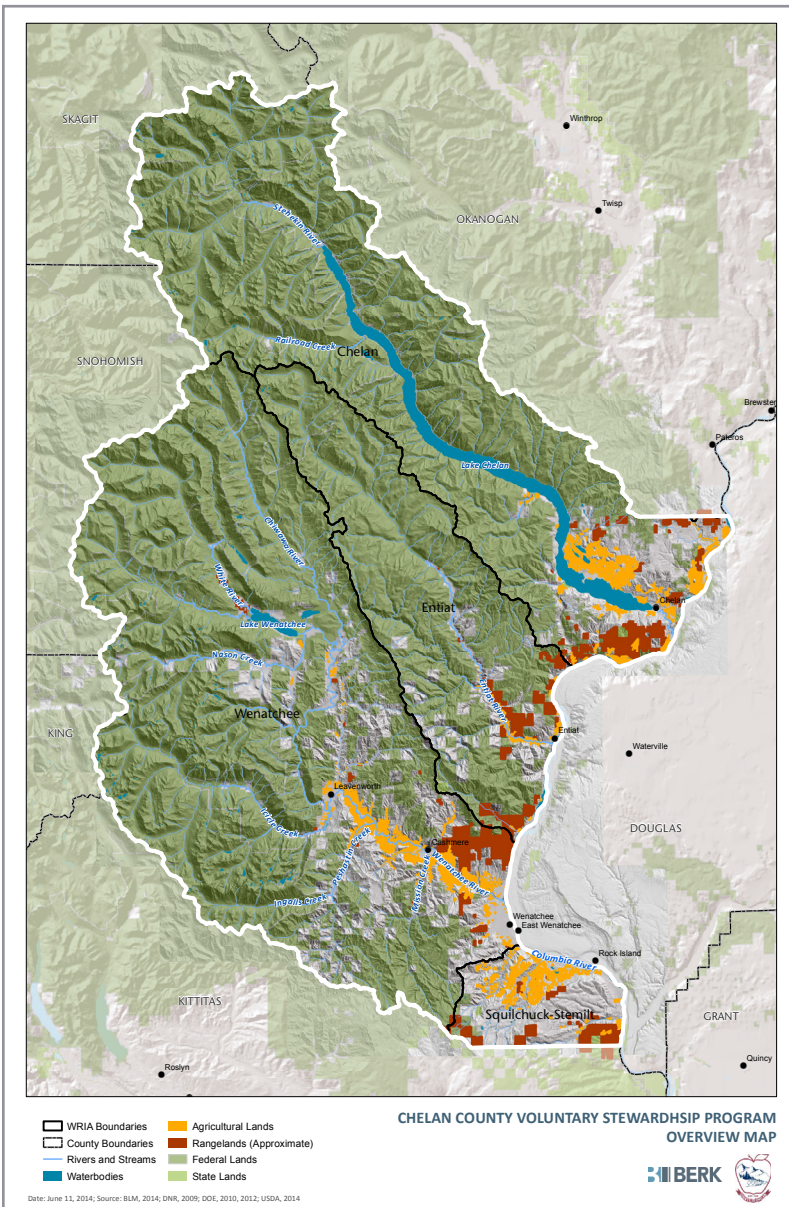
An alternative approach to protect critical areas and promote agriculture



Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an optional, incentive-based approach to protecting critical areas while promoting agriculture. The VSP is allowed under the Growth Management Act as an alternative to traditional approaches to critical areas protection, such as “no touch” buffers. Chelan County is one of 28 counties that has “opted in” to VSP, and has received funding to develop a VSP work plan.



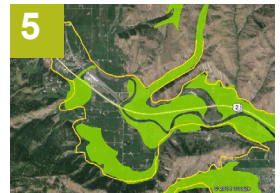
1
Icicle Creek Restoration Site,
Chelan County Dept. of Natural
Resources



1
Bald eagles, Chelan
County PUD



2
Wetlands, Confluence State Park,
Historylink.org



5
Potential Aquifer and Alluvial Soils,
Wenatchee Basin Area, BERK 2014



3
Colockum Creek Road Washout, WSU Chelan-Douglas Extension



4
Malaga Mudslide, Komo News

WHAT ARE CRITICAL AREAS?

Critical areas include (1) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, (2) wetlands, (3) frequently flooded areas, (4) geologically hazardous areas, and (5) critical aquifer recharge areas used for potable water.

Note: See RCW 36.70A and WAC 365-190

HOW MUCH LAND IS IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY?

Land in farming equals approximately 27,616 acres, and rangeland equals about 76,184 acres, based on 2014 geographic information system mapping. The greatest area of intersection between agriculture and critical areas includes fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, geologically hazardous areas, and potential aquifers.

