

RCW 84.34.020 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Open space land" means (a) any land area so designated by an official comprehensive land use plan adopted by any city or county and zoned accordingly, or (b) any land area, the preservation of which in its present use would (i) conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources, or (ii) protect streams or water supply, or (iii) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes, or (iv) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open space, or (v) enhance recreation opportunities, or (vi) preserve historic sites, or (vii) preserve visual quality along highway, road, and street corridors or scenic vistas, or (viii) retain in its natural state tracts of land not less than one acre situated in an urban area and open to public use on such conditions as may be reasonably required by the legislative body granting the open space classification, or (c) any land meeting the definition of farm and agricultural conservation land under subsection (8) of this section. As a condition of granting open space classification, the legislative body may not require public access on land classified under (b)(iii) of this subsection for the purpose of promoting conservation of wetlands.

(2) "Farm and agricultural land" means:

(a) Any parcel of land that is twenty or more acres or multiple parcels of land that are contiguous and total twenty or more acres:

(i) Devoted primarily to the production of livestock or agricultural commodities for commercial purposes;

(ii) Enrolled in the federal conservation reserve program or its successor administered by the United States department of agriculture; or

(iii) Other similar commercial activities as may be established by rule;

(b)(i) Any parcel of land that is five acres or more but less than twenty acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses, which has produced a gross income from agricultural uses equivalent to, as of January 1, 1993:

(A) One hundred dollars or more per acre per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter for all parcels of land that are classified under this subsection or all parcels of land for which an application for classification under this subsection is made with the granting authority prior to January 1, 1993; and

(B) On or after January 1, 1993, two hundred dollars or more per acre per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter;

(ii) For the purposes of (b)(i) of this subsection, "gross income from agricultural uses" includes, but is not limited to, the wholesale value of agricultural products donated to nonprofit food banks or feeding programs;

(c) Any parcel of land of less than five acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses which has produced a gross income as of January 1, 1993, of:

(i) One thousand dollars or more per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter for all parcels of land that are classified under this subsection or all parcels of land for which an application for

classification under this subsection is made with the granting authority prior to January 1, 1993; and

(ii) On or after January 1, 1993, fifteen hundred dollars or more per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter. Parcels of land described in (b) (i) (A) and (c) (i) of this subsection will, upon any transfer of the property excluding a transfer to a surviving spouse or surviving state registered domestic partner, be subject to the limits of (b) (i) (B) and (c) (ii) of this subsection;

(d) Any parcel of land that is five acres or more but less than twenty acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses, which meet one of the following criteria:

(i) Has produced a gross income from agricultural uses equivalent to two hundred dollars or more per acre per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter;

(ii) Has standing crops with an expectation of harvest within seven years, except as provided in (d) (iii) of this subsection, and a demonstrable investment in the production of those crops equivalent to one hundred dollars or more per acre in the current or previous calendar year. For the purposes of this subsection (2) (d) (ii), "standing crop" means Christmas trees, vineyards, fruit trees, or other perennial crops that: (A) Are planted using agricultural methods normally used in the commercial production of that particular crop; and (B) typically do not produce harvestable quantities in the initial years after planting; or

(iii) Has a standing crop of short rotation hardwoods with an expectation of harvest within fifteen years and a demonstrable investment in the production of those crops equivalent to one hundred dollars or more per acre in the current or previous calendar year;

(e) Any lands including incidental uses as are compatible with agricultural purposes, including wetlands preservation, provided such incidental use does not exceed twenty percent of the classified land and the land on which appurtenances necessary to the production, preparation, or sale of the agricultural products exist in conjunction with the lands producing such products. Agricultural lands also include any parcel of land of one to five acres, which is not contiguous, but which otherwise constitutes an integral part of farming operations being conducted on land qualifying under this section as "farm and agricultural lands";

(f) The land on which housing for employees and the principal place of residence of the farm operator or owner of land classified pursuant to (a) of this subsection is sited if: The housing or residence is on or contiguous to the classified parcel; and the use of the housing or the residence is integral to the use of the classified land for agricultural purposes;

(g) Any land that is used primarily for equestrian related activities for which a charge is made, including, but not limited to, stabling, training, riding, clinics, schooling, shows, or grazing for feed and that otherwise meet the requirements of (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection; or

(h) Any land primarily used for commercial horticultural purposes, including growing seedlings, trees, shrubs, vines, fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs, and other plants in containers, whether under a structure or not, subject to the following:

(i) The land is not primarily used for the storage, care, or selling of plants purchased from other growers for retail sale;

