

# BENTON COUNTY VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## Producer Checklist

### Promoting Agriculture Viability and Protecting Critical Areas

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an optional, incentive-based approach to protecting critical areas while promoting agriculture. This checklist serves as an individual stewardship plan referenced in the VSP law to help each farmer contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the Benton County VSP work plan. See [www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0](http://www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0) for more information.

## Step 1: General Location Information

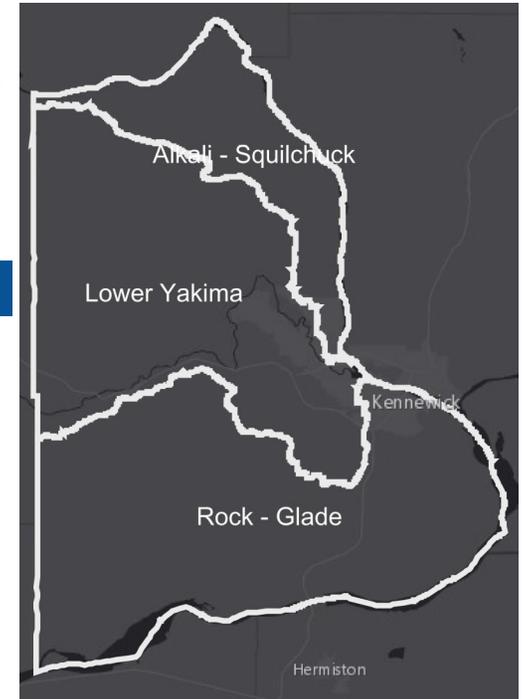
### Provide Location Information

1. What basin is your agricultural property located within?
- a. Lower Yakima
  - b. Rock Glade
  - c. Alkali-Squilchuck

2. Identify potential critical areas intersecting with agriculture on, or near, property:
- a. fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
  - b. wetlands
  - c. frequently flooded areas
  - d. geologically hazardous areas
  - e. critical aquifer recharge areas

**Instructions:** Review critical area and agriculture maps at: [www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0](http://www.co.benton.wa.us/pview.aspx?id=10933&catid=0) for potential critical areas on or near your property, such as ponds, streams, wetlands, steep slopes, etc.

**Note:** 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.



### Consider Other Programs that Protect Critical Areas

3. Do you participate in the following?
- |   |                          |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| a. Global Gap: <a href="http://www.scsglobalservices.com/globalgap-certification">www.scsglobalservices.com/globalgap-certification</a> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Harmonized GAP: <a href="http://www.scsglobalservices.com/harmonized-gap-audit">www.scsglobalservices.com/harmonized-gap-audit</a> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Salmon Safe: <a href="http://www.salmonsafe.org/">www.salmonsafe.org/</a>  | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Safe Quality Food Institute: <a href="http://www.sqfi.com">www.sqfi.com</a>  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. PrimusLabs GAP: <a href="http://www.primuslabs.com/services/standardgap.aspx">www.primuslabs.com/services/standardgap.aspx</a>       | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. Other: _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Note: Federal and state laws regarding the use and storage of pesticides and standards for water quality continue to apply.

### Consult Technical Providers

Contact Technical Advisors for general advice, or to apply for funding to establish conservation practices.

