

Douglas County
Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Workgroup
GROUND RULES

1. **Decision-making** - All members are expected to participate in all phases of discussions and decisions. The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Workgroup (the Workgroup) will work together to achieve consensus on VSP work plan elements. The Workgroup will operate by consensus. Consensus is defined as a decision that falls within the “endorsement” to “formal disagreement but will go with majority” continuum (see attached exhibit).
 - a. A simple majority is required for a quorum per the Washington Open Public Meetings Act ; informational meetings can still be held without a full quorum present
 - b. A simple majority quorum must be present for decisions to be made. A quorum exists for a meeting if there is a simple majority of the Workgroup present for the meeting. If a quorum does not exist, the members present shall decide whether to continue with an informal discussion of the agenda for the meeting.
 - c. Agendas will be distributed in advance, and all items where a decision or vote is needed must be officially added to the agenda.
 - d. When possible, the Workgroup will discuss any issue in at least two meetings, to allow time for members to discuss issues.
 - e. If the Workgroup is unable to reach consensus on any issue, it will consider other options:
 - Table the issue temporarily, and revisit it during a subsequent meeting.
 - Take an advisory or “straw” vote to help the committee decide what action to take next
 - Leave the issue unresolved and note it as such. The option of providing a minority report is available as an option.
 - f. If consensus cannot be reached, a voting process may also be used to resolve issues. Voting will occur by a hand-count. Each member will be identified in meeting notes by name with their vote. An affirmative vote will be based on simple majority plus one approval of the voting members present.
 - i. The Chair of the Workgroup will have the tie-breaking vote
 - ii. WDFW, WSDA, State Farm Bureau and other government agency representatives may be active participants in the Workgroup, but are not voting members.
2. **Respect for Interests** - The Workgroup members represent a full range of interests related to protecting critical areas and sustainable agriculture in Douglas County.
 - Every idea has merit.
 - Suspend assumptions, listen carefully, and speak to educate.
3. **Creativity** - The members commit to search for opportunities,

options, and alternatives.

4. **Open Dialogue** - The members agree that they have a responsibility to discuss the issues and plan development, and to use open and candid communication with each other.
5. **Open Meetings** - All Workgroup meetings will be open to the public. Observers are welcome to attend the Workgroup meetings and provide public comment at specified opportunities during each meeting. Written comments are also welcome. Summaries of each meeting will be shared with an Interested Parties email distribution list.
6. **Speaking** - One person will speak at a time, and Facilitators will make every effort to assure that everyone will have an opportunity to speak. The facilitator will recognize each speaker.
7. **Attendance** - Attendance is critical to the success of this planning process. Each member will take the responsibility to get the information they missed due to an absence. Members may waive the opportunity to participate in decisions due to lack of attendance.
8. **Responsibility to meet needs** - Each member will take the responsibility for getting their needs met, for getting the needs of those they represent met, and for getting the needs of the other members met. Additionally, Workgroup members are responsible for the statements that they make to the other Workgroup members as well as to the public regarding the work of the Workgroup.
9. **Start on time** - Workgroup members agree to start the meetings on time and end them on time.
10. **Humor & Miscellaneous** - We agree that humor is appreciated and welcome. We commit to having fun and encouraging it in others.
11. **Use of cell phones** - Unless there's an emergency, responding to pagers, cell phones, telephone messages, etc. will wait until the members are on a break, or the meeting is over.

Definition of Consensus
Voluntary Stewardship Program

Consensus is defined in terms of agreement along a continuum. VSP Workgroup members may register their degree of agreement with the language in any of the six columns:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Endorse	Endorse with a minor point of contention	Agree with reservation	Abstain	Stand Aside	Formal disagreement but will go with the majority
“I like it”	“Basically I like it”	“I can live with it”	“I have no opinion”	“I don’t like it but I don’t want to hold up the group”	“I want my disagreement to be noted in writing but I’ll support the decision”

(Adapted from: “Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making,” 1996)

Notes: 1) Agreements with scores ranging from 1 to 6 is considered “agreement by consensus.” 2) Blocking (disagreeing and not supporting the decision) is not consensus.