




# Voluntary Stewardship Program

**Presented By:**  
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# History

- 2007 – Washington State Supreme Court Case – Agriculture Practices are not exempt from critical areas requirements of GMA.
- 2007 Sent to Ruckelshaus Center to resolve conflicts
- 2011 – VSP – signed into law

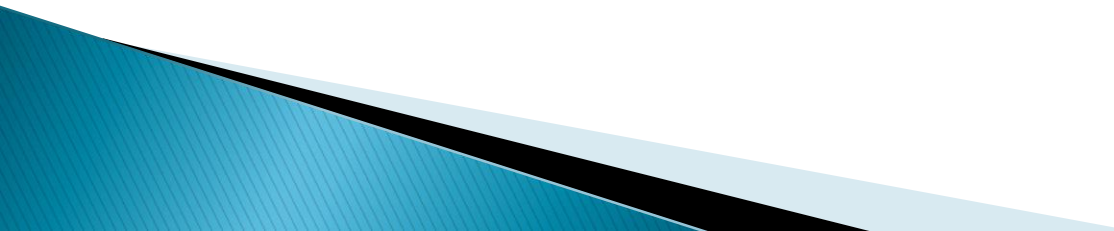
# VSP PROCESS

- The voluntary stewardship program is created at the Conservation Commission.
  - The program is an alternative approach for counties to protect critical areas on agricultural lands.
  - Counties are given two options:
    - Opt-in to the voluntary stewardship program, or
    - Continue under existing law in GMA to protect critical areas on agricultural lands.
  - Although not all counties are GMA counties, ALL counties must protect critical areas
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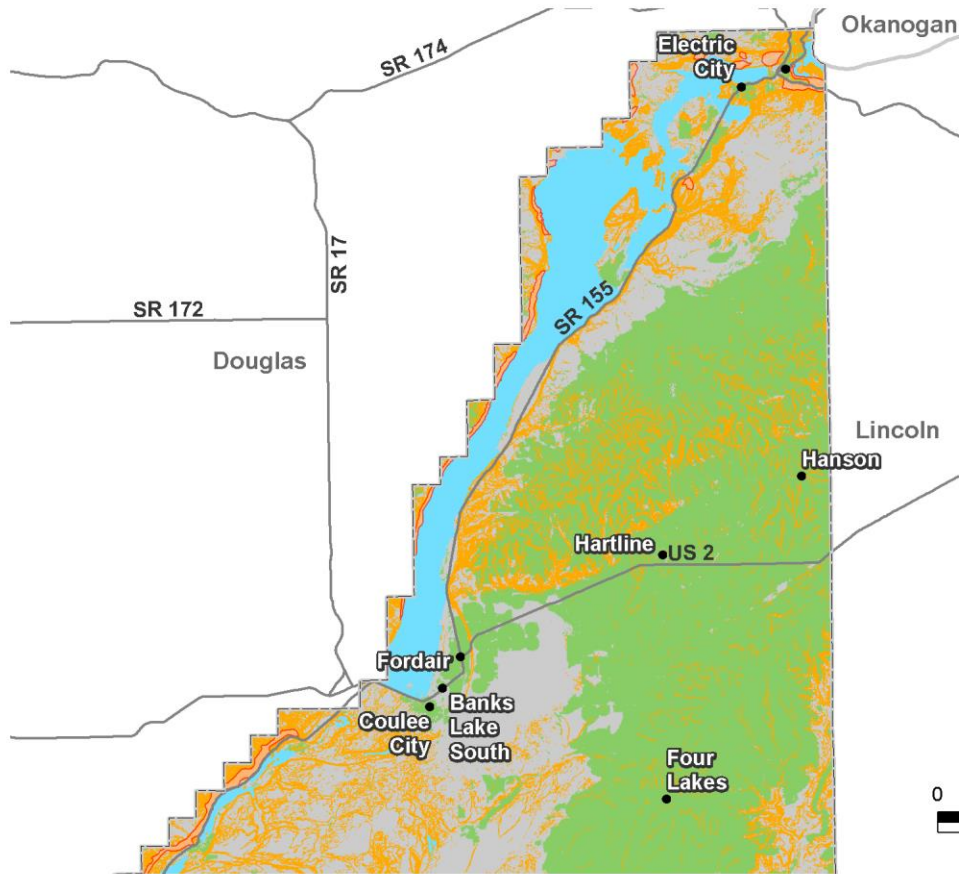
## COUNTIES OPTING-IN TO THE VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM



# **CRITICAL AREAS**

- (a) Wetlands
  - (b) Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water
  - (c) Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (including rivers, streams, lakes, and salt water shorelines)
  - (d) Frequently flooded areas
  - (e) Geologically hazardous areas. (erosion)
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# Critical Areas: Steep Slopes and Ag Lands



- Interstate/Highway
- Waterbody
- Landslide (DNR Geologic Unit Map)
- Slope Steeper than 30%
- Agricultural Land
- Rangeland/Non-Agricultural Land



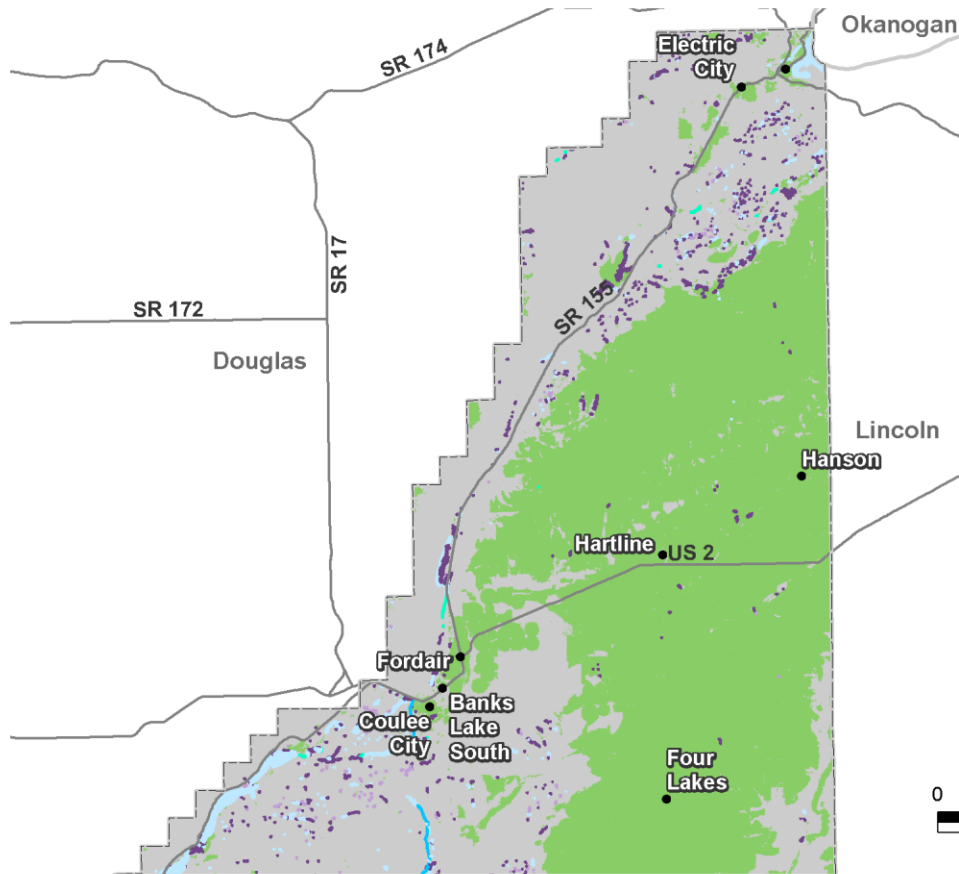
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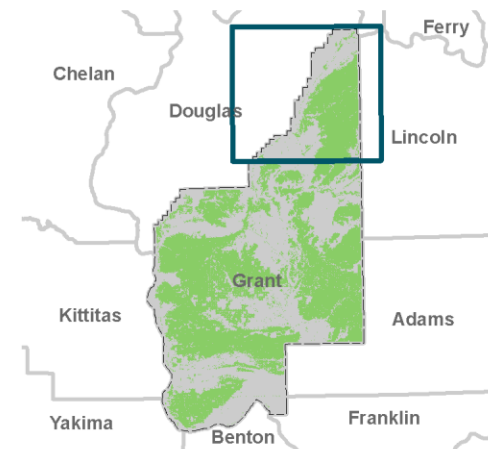
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# Critical Areas: Wetlands and Ag Lands