WHAT IS REQUIRED TO BE ADDRESSED IN A WATERSHED WORK PROGRAM?

In order to establish the program, a watershed work plan is required and must contain goals and benchmarks for the protection and enhancement of critical areas. The VSP Work Plan must also “maintain and enhance” agricultural viability to receive approval. The work plan must be approved by the Washington State Conservation Commission Director and the Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, and Agriculture.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The Conservation Commission Director must approve the Work Plan within 3 years of funding (January 2017) or the county must comply with the non-VSP (regulatory) critical area protection requirements of the Growth Management Act. The watershed work group in Chelan County is working on a draft plan in 2015 and intends to submit it by winter 2016 to the Conservation Commission.



Lake Chelan vineyard, cornichon.org

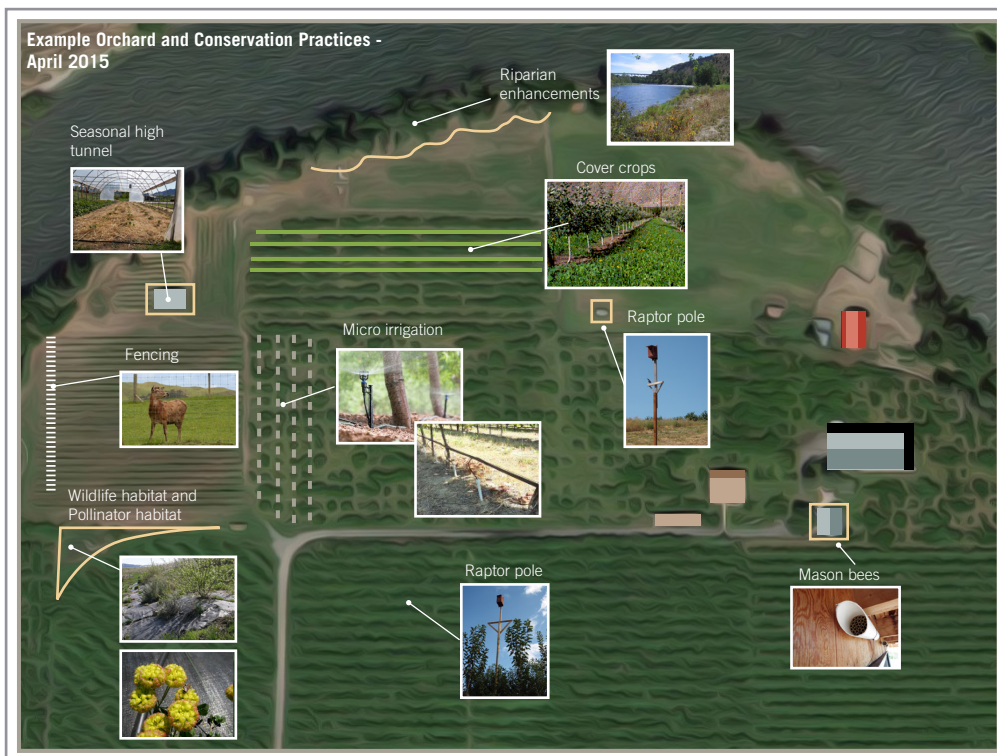
RECOGNIZING STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

Tree fruit production accounts for the vast majority of agriculture in the County. Local growers have a strong culture of improving agricultural practices that are beneficial to their business and protective of the environment. Examples of beneficial conservation practices include use of micro- and ground-level drip systems, integrated pest management, cover crops, mulching and soil management, installing raptor poles and bat boxes, installing plantings to attract pollinators, and installing plastic fencing to protect orchards and avoid mammal “hang ups”.

Photos: NRCS Wenatchee Field Office, CCNRD, 2015



Apple orchard in Chelan County, WSU Extension



Why participate?

- Work together with other farmers to promote volunteerism versus additional regulatory controls. This means more certainty and less regulations.
- Create a baseline for your farm and farming in Chelan County.
- Document advances and changes that have already occurred.
- Conserve, improve, and increase efficient use of natural resources to support greater yields and produce quality.
- Promote a positive image of agriculture to the larger community.
- Enhance marketability of agricultural products.

Example Draft Voluntary Measures to Protect or Enhance Critical Areas

- Participation in VSP conservation practices is maintained or increased over 10 years (*see voluntary checklist*).
- Stems per acre (tree/shrub density) in critical areas and adjacent buffer areas are maintained or increased.
- Habitat for complementary wildlife species is maintained or increased (e.g., pollinators, raptors, bats, etc.).
- Sheet and rill erosion is reduced, such as through conservation practices and management of fire danger.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Prepared by BERK Consulting

