



Adams County Voluntary Stewardship Plan



Presented by
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What is a Voluntary Stewardship Plan?

Background

The Washington State **Growth Management Act** (GMA) is a state law that requires local governments to **manage growth**, including identifying and protecting critical areas

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Five critical area types include

1. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
2. Wetlands
3. Frequently Flooded Areas
4. Geologic Hazards
5. Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

Background (cont.)

The Washington State **Growth Management Act** (GMA) is a state law that requires local governments to **manage growth**, including identifying and protecting critical areas



“Traditional GMA” uses a regulatory approach – required buffers on each parcel with critical areas, under local Critical Areas Ordinances (CAO)

Voluntary Stewardship Plan (VSP)

VSP is an alternative, incentive- and watershed-based approach to meet critical area protection requirements under GMA where agricultural activities are conducted



Dual Goals

- Protect and voluntarily enhance critical areas in areas with agricultural activities
- Maintain and improve viability of agriculture in Adams County

Key VSP Terminology – State Definitions

- Protect and enhance critical areas
 - *Protect = Prevent the degradation of functions and values existing as of July 22, 2011*
 - *Enhance = Improve the processes, structure, and functions existing as of July 22, 2011*
- Maintain and improve viability of agriculture
 - Avoid unnecessary regulation and implement practices that improve ag viability and promote land stewardship
 - Needs more specific definition = Opportunity to tailor to Adams County
- Baseline information available from County Shoreline Master Program update and other sources

Key VSP Terminology (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 90.58.065)

- Agricultural activities
 - Producing, breeding, or increasing agricultural products
 - Rotating and changing crops
 - Fallowing land/dormant land
 - Dormant land in local/state/federal conservation programs or easement
 - Agricultural operations
 - Maintaining, repairing, and replacing agriculture facilities
 - Maintaining agricultural lands under production or cultivation
- Agricultural products = Covers all
- Agricultural equipment and facilities = Covers all
- Agricultural land = Where activities are conducted

VSP Principles

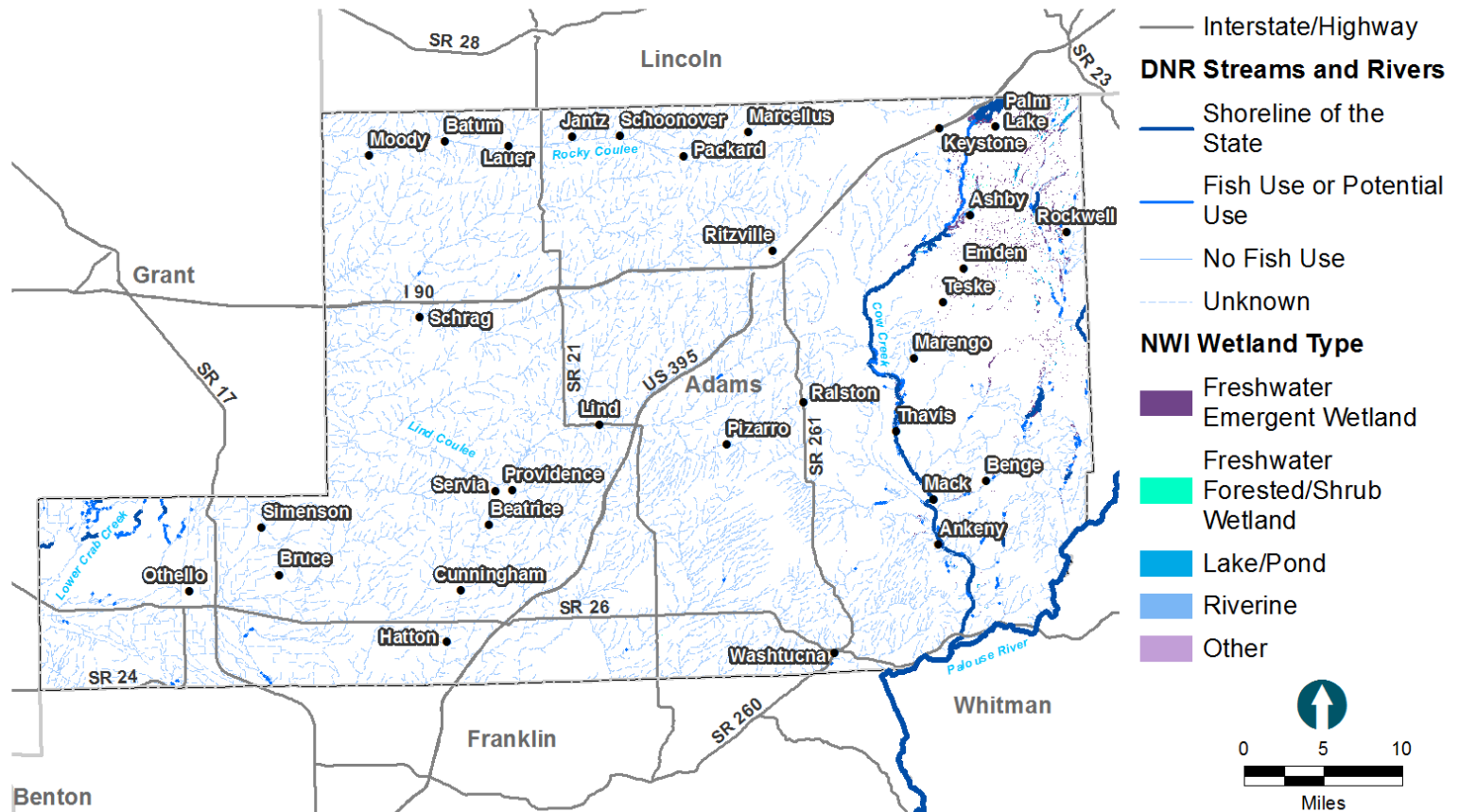
- Build on existing plans in County
- Protect critical areas from further degradation
- Set priorities for voluntary action to restore and enhance critical areas
- Capture effective practices already being implemented
- Separate but related – compliance with existing water quality and habitat protection regulations