**Lead Technical Assistance Provider:** Benton Conservation District, <http://www.bentoncd.org/>

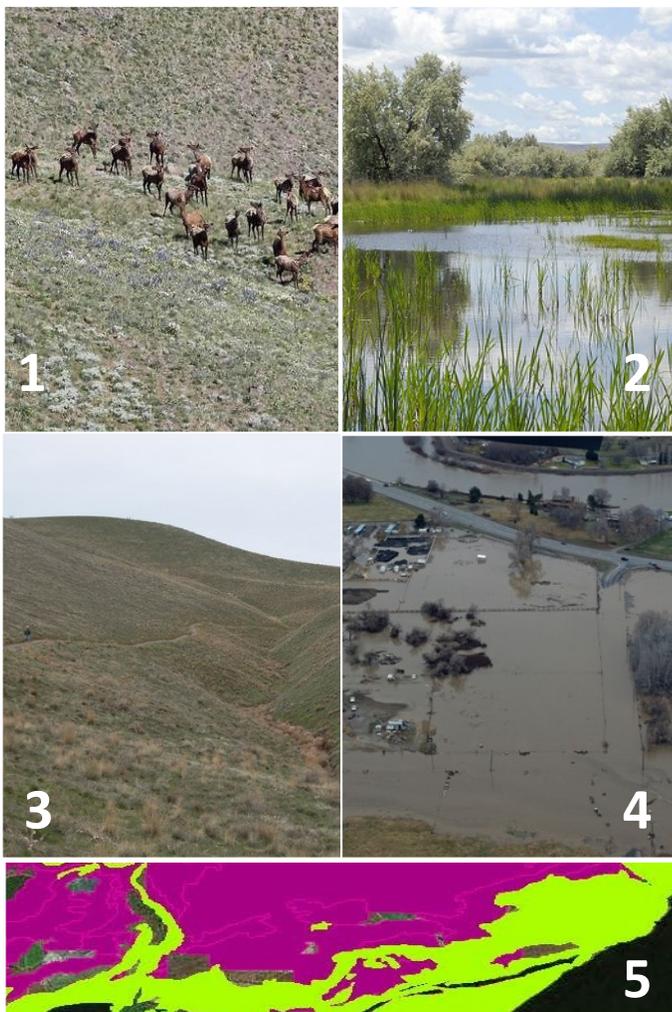
**Supporting Technical Assistance Providers:**

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>
- Washington State University Extension <http://county.wsu.edu/chelan-douglas/agriculture/Pages/default.aspx>
- Washington Department of Ecology: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

**Benton County:** <http://www.co.benton.wa.us/> (VSP Program Administration)

# Background: Critical Areas

## Definitions



"Critical areas" include the following areas and ecosystems: (a) Wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas. "Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas" does not include such artificial features or constructs as irrigation delivery systems, irrigation infrastructure, irrigation canals, or drainage ditches that lie within the boundaries of and are maintained by a port district or an irrigation district or company. RCW 36.70A.030(5)

### 1 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Land management for maintaining populations of species in suitable habitats within their natural geographic distribution so that the habitat available is sufficient to support viable populations over the long term and isolated subpopulations are not created. This does not mean maintaining all individuals of all species at all times, but it does mean not degrading or reducing populations or habitats so that they are no longer viable over the long term. (WAC 365-190-130(1))

Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas that must be considered for classification and designation include: Areas where endangered, threatened, and sensitive species have a primary association; Habitats and species of local importance, as determined locally; Naturally occurring ponds under twenty acres and their submerged aquatic beds that provide fish or wildlife habitat; Waters of the state; Lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers planted with game fish by a governmental or tribal entity; and State natural area preserves, natural resource conservation areas, and state wildlife areas. (WAC 365-190-130 (2))

### 2 Wetlands

Areas inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland sites, including, but not limited to, irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway. However, wetlands may include those artificial wetlands specifically intentionally created from non-wetland areas to mitigate conversion of wetlands. (RCW 36.70A.030(21))

### 3 Geologically Hazardous Areas

Areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, where development is not suitable due to public health or safety concerns. (RCW 36.70A.030 (9)) According to BCC 15.55.030, geologically hazardous areas are characterized by steep slopes over 15 percent.