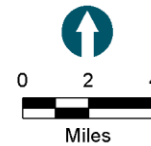
- Interstate/Highway
- Agricultural Land
- Rangeland/Non-Agricultural Land
- NWI Wetland Type**
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Lake/Pond
- Riverine
- Other



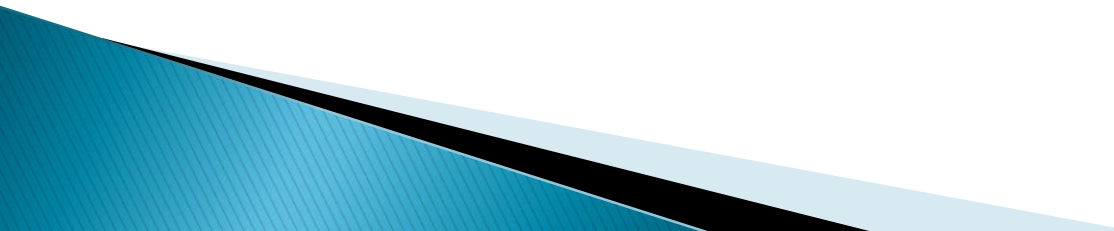
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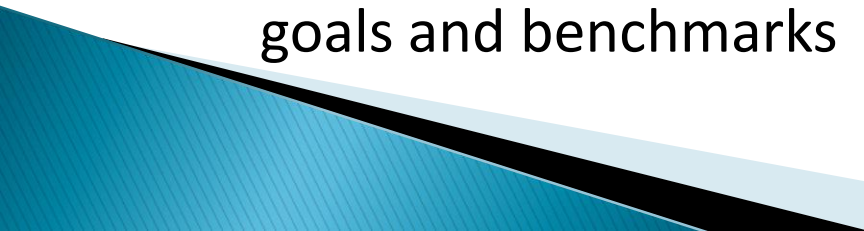
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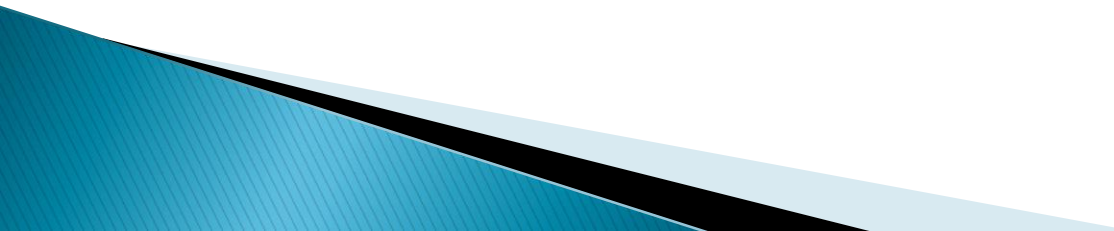
# VSP Overview