Establishing Baseline Conditions For Critical Areas

Establishing Critical Area Baseline

- Condition of critical areas (CA) July 2011
- Establish presence of CAs in the inventory area
- Determine functions and values using best available science
- Inventory agricultural activities in the inventory area and effect on CAs

Streams and Wetlands



Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

- Land and water managed to maintain populations of fish and wildlife species in suitable habitats within their natural geographic distribution over the long term within connected habitat blocks and open spaces



Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (cont.)

- Includes – Ranges and habitat elements where federal- and state-listed endangered, threatened, and sensitive species have a primary association



Photo: USFWS

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (cont.)

- Does not include artificial features such as
 - Irrigation delivery systems
 - Irrigation infrastructures
 - Irrigation canals
 - Drainage ditches
(when no salmonids
are present)

Wetlands

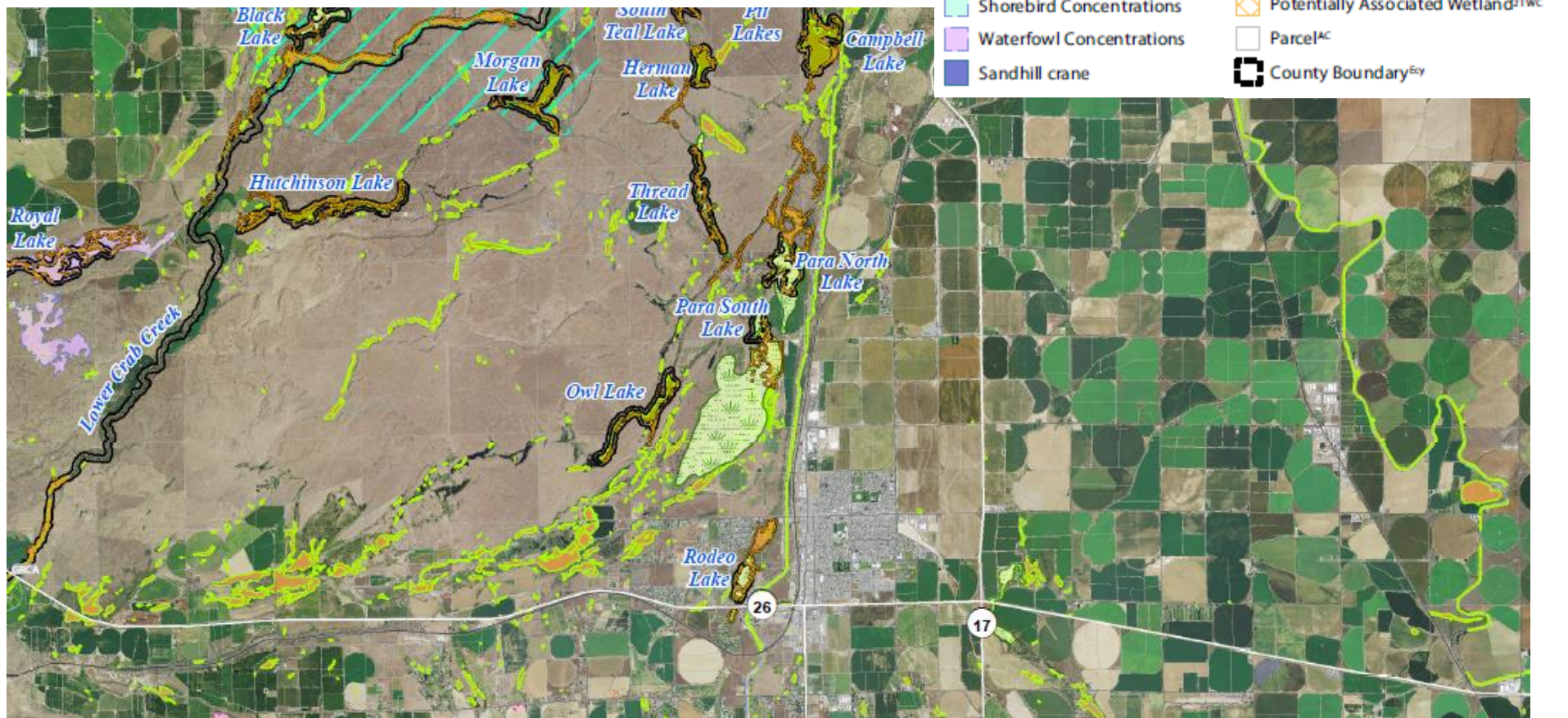
- Areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater supporting a prevalence of vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions



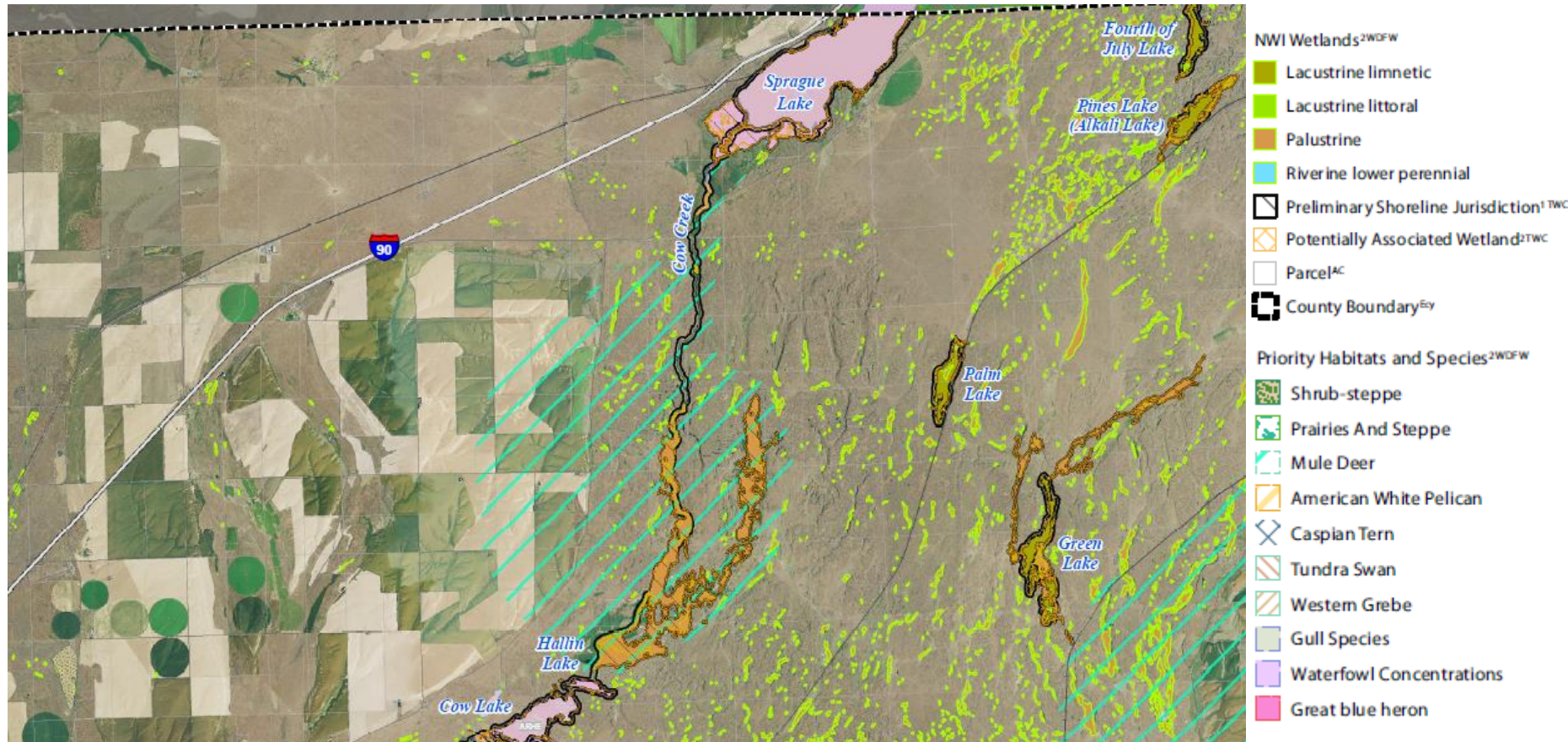
Frequently Flooded Areas

- Lands in the floodplain subject to at least a 1% or greater chance of flooding in any given year
- Includes – Streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and areas where high groundwater forms on the ground surface

Priority Habitats and Species and Wetlands (Near Othello)