### 4 Frequently Flooded Areas

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. These areas include, but are not limited to, streams, rivers, lakes, coastal areas, wetlands, and areas where high groundwater forms ponds on the ground surface. (WAC 365-190-030 (8))

### 5 Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, including areas where an aquifer that is a source of drinking water is vulnerable to contamination that would affect the potability of the water, or is susceptible to reduced recharge. (WAC 365-190-030(3))

# Background: Critical Area & Agricultural Viability

## Goals & Example Conservation Practices

Critical Area Goals	Agricultural Viability Aims associated with critical area protection and enhancement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent with the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan, ensure flows necessary to protect salmonids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and increase reliability and availability of irrigation water</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect surface water quality in streams, wetlands, and agricultural drains in hydrologic study areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support actions that benefit both stream functions and agricultural viability</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect shrub-steppe habitat and connectivity without restricting ongoing agricultural activities</li> <li>Protect native plant community diversity</li> <li>Protect the functions and values of wetlands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support measures that provide incentives for conservation of key habitats</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage shrub-steppe habitat to improve resiliency to fire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect agriculture from unmanaged fire</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect groundwater recharge in areas of declining water tables or where recharge can help maintain base flows for rivers and streams</li> <li>Protect groundwater quality in areas of agricultural intersect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and increase reliability and availability of irrigation water</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect natural floodplain functions</li> <li>Maintain or reduce hazards to physical safety associated with flooding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize agricultural activities and techniques that are compatible with flooding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the integrity of steep slopes associated with agricultural production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve soil health and reduce erosion</li> </ul>

1. CREP: protect highly erodible soils along salmon-bearing streams
2. Fish screen
3. Irrigation efficiencies
4. Grazing management
5. Field borders
6. Nutrient Management

Photos: BCD.org

## Step 2: Voluntary Practices to Enhance Agriculture Viability and Protect Critical Areas

In this section, examine the conservation practices examples. For each practice, check off if you already do it, are interested in the practice, or it doesn't apply. Practices are listed in three categories: A) Water Efficiencies/Management, B) Habitat, and C) Soil Health and Erosion Control.

Conservation Practice Examples	NRCS #	Global Gap	Salmon Safe	Farm Type	Critical Area Types						I do this	I'm interested in this	Does not apply
					Fish	Wild	CARA	Geo	Flood	Wet			
<b>A) Water Efficiencies/ Management</b>													
Irrigation Canal or Lateral	320	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X		X				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irrigation Pipeline	430	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	442	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irrigation Water Management	449	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X		X	X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pond Lining - Irrigation	521	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X		X				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pumping Plant—Variable Frequency Drive	533	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water Quantity Enhancements: Center Pivot low energy precise application (LEPA)	WQT 11	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water Well for livestock, fire control, wildlife, and other agricultural uses	642	CB 5	F.3	All	X	X	X				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Well Water Testing	355	CB 5		All			X				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water trust agreement or other water exchange or transfer	—	CB 5	F-3	All	X		X				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ideas to meet the goal:											<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Critical Area Types: Fish; Wild=Wildlife; CARA = Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas; Geo=Geologically Hazardous Areas; Flood =Frequently Flooded Areas; Wet=Wetlands

Farm Type: Irr=Irrigated; Dry = Dryland; Range=Rangeland; All=All Farm Types

Conservation Practice Examples	NRCS #	Global Gap	Salmon Safe	Farm Type	Critical Area Types						I do this	I'm interested in this	Does not apply
					Fish	Wild	CARA	Geo	Flood	Wet			
<b>B) Habitat</b>													
Access Control to exclude animals, people, vehicles, and/or equipment from an area	472	AF 7.1	F.4	All	X	X		X		X	O	O	O
Access Road: position away from water bodies and water courses; locate and build to control or reduce erosion	560	AF 7.1, CB 3	F.4	All	X			X		X	O	O	O
Brush Management to manage or remove woody plants that are invasive or noxious	314	AF 7.1	F.7	All		X				X	O	O	O
Conservation Cover to provide vegetative cover, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation	327	AF 7.2, CB 3	F.4	All	X	X		X			O	O	O
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	BCD	AF 7.2	F.7	All		X			X	X	O	O	O
Fence (management of browsing animals or management of wildlife movement)	382	AF 7.1	F.6	All		X			X	X	O	O	O
Field Border to provide wildlife food and cover, protect soil and water quality.	386	AF 7.2	F.7	All	X	X		X			O	O	O
Fish Screen to protect fish from injury	700	AF 7.1	F.1	Irr	X						O	O	O
Integrated Pest Management to control noxious weeds and invasive plants	595	AF 7.1	F.5	All	X	X			X	X	O	O	O
Livestock Pipeline to convey water for livestock or wildlife	516	CB 5	F.3	All	X	X	X				O	O	O
Prescribed Grazing, including to reduce noxious weeds or invasive plants, manage fuel loads, and address erosion	528	AF 7.1	F.4, F.6, F.7	All	X			X		X	O	O	O
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats	643	AF 7.2	F.7	All	X	X			X	X	O	O	O
Riparian Herbaceous Cover or Riparian Forest Buffer	390, 391	AF 7.2	F.2	Irr	X	X			X	X	O	O	O

