GMA rule update: Voluntary Stewardship Program

Commerce is initiating rule-making to help implement the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). The VSP is an alternative approach for counties to protect critical areas on agricultural lands. The program is administered by the State Conservation Commission (Commission). The 28 counties that opted in to the program are required to develop work plans to protect critical areas while maintaining the viability of agriculture through voluntary, incentive-based measures. Work plans must be reviewed by a technical panel and approved by the Commission, and the legislation creates a consultation role for a statewide advisory committee. The program is premised on funding from the commission.

Why is Commerce writing rules?

If a work plan is not approved, fails, or is unfunded then a county is given 18 months to take one of four actions. The county may either develop their own critical area regulations under the “standard” regulatory approach, or adopt regulations previously adopted under the GMA by another jurisdiction that meet specific criteria in the statute.

In addition, counties have the option to either develop a watershed work plan approved by Commerce; or adopt development regulations certified by Commerce as protective of critical areas on agricultural lands. Commerce is required to develop rules to implement this role.

How will Commerce develop rules?

Commerce will work closely with the Commission, together with the VSP advisory committee and technical panel created by the legislation. We will keep this page updated with current activity.

Formal rule-making documents

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<th>Filing Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>3/5/2014</td>
<td>Pre-proposal statement of inquiry - CR-101. This document announces the intent of the agency to start rule-making.</td>
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For more information

E-mail comments or questions on rule-making to WACUPDATE@commerce.wa.gov or call Paul Johnson at (360) 725-3048.

For information about the VSP, contact Ron Shultz at the Commission, (360) 407-7507.