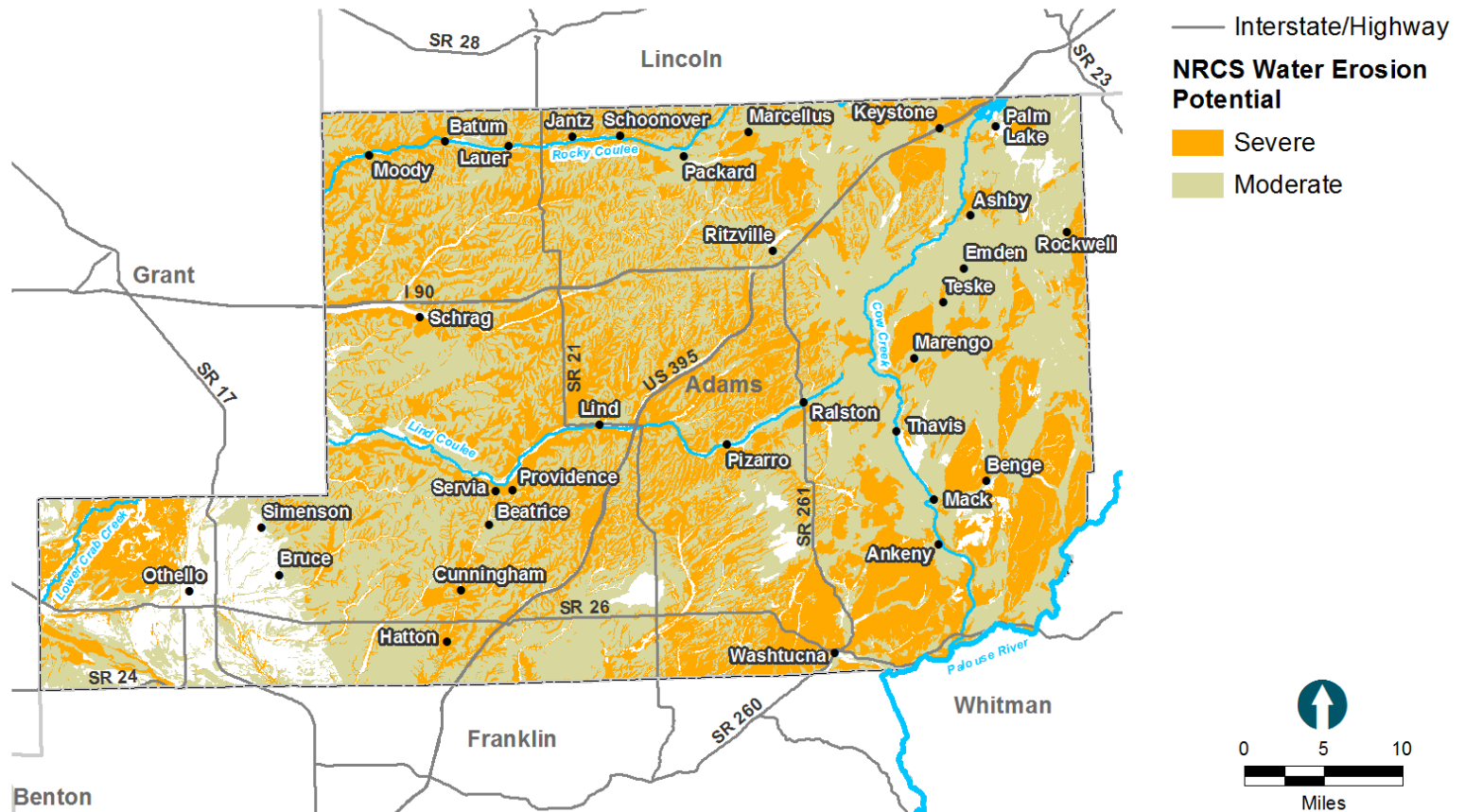
Priority Habitats and Species and Wetlands (Northeast)