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Conservation Practice Examples	NRCS #	Global Gap	Salmon Safe	Farm Type	Critical Area Types						I do this	I'm interested in this	Does not apply
					Fish	Wild	CARA	Geo	Flood	Wet			
<b>B) Habitat (continued)</b>													
Seasonal high tunnel system for crops	798	CB 3	F.3	Irr	X						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spring Development	574	CB 3	F.3	All		X	X				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	580	AF 7.1	F.2	Irr	X						<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Structures for wildlife: Raptor and bat nesting box for predator patrol	649	AF 7.1	F.7	All		X					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	490	AF 7.1	F.4	All		X			X	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645	AF 7.1	F.7	All		X					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watering Facility for livestock or wildlife	614	AF 7.1	F.2	All	X	X			X	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wetland Creation	658	AF 7.2	F.2	Irr						X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wetland Enhancement	659	AF 7.1	F.2	All						X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wetland Restoration	657	AF 7.2	F.2	Irr						X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644	AF 7.1	F.7	All						X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wildlife and pollinator habitat planting	422	AF 7.2	F.7	All		X					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Windbreak	380/ 650	AF 7.1	F.4	All		X					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ideas to meet the goal:											<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Conservation Practice Examples	NRCS #	Global Gap	Salmon Safe	Farm Type	Critical Area Types						I do this	I'm interested in this	Does not apply
					Fish	Wild	CARA	Geo	Flood	Wet			
<b>C) Soil Health &amp; Erosion Control</b>													
Access Road: position away from water bodies and water courses; locate and build to control or reduce erosion	560	AF 7.1	F.4	All	X			X		X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conservation Cover to provide permanent vegetative cover, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation	327	AF 7.2, CB 3	F.4	All	X	X		X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cover Crop for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes.	340	AF 7.1	F.4	Irr, Dry				X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fire wise: wildfire protection to maintain cover/ reduce soil loss	BCD	AF 7.1	F.7	Dry, Range		X		X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heavy use area protection to stabilize ground surface	561	CB 3	F.4	All				X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irrigation Water Management	449	CB 5	F.3	Irr	X		X	X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nutrient Management to conserve nutrients, minimize pollution	590	CB 4	F.5	All			X				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mulching to control erosion and conserve soil moisture	484	CB 3	F.4	Irr, Dry				X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prescribed Grazing, including to reduce erosion and manage fuel loads	528	AF 7.1	F.6	All	X			X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Residue and Tillage Management	329, 345	CB 3	F.6	Dry	X	X		X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seasonal High Tunnel System for crops and soil moisture	798	CB 3	F.4	Irr				x			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vegetative Barrier along contour of slopes or concentrated flow areas	601	AF 7.1, CB 3	F.4	All	X			X			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Windbreak to reduce soil erosion, protect plants	380/ 650	CB 3	F.4	All		X					<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ideas to meet the goal:											<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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### Step 3: Monitoring

A technical assistance provider, coordinated by the Benton Conservation District, will contact you annually about the conservation practices installed. To assist with monitoring, you may be asked to provide additional information. You may request a field visit to obtain advice on improving the effectiveness of the conservation practices.

### Ideas for Agriculture Viability Incentives and Outcomes

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. Producers may find cost-matching programs with technical providers (see contact information on page 1).

**What incentives could help you achieve your goals for your farm?**