(ii) If the land is less than five acres and used primarily to grow plants in containers, such land does not qualify as "farm and agricultural land" if more than twenty-five percent of the land used primarily to grow plants in containers is open to the general public for on-site retail sales;

(iii) If more than twenty percent of the land used for growing plants in containers qualifying under this subsection (2)(h) is covered by pavement, none of the paved area is eligible for classification as "farm and agricultural land" under this subsection (2)(h). The eligibility limitations described in this subsection (2)(h)(iii) do not affect the land's eligibility to qualify under (e) of this subsection; and

(iv) If the land classified under this subsection (2)(h), in addition to any contiguous land classified under this subsection, is less than twenty acres, it must meet the applicable income or investment requirements in (b), (c), or (d) of this subsection.

(3) "Timberland" means any parcel of land that is five or more acres or multiple parcels of land that are contiguous and total five or more acres which is or are devoted primarily to the growth and harvest of timber for commercial purposes. Timberland means the land only and does not include a residential homesite. The term includes land used for incidental uses that are compatible with the growing and harvesting of timber but no more than ten percent of the land may be used for such incidental uses. It also includes the land on which appurtenances necessary for the production, preparation, or sale of the timber products exist in conjunction with land producing these products.

(4) "Current" or "currently" means as of the date on which property is to be listed and valued by the assessor.

(5) "Owner" means the party or parties having the fee interest in land, except that where land is subject to real estate contract "owner" means the contract vendee.

(6)(a) "Contiguous" means land adjoining and touching other property held by the same ownership. Land divided by a public road, but otherwise an integral part of a farming operation, is considered contiguous.

(b) For purposes of this subsection (6):

(i) "Same ownership" means owned by the same person or persons, except that parcels owned by different persons are deemed held by the same ownership if the parcels are:

(A) Managed as part of a single operation; and

(B) Owned by:

(I) Members of the same family;

(II) Legal entities that are wholly owned by members of the same family; or

(III) An individual who owns at least one of the parcels and a legal entity or entities that own the other parcel or parcels if the entity or entities are wholly owned by that individual, members of his or her family, or that individual and members of his or her family.

(ii) "Family" includes only:

(A) An individual and his or her spouse or domestic partner, child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, cousin, or sibling;

(B) The spouse or domestic partner of an individual's child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, cousin, or sibling;

(C) A child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, cousin, or sibling of the individual's spouse or the individual's domestic partner; and

(D) The spouse or domestic partner of any individual described in (b) (ii) (C) of this subsection (6).

(7) "Granting authority" means the appropriate agency or official who acts on an application for classification of land pursuant to this chapter.

(8) "Farm and agricultural conservation land" means either:

(a) Land that was previously classified under subsection (2) of this section, that no longer meets the criteria of subsection (2) of this section, and that is reclassified under subsection (1) of this section; or

(b) Land that is traditional farmland that is not classified under chapter 84.33 or 84.34 RCW, that has not been irrevocably devoted to a use inconsistent with agricultural uses, and that has a high potential for returning to commercial agriculture. [2014 c 125 s 2; 2011 c 101 s 1; 2010 c 106 s 304. Prior: 2009 c 513 s 1; 2009 c 255 s 1; 2005 c 57 s 1; 2004 c 217 s 1; 2002 c 315 s 1; 2001 c 249 s 12; 1998 c 320 s 7; 1997 c 429 s 31; 1992 c 69 s 4; 1988 c 253 s 3; 1983 c 3 s 227; 1973 1st ex.s. c 212 s 2; 1970 ex.s. c 87 s 2.]

Intent—2014 c 125: "The legislature intends to clarify and update the description of farm and agricultural land as it is used under the property tax open space program. Modern technology and water quality and labor regulations have all caused nurseries to increasingly grow plants in containers rather than in the ground. Growing plants in containers preserves topsoil, allows more plants to be grown per acre, allows soil and nutrients to be customized for each type of plant, allows more efficient use of water and fertilizer, allows year-round harvest and sales, and reduces labor cost and injuries." [2014 c 125 s 1.]

Intent—2014 c 125: "The amendments to RCW 84.34.020, as provided in section 2 of this act, are intended to clarify an ambiguity in an existing tax preference, and are therefore exempt from the requirements of RCW 82.32.805 and 82.32.808." [2014 c 125 s 3.]

Effective date—2010 c 106: See note following RCW 35.102.145.

Purpose—2004 c 217 s 1: "The purpose of the amendatory language in section 1 of this act is to clarify the timberland definition as it relates to tax issues. The language does not affect land use policy or law." [2004 c 217 s 2.]

Severability—1997 c 429: See note following RCW 36.70A.3201.