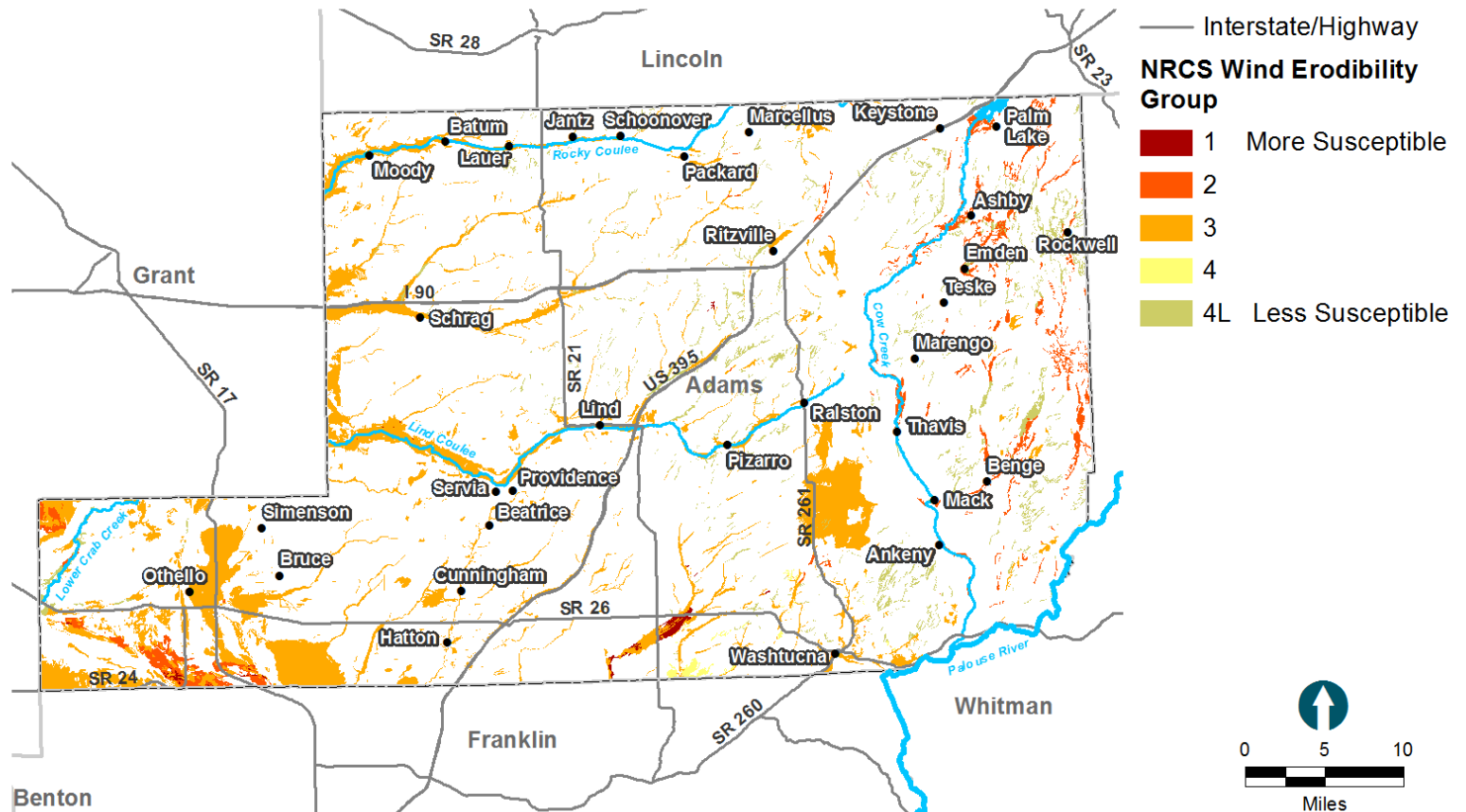
Geologically Hazardous Areas

- Geologically hazardous areas include areas susceptible to erosion (including wind and water/rill), sliding, earthquake, or other geological events