- “Protect” critical areas means county must demonstrate system in place for no degradation
  - By the opt-in date of January 21, 2012 – 28 of 39 counties opted-in.
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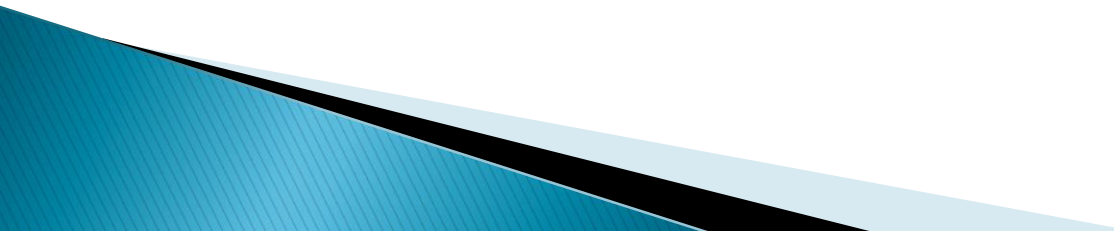
# Designation of VSP Work Group

- The designated VSP workgroup must develop a work plan to protect critical areas while maintaining the viability of agriculture in the watershed.
  - Work plan must be approved within 2 years 9 months of receipt of funds.
  - The work plan must:
    - Identify critical areas and ag activities
    - Identify economic viability of agriculture in county
    - Identify outreach plan to contact landowners
    - Identify entity to provide landowner assistance
    - Identify measurable programmatic and implementation goals and benchmarks
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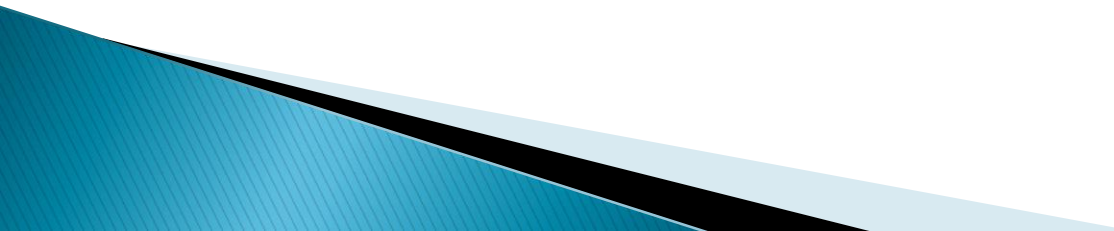
# Work Plan Approval

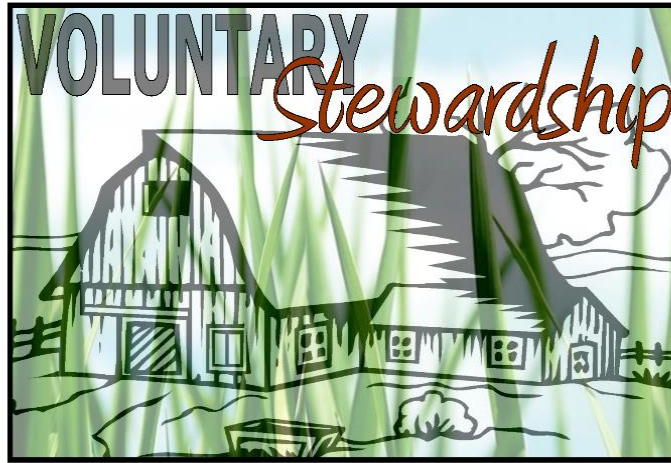
- Once a county has completed a work plan, it is submitted to Commission Director for approval.
  - Director submits the plan to a technical panel who has 45 days to review and make recommendation to the director.
  - Every 5 years, local work group must report on progress to the Conservation Commission
  - If not making progress, must correct or be kick back into “traditional GMA approach”.
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# Implementation

- How does VSP work on the ground?
  - Once a work plan is approved, the county work group implements by conducting outreach to landowners in targeted areas.
  - Targeted areas are places identified in the work plan as important critical areas combined with agricultural activity.
  - Landowners have the option to develop stewardship plans.
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# GMA ---VSP

- One difference between VSP and GMA is how individual landowners are treated.
  - Under GMA, all landowners must comply with the CAO – i.e. treatment must be implemented when the critical area occurs on the property. Progress and enforcement are easy – Practices in place or not.
  - Under VSP, landowners volunteer to develop and implement the stewardship plan. Progress more difficult – work group must determine whether progress is being made.
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