

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
- Sustainable
- 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:			
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: