
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1797

State of Washington 61st Legislature 2009 Regular Session

By House Local Government & Housing (originally sponsored by Representatives White, Priest, Springer, Anderson, Miloscia, Nelson, McCoy, Rodne, Simpson, and Sullivan)

READ FIRST TIME 02/20/09.

1 AN ACT Relating to a rural and resource lands study; adding a new
2 section to chapter 43.79 RCW; and creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that working
5 forests, farmlands, and open rural zoned lands in the central Puget
6 Sound region are rapidly being converted to other uses. More than
7 eighteen thousand acres of forests and farms in King, Pierce,
8 Snohomish, and Kittitas counties are developed each year, a trend that
9 threatens the state's farm and forestry economies. The legislature
10 further finds that if conversion rates are not controlled, the four
11 hundred thousand acres of rural and agricultural zoned lands in King,
12 Pierce, and Snohomish counties will be fractionated in the next twenty
13 years, and will likely be developed by the end of the twenty-first
14 century.

15 (2) The legislature also finds that this pattern of growth leads to
16 a number of unfavorable conditions, including: (a) The removal of
17 large areas from economically beneficial agricultural and forestry
18 uses; (b) the loss of an important and diversified industry sector and
19 associated employment; (c) the wasteful use of scarce public funds for

1 roads, infrastructure, and fire and safety services; (d) reductions in
2 carbon sequestration benefits from forestry uses; (e) inefficient water
3 withdrawals; and (f) the generation of polluted storm water from
4 impervious surfaces.

5 (3) The legislature intends to provide for an examination of the
6 environmental, economic, and social consequences of current and
7 expected patterns of growth in rural and resource lands, and to secure
8 a common understanding of associated factors. The legislature intends
9 for this examination to result in a widely accepted strategy for
10 identifying how best to maintain the character of rural and resource
11 lands in ways that: (a) Support the goals of the growth management act
12 and the Puget Sound regional council's vision 2040, goals and
13 objectives that direct growth into existing cities and towns; (b)
14 respect landowner rights, values, and concerns; (c) assist in
15 maintaining forest and farmlands and their associated employment; and
16 (d) support Puget Sound restoration activities.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
18 for this specific purpose, the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, in
19 partnership with the Puget Sound regional council, must conduct an
20 examination of trends affecting, and policies guiding, the maintenance
21 of rural and resource lands in Washington. The examination must
22 commence by July 1st of the year in which funds are made available.

23 (2) In fulfilling the requirements of this section, the center
24 must: (a) Work and consult with willing participants including, but
25 not limited to, stakeholders representing agricultural, environmental,
26 forestry, development, realty, tribal, and local government interests;
27 and (b) involve and apprise legislators and legislative staff of its
28 efforts.

29 (3) The center must conduct fact-finding and stakeholder
30 discussions with participants identified in subsection (2) of this
31 section. These discussions must identify stakeholder concerns,
32 barriers, opportunities, and desired principles for maintaining rural
33 character and conserving resource lands. The fact-finding must
34 identify existing regulatory, management, and scientific information
35 related to rates of growth in rural and resource lands, and associated
36 policies guiding development in these lands. The center must issue two
37 reports of its fact-finding efforts and stakeholder discussions to the

1 governor and the appropriate committees of the house of representatives
2 and the senate: One by December 1st of the year in which funds for the
3 examination become available; and one by the following July 1st.

4 (4) The center must facilitate discussions between the stakeholders
5 identified in subsection (2) of this section for the purposes of
6 identifying options and recommendations for addressing expected growth
7 in a manner that maintains rural character and conserves forest, farm,
8 and natural areas.

9 (5) The center must work to achieve agreement among participating
10 stakeholders and to develop a coalition that can be used to support
11 agreed upon changes or new approaches to: (a) Maintaining the
12 character of rural lands; and (b) conserving agricultural and forest
13 lands of long-term significance.

14 (6) The center must issue a final report of findings and
15 legislative recommendations to the governor and the appropriate
16 committees of the house of representatives and the senate by September
17 1st of the year following the year in which funds for the examination
18 become available.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.79 RCW
20 to read as follows:

21 The rural and resource lands study account is created in the state
22 treasury. The department of community, trade, and economic development
23 may accept gifts, grants, and endowments from public or private
24 sources, in trust or otherwise, and must deposit such funds into the
25 account. The legislature may also appropriate moneys to the account.
26 Expenditures from the account may be used only for an examination that
27 complies with the requirements of section 2 of this act. Only the
28 director of the department of community, trade, and economic
29 development or the director's designee may authorize expenditures from
30 the account. The account is subject to allotment procedures under
31 chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for
32 expenditures.

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