Water Erosion Potential



Wind Erosion Potential

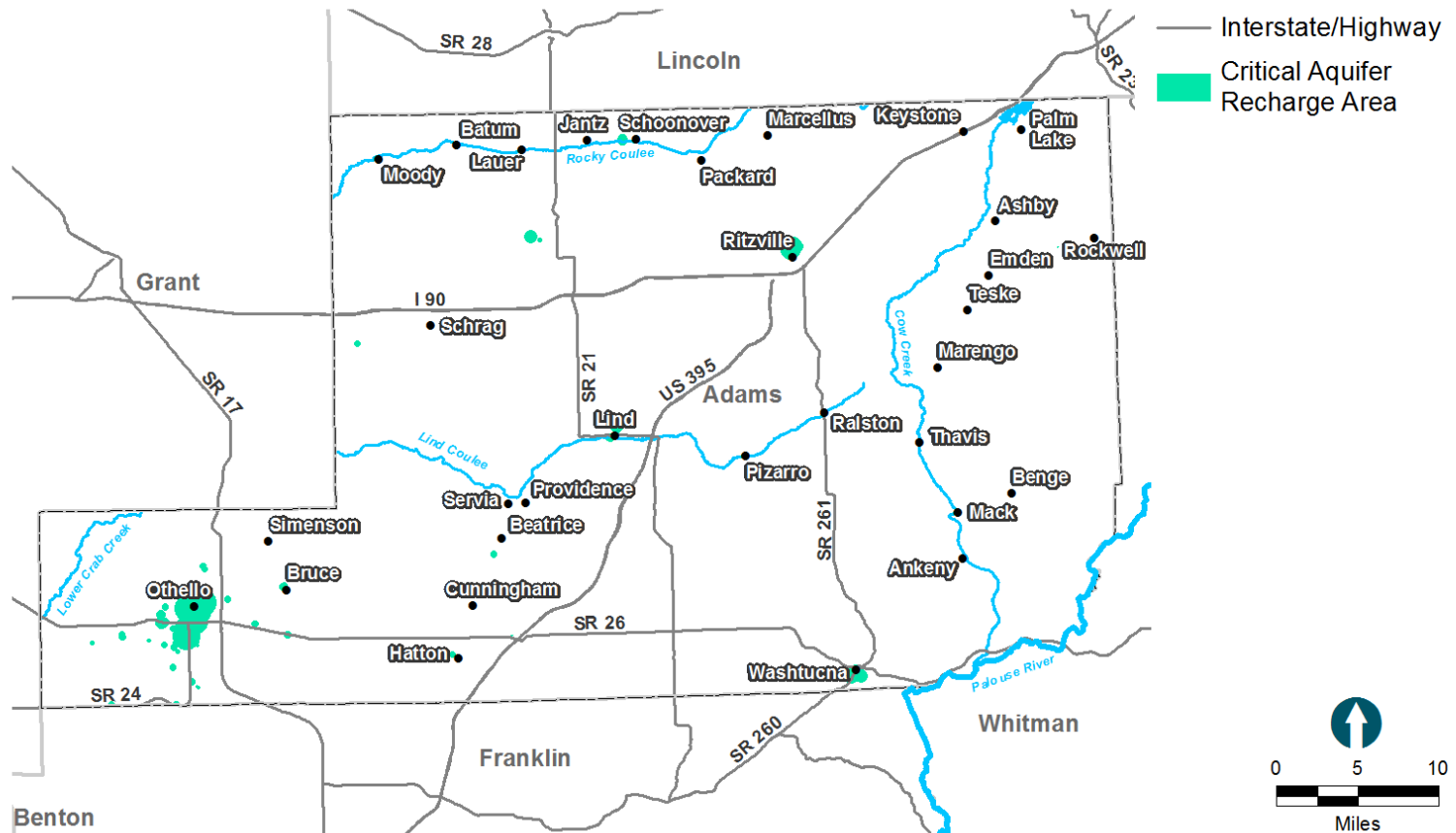


Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

- Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water and areas vulnerable to contamination that would affect the potability of the water



Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas



Establishing Agricultural Baseline

Establishing Agriculture Baseline

- Inventory cropping systems
 - Number and acres
- Inventory conservation practices applied within inventory areas and effect on CAs
- Build technical components by assembling conservation systems



Dairy Waste Treatment Transfer

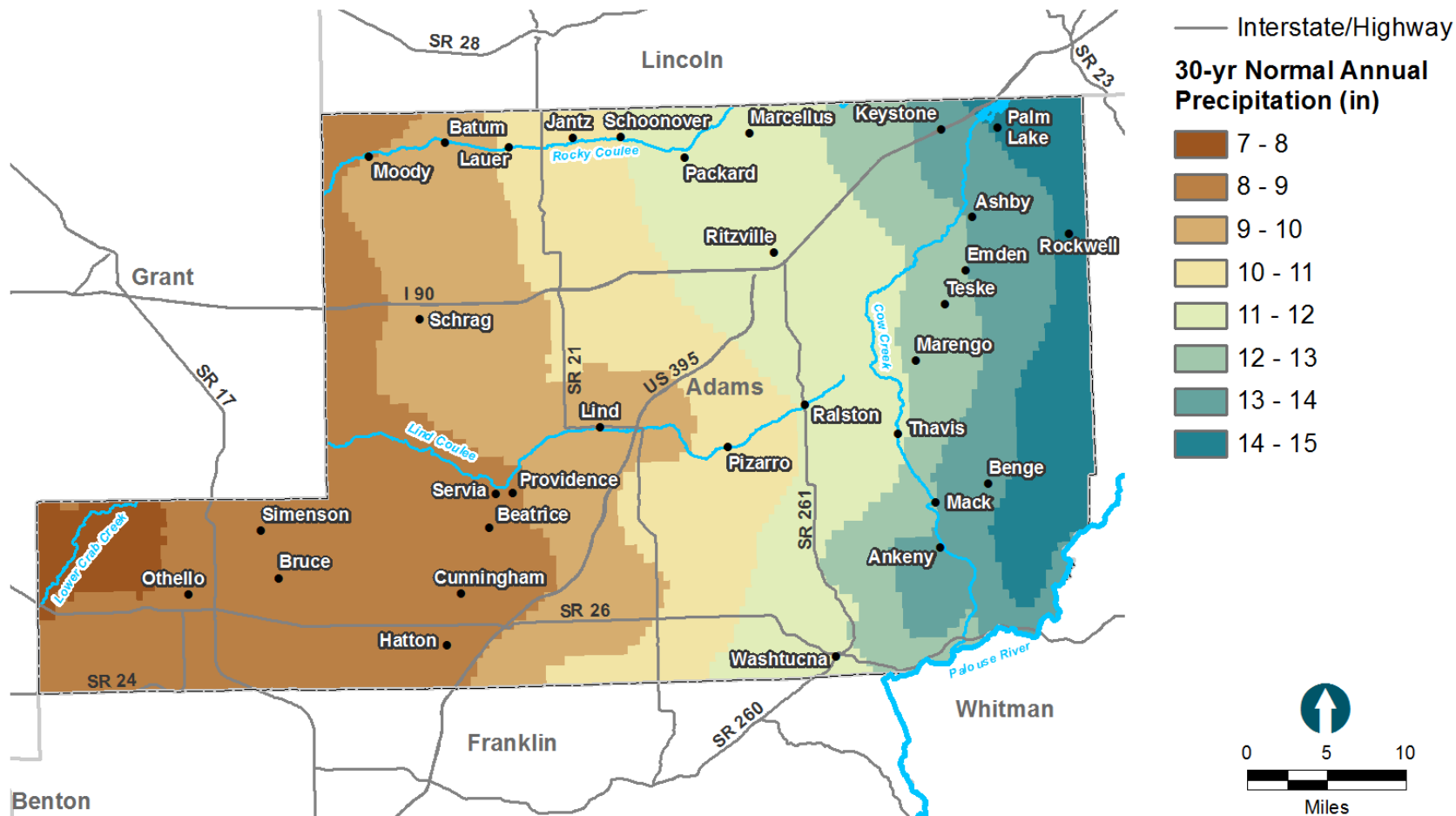


Direct Seeding

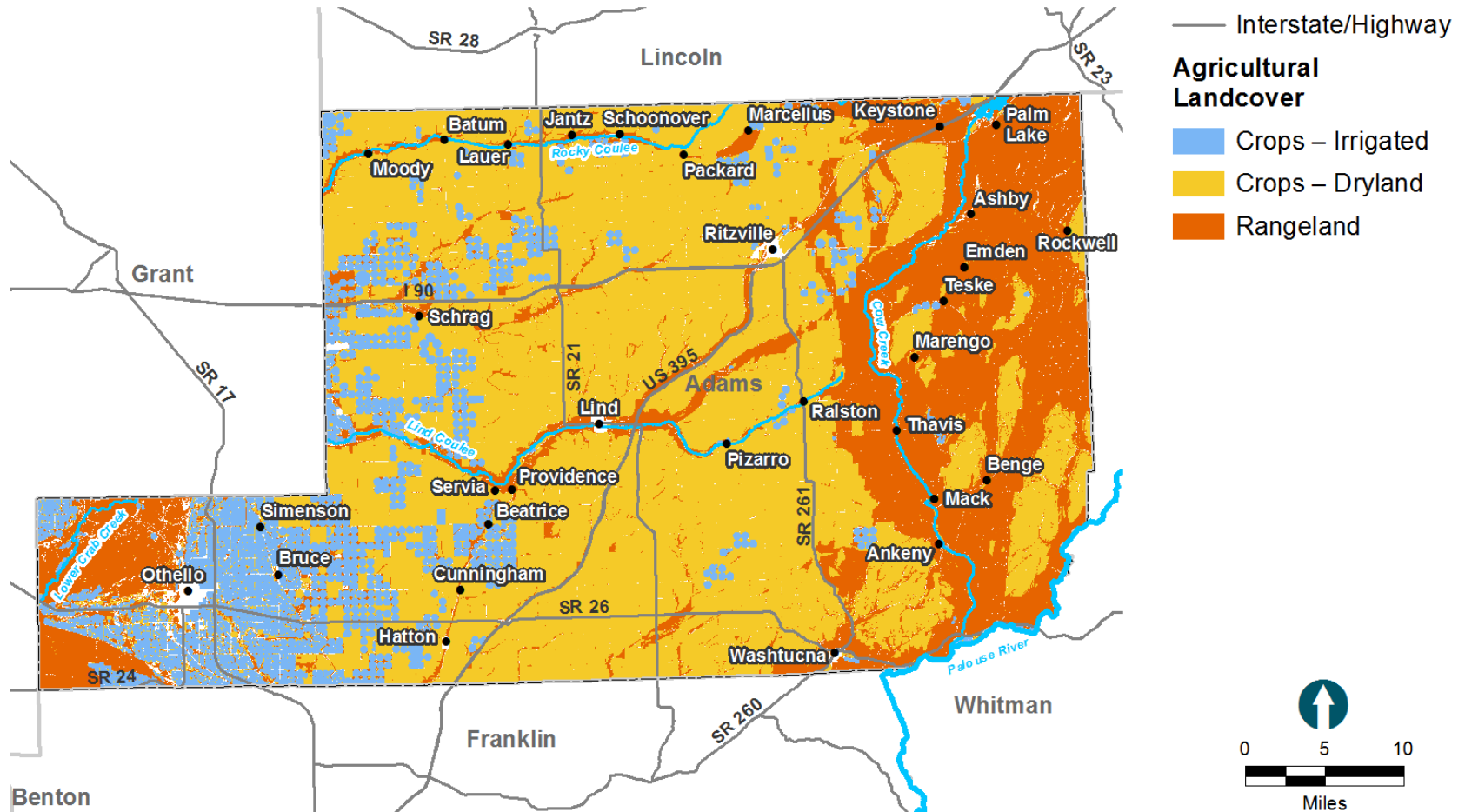


Vegetation Enhancement

Average Precipitation



Agricultural Land Cover



Work Plan Elements

Work Plan Elements

- **Review and incorporate** applicable water quality, watershed management, farmland protection, and species recovery **data and plans**
- **Seek input** from tribes, agencies, and stakeholders
- **Develop goals** for participation by agricultural operators necessary to meet the protection and enhancement **benchmarks** of the watershed plan
- **Ensure outreach and technical assistance** is provided to agricultural operators in the watershed

Work Plan Elements (cont.)

- **Create measurable benchmarks** that, within 10 years after receipt of funding, are designed to result in the protection and enhancement of critical areas functions and values through voluntary, incentive-based measures
- **Designate the entity** that will provide technical assistance
- Work with the entity providing technical assistance to ensure **individual stewardship plans** contribute to the goals and benchmarks of the watershed plan
- **Incorporate** into the watershed plan **existing development regulations** relied on to achieve the goals and benchmarks for protection

Work Plan Elements (cont.)

- Establish baseline **monitoring**
- Conduct periodic **evaluations**, institute **adaptive management**, and provide a **written report** of the status of plans and accomplishments to the county and the Commission within 60 days after the end of each biennium
- **Assist state agencies** in their monitoring programs
- Satisfy any **other reporting requirements** of the program

Agricultural Operators – Withdrawal from Program (RCW 36.70A.760)

- An agricultural operator participating in the program
 - May withdraw from the program
 - Is not required to continue voluntary measures after the expiration of an applicable contract
- The VSP Work Group must account for any loss of protection resulting from withdrawals when establishing goals and benchmarks for protection and a Work Plan

VSP Process and Timeline

VSP Process

County Opts In

- Funding is provided
- Form local VSP Work Group



VSP Work Group Develops Work Plan

- Identifies critical areas and agricultural activities
- Includes measurable benchmarks for program



State Review

- Work Plan reviewed by the State Technical Panel
- Upon approval, sent to VSP Work Group for implementation



VSP Implementation

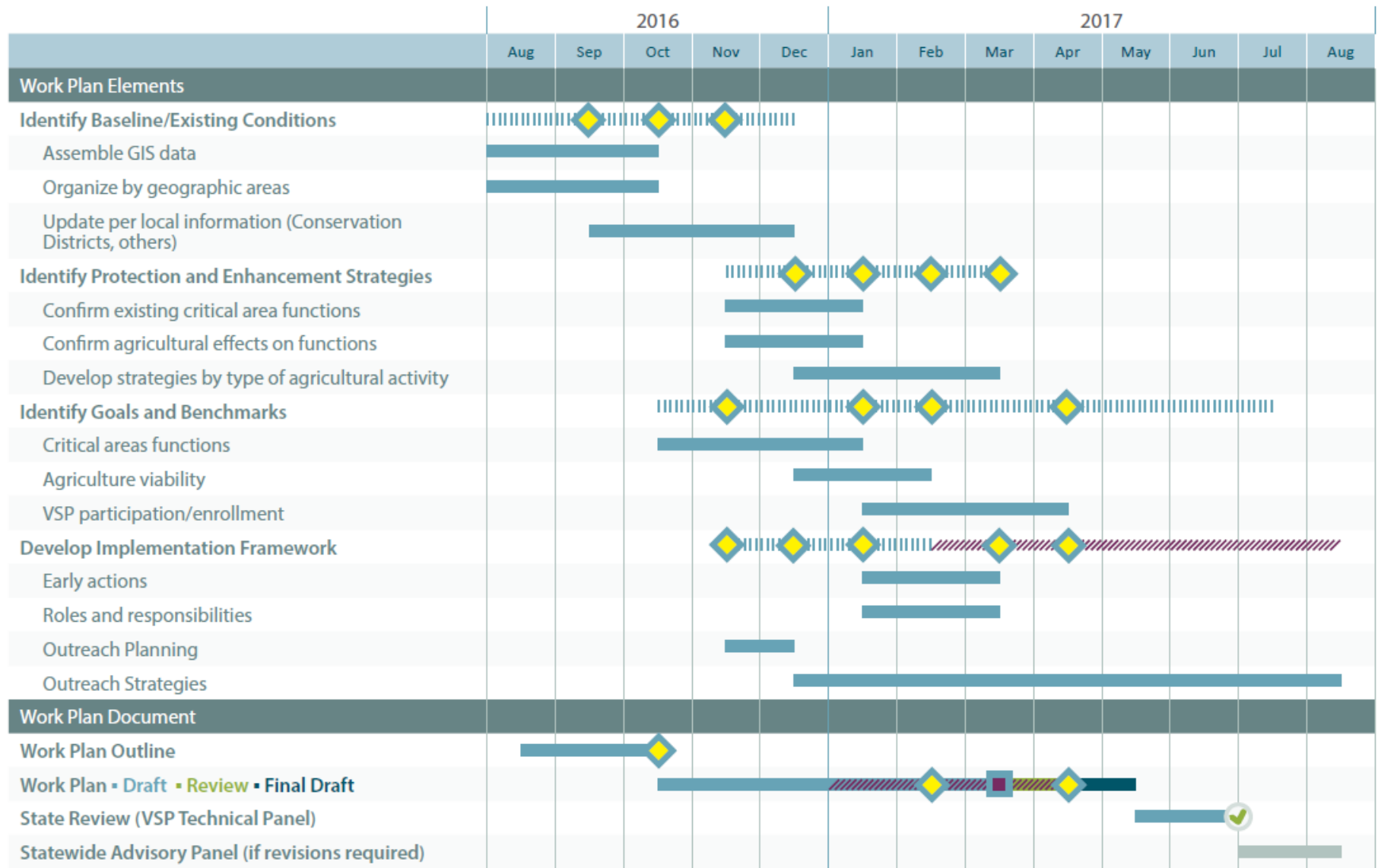
- VSP Work Group implements Work Plan
- Focused landowner outreach to develop farm plans



5-year Status Reports

- Must show progress on benchmarks or
- Implement adaptive management approaches

Adams County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) - Work Plan Timeline



Watershed Workgroup Meeting



Overall Task Period



Landowner/Stakeholder Outreach



Agency Coordination Meeting



State Approval

